Embracing Change:

Rethinking public library standards for the future

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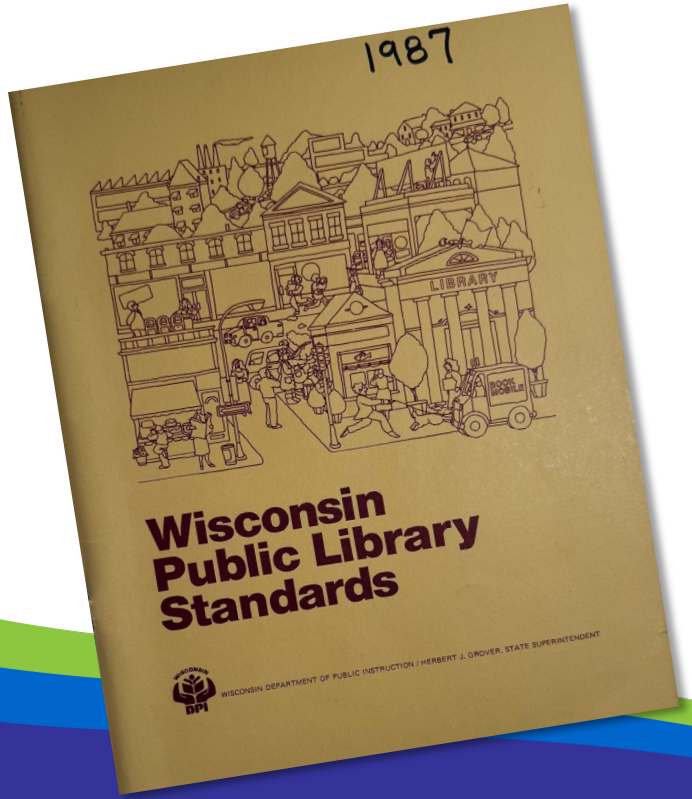
Wisconsin DPI Bureau of Libraries
WLA Conference | October 29, 2025

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
Public Instruction
Jill K. Underly, PhD, State Superintendent

INSTITUTE *of*
Museum and Library
SERVICES

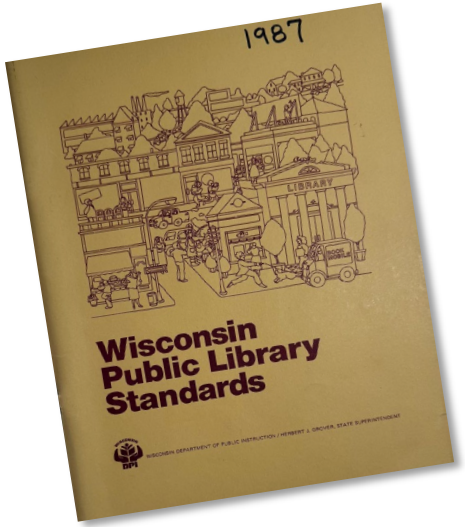
Consulting services of the **Wisconsin DPI Bureau of Libraries**
are made possible in part by the
Institute of Museum and Library Services

History of WI Public Library Standards



- 1974: *Wisconsin Public Library System Standards* published by the Division for Library Services
- *Wisconsin Public Library Standards* : 1st edition in 1987
- 9 chapters plus appendices, 76 pages
- Further editions in 1994, 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2018

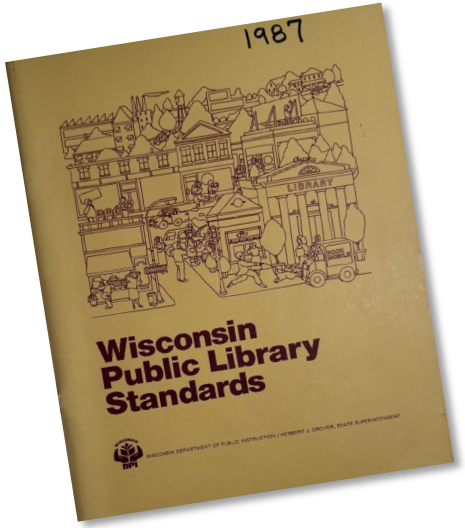
WI Public Library Standards, 1st Edition



- **Percentile Measures for Library Services:**
  40th through 90th
- **7 population bands:**
  Less than 2000 through ***50,000 and over***
- **Quantitative data for:**

Volumes held	Audio recordings held
Volumes added per year	Audio recordings / 1,000 pop.
Volumes held per capita	Video recordings held
Periodical titles received	Turnover rate (circ / items held)
Periodical titles / 1,000 pop.	Circulation per capita
Hours open	Staff (FTE per 1,000 pop.)

WI Public Library Standards, 1st Edition

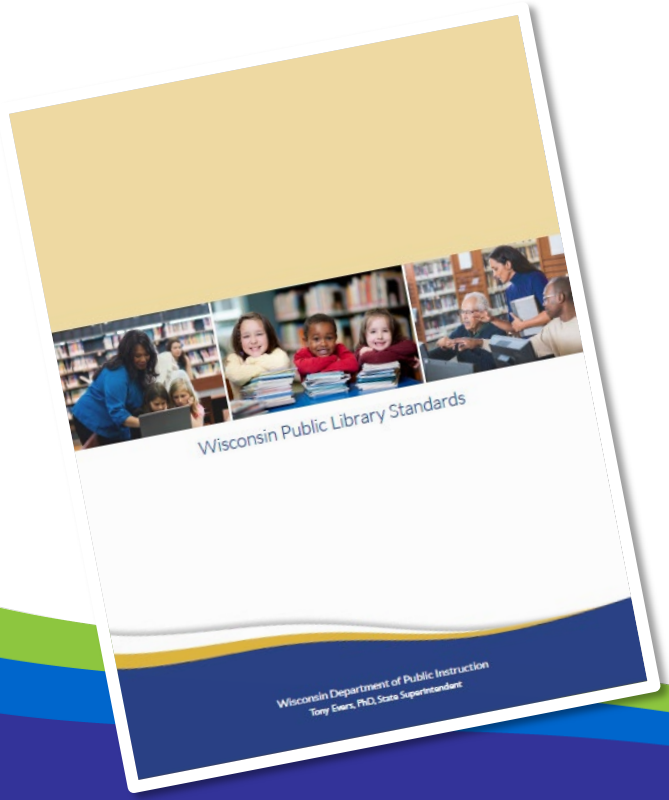


- **Chapters**

  Governance, Administration, and Funding – Staffing – Collection – Services – Public Relations – Access and Facilities

- **Appendix A includes public library role descriptions:**
  - Community Activity Center
  - Community Information Center
  - Formal Education Support Center
  - Independent Learning Center
  - Popular Materials Center
  - Preschoolers' Door to Learning
  - Reference Library
  - Research Center

WI Public Library Standards, 6th ed., 2018



- **Aligned with Chapter 43**
- **Committee-focused development**
  - Steering group
  - Governance and administration
  - Collections, resources, and services
  - Access, facilities, and technology
- **Very little on youth services or inclusive services**
- **Introduction of "Tier" structure for both qualitative and quantitative standards** – all topics included in each tier.
- **Advisory/voluntary only –** How does DPI use them?

dpi.wi.gov/libraries/public-libraries/planning-evaluation

Do you use Wisconsin's current public library standards?

I use the Standards for planning with my library board, and/or for advocacy.

I refer to the Standards checklist for planning and evaluation.

Knowing my library's "Tier" is a useful tool for planning and/or advocacy.

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

Qualitative Standards and Guidelines

Topic areas in the 6th Edition Standards:

- Governance
- Administration
- Funding
- Staffing
- Collections & Resources
- Programs & Services
- Access
- Facility

Wisconsin History of Youth Guidelines

- **Public Library Services for Youth with Special Needs: A Plan for Wisconsin (1999)**
- **Wisconsin Public Library Youth Services Guidelines (2012)**

404: Other topics not found

- Storytime Guidelines
- Early Childhood Development
- Five Early Literacy Practices

- Intellectual Freedom
- Materials Challenges
- Community Voices
- Post-Covid World
- Staff Competencies
- Adult Services
- Inclusive Services (separate guide)
- Public Relations and Technology Plan Checklists (appendices)

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Mentimeter

Thoughts to share about these "other" topics?

All responses to your question will be shown here

Each response can be up to 200 characters long

Turn on voting to let participants vote for their favorites

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Standards Presentation...

Choose a slide to present

2018 Standards vs. 2023 AR Data

Total Hours/week - central location

Less than 999	1,000 to 1,999	2,000 to 2,999	3,000 to 4,999	5,000 to 6,499	6500 to 8,999	9,000 to 12,999	13,000 to 18,999	19,000 to 34,999	35,000 to 69,999	70,000 to 99,999	100,000 and over
4.0%	-3.3%	3.8%	2.5%	-3.3%	-3.8%	-6.0%	-3.9%	-5.0%	-3.2%	-7.9%	-11.5%
-3.4%	-8.6%	7.5%	-2.2%	-6.0%	-5.6%	-8.6%	-1.5%	-4.8%	-3.3%	-4.8%	-13.1%
-8.3%	1.0%	3.0%	-3.6%	-9.4%	-2.7%	-7.9%	-4.4%	-4.6%	-4.1%	-4.9%	-3.8%

Print volumes held per capita, extended population

Less than 999	1,000 to 1,999	2,000 to 2,999	3,000 to 4,999	5,000 to 6,499	6500 to 8,999	9,000 to 12,999	13,000 to 18,999	19,000 to 34,999	35,000 to 69,999	70,000 to 99,999	100,000 and over
15.5%	-9.2%	-3.1%	-25.9%	-18.8%	-13.3%	-15.7%	10.4%	0.4%	-1.7%	-9.3%	-27.6%
9.0%	-17.3%	-11.0%	-21.1%	-9.3%	-0.9%	-11.7%	17.9%	11.9%	-0.2%	-14.8%	-12.5%
42.9%	-2.5%	-14.0%	-22.3%	-30.9%	-6.7%	-8.6%	22.8%	10.9%	2.1%	-7.0%	0.9%

Audio per capita, extended population

Less than 999	1,000 to 1,999	2,000 to 2,999	3,000 to 4,999	5,000 to 6,499	6500 to 8,999	9,000 to 12,999	13,000 to 18,999	19,000 to 34,999	35,000 to 69,999	70,000 to 99,999	100,000 and over
-57.6%	-33.2%	-7.6%	-35.6%	-32.1%	-15.6%	-25.2%	11.0%	-14.3%	11.5%	1.1%	-13.8%
-59.9%	-46.5%	-24.1%	-27.0%	-28.1%	-23.8%	-32.4%	0.3%	-14.0%	-15.3%	-21.1%	-30.4%
-19.3%	-26.1%	-15.0%	-22.7%	-24.1%	-7.5%	-34.7%	9.2%	-12.1%	3.5%	13.4%	-24.7%

Video per capita, extended population

Less than 999	1,000 to 1,999	2,000 to 2,999	3,000 to 4,999	5,000 to 6,499	6500 to 8,999	9,000 to 12,999	13,000 to 18,999	19,000 to 34,999	35,000 to 69,999	70,000 to 99,999	100,000 and over
52.6%	22.2%	18.1%	-6.4%	-6.2%	-0.5%	-7.3%	42.4%	-1.0%	16.2%	-10.8%	4.5%
0.4%	16.6%	25.7%	23.7%	35.8%	19.9%	4.1%	52.6%	10.6%	-4.0%	-20.5%	-17.8%
67.6%	11.4%	-4.0%	11.1%	-1.9%	23.6%	-0.9%	10.8%	12.7%	-5.3%	10.8%	-13.9%

Periodical subscriptions per 1,000 extended population

Less than 999	1,000 to 1,999	2,000 to 2,999	3,000 to 4,999	5,000 to 6,499	6500 to 8,999	9,000 to 12,999	13,000 to 18,999	19,000 to 34,999	35,000 to 69,999	70,000 to 99,999	100,000 and over
-43.6%	-69.2%	-49.9%	-58.2%	-48.3%	-48.4%	-50.0%	-32.9%	-45.7%	-45.0%	-52.0%	-53.7%
-36.0%	-54.3%	-35.7%	-52.1%	-37.7%	-38.9%	-38.8%	-32.7%	-43.7%	-47.1%	-55.5%	-29.2%
4.2%	-34.3%	-34.3%	-39.2%	-31.3%	-30.6%	-25.4%	-26.1%	-43.0%	-41.3%	-33.8%	-15.1%

Collection size per capita (print, audio, and video), extended population

Less than 999	1,000 to 1,999	2,000 to 2,999	3,000 to 4,999	5,000 to 6,499	6500 to 8,999	9,000 to 12,999	13,000 to 18,999	19,000 to 34,999	35,000 to 69,999	70,000 to 99,999	100,000 and over
-4.2%	-12.4%	2.3%	-16.0%	-10.6%	-4.4%	-15.4%	-10.0%	-17.8%	-11.8%	-20.6%	-20.9%
-29.3%	-21.2%	-13.6%	-12.5%	-0.6%	12.7%	-11.6%	8.4%	-14.8%	-10.0%	-19.6%	-13.0%
22.3%	-8.7%	-11.0%	-17.0%	-23.1%	-4.0%	-13.5%	4.5%	-2.6%	-10.0%	-14.9%	1.6%

Computers per 1,000 extended population

Less than 999	1,000 to 1,999	2,000 to 2,999	3,000 to 4,999	5,000 to 6,499	6500 to 8,999	9,000 to 12,999	13,000 to 18,999	19,000 to 34,999	35,000 to 69,999	70,000 to 99,999	100,000 and over
-22.7%	-23.0%	-19.0%	-10.2%	-41.6%	-13.2%	-27.8%	-22.8%	-34.2%	-26.8%	-40.1%	-30.8%
-10.1%	-36.1%	-13.9%	-17.5%	-35.5%	-18.1%	-32.8%	-19.0%	-22.3%	-15.2%	-36.1%	-16.1%
-18.2%	-30.7%	-1.7%	-16.4%	-25.9%	-17.9%	-20.9%	29.9%	-0.9%	-12.4%	-35.3%	4.9%

FTE Staff per 1,000 extended population

Less than 999	1,000 to 1,999	2,000 to 2,999	3,000 to 4,999	5,000 to 6,499	6500 to 8,999	9,000 to 12,999	13,000 to 18,999	19,000 to 34,999	35,000 to 69,999	70,000 to 99,999	100,000 and over
1.0%	-12.3%	11.2%	-7.5%	1.4%	-21.3%	-13.0%	4.5%	-5.6%	4.1%	21.2%	2.1%
17.3%	-18.5%	3.4%	-4.2%	6.1%	1.3%	7.3%	20.6%	19.0%	-1.6%	5.4%	-2.4%
26.9%	-29.7%	-10.9%	-19.1%	-27.2%	8.1%	-11.6%	4.8%	4.5%	3.2%	-6.6%	-12.6%

% Change in Tier data from 6th edition standards to 2023 Annual Report Data

Green = increase since 2018, Red = decrease

Tier 1: 40th percentile; **Tier 2:** 60th percentile; **Tier 3:** 90th percentile

Data gaps in Wisconsin Standards

- **What data do we collect that we do *not* include in the quantitative Standards?**
  - Items in 1987 quantitative standards but not 6th ed. include: Volumes added per year, circulation per capita, turnover rate (circulation/items held)
  - Programs and attendance data
- **What data do we not even collect at all?**
  - Youth services FTE, number of YS staff classified as "Librarians," and MLIS Librarians serving youth.
  - Ditto for inclusive services and adult services.

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What quantitative standards are most useful to you?

Hours open

Volumes held per capita

FTE staff per 1k population

Materials expenditures per capita

Not at all useful

Very useful

0/1

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Standards Presentation...

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Mentimeter

What quantitative standards are most useful to you?

Collection size per capita

Periodical subscriptions per capita

Audio and video recordings held per capita

Public use internet computers per capita

Not at all useful

Very useful

0/1

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Standards Presentation...

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What other **quantitative** measures should be in the Standards?

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Standards Presentation...

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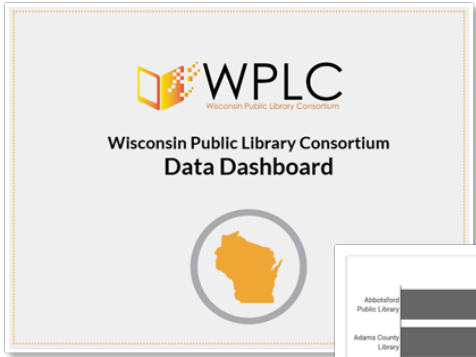
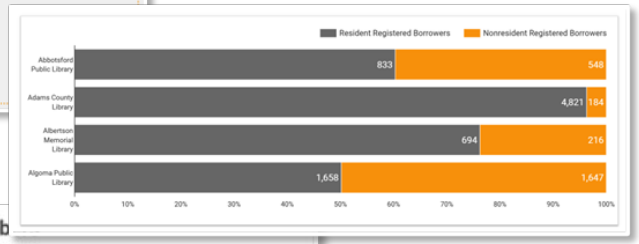
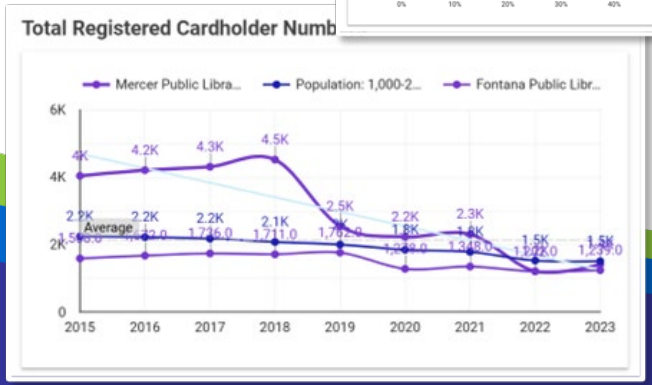
Other Evaluation Tools

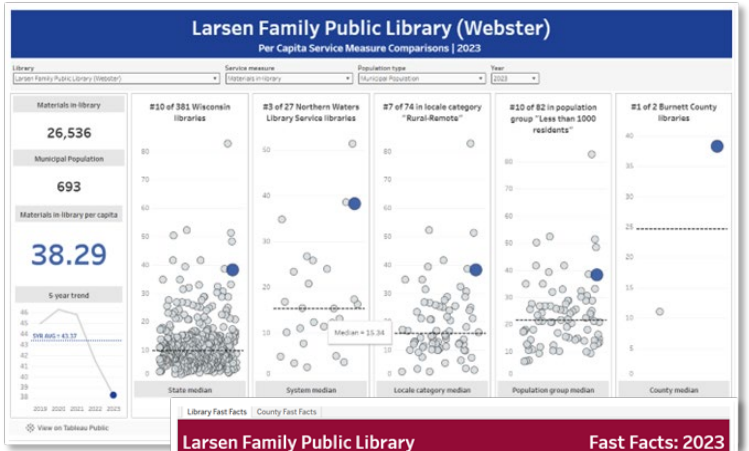


WPLC Data Dashboard

wplc.info/dashboard

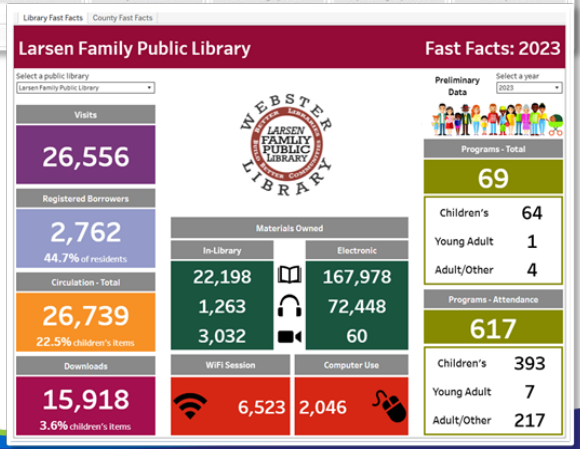






SCLS Data Dashboard

www.scls.info/data-statistics



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Do you use currently available data dashboards/tools?

WPLC Data Dashboard

SCLS Data Dashboard

Data provided by my library system

Annual report (AR) data for peer comparisons or performance over time

I've never used this.

I use this frequently.

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TS

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Standards Presentation...

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What other data tools or methods do you use for planning & evaluation?

All responses to your question will be shown here

Each response can be up to 200 characters long

Turn on voting to let participants vote for their favorites

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Standards Presentation...

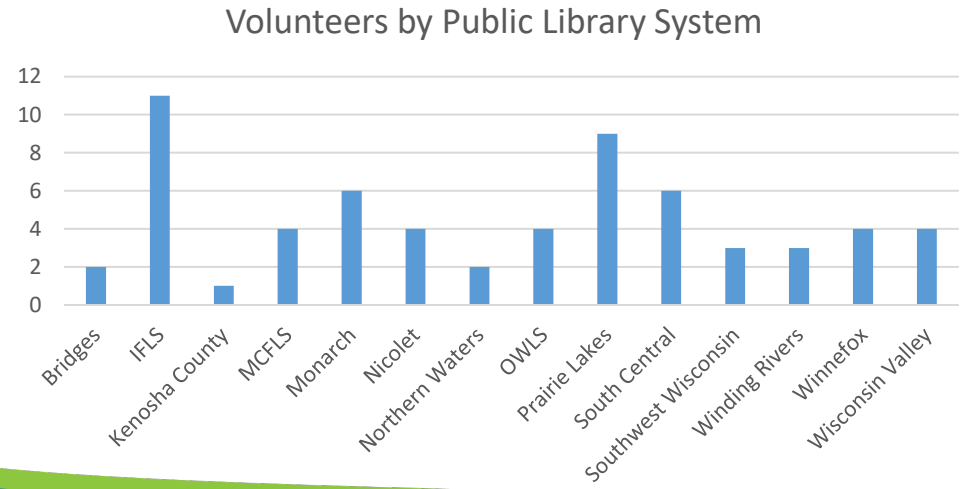
Choose a slide to present

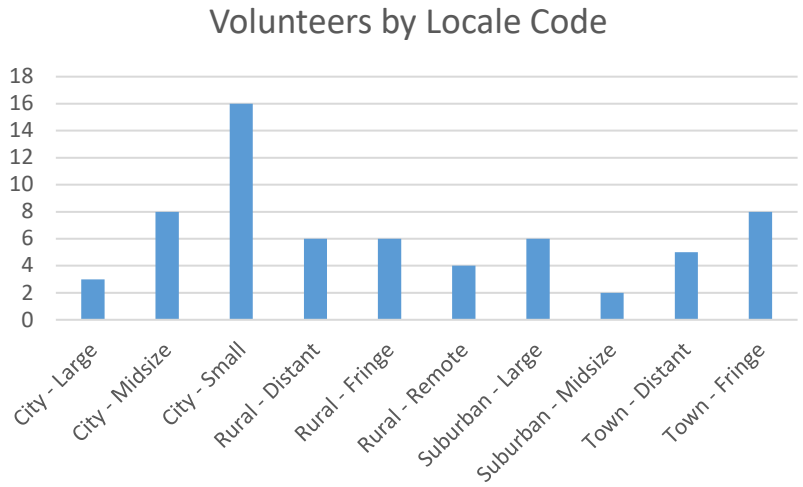
Standards revision process

- **Authorized by Wisconsin Statute § 43.05(6):** "Recommend and distribute standards… for public libraries to public library governing bodies…"
- **Steering Committee will establish workgroups and oversee the development of recommendations to DPI Bureau of Libraries**
- **Project charter:** "The process will incorporate extensive input from members of the Wisconsin public library community to ensure that the revised Standards can be utilized by public libraries for administrative decision making when planning, evaluating, and improving library services to all citizens in the state."

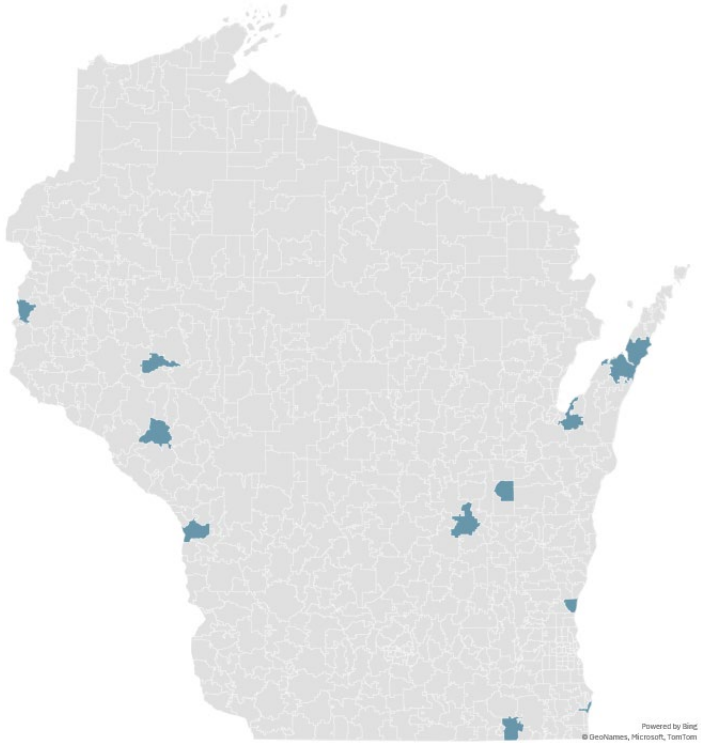
Steering Committee

- **Volunteer recruitment:** Form open September 3 – September 19, 2025
- **Strong interest in participating!** 63 applicants
- **Volunteer selection:** Criteria included in the volunteer job description



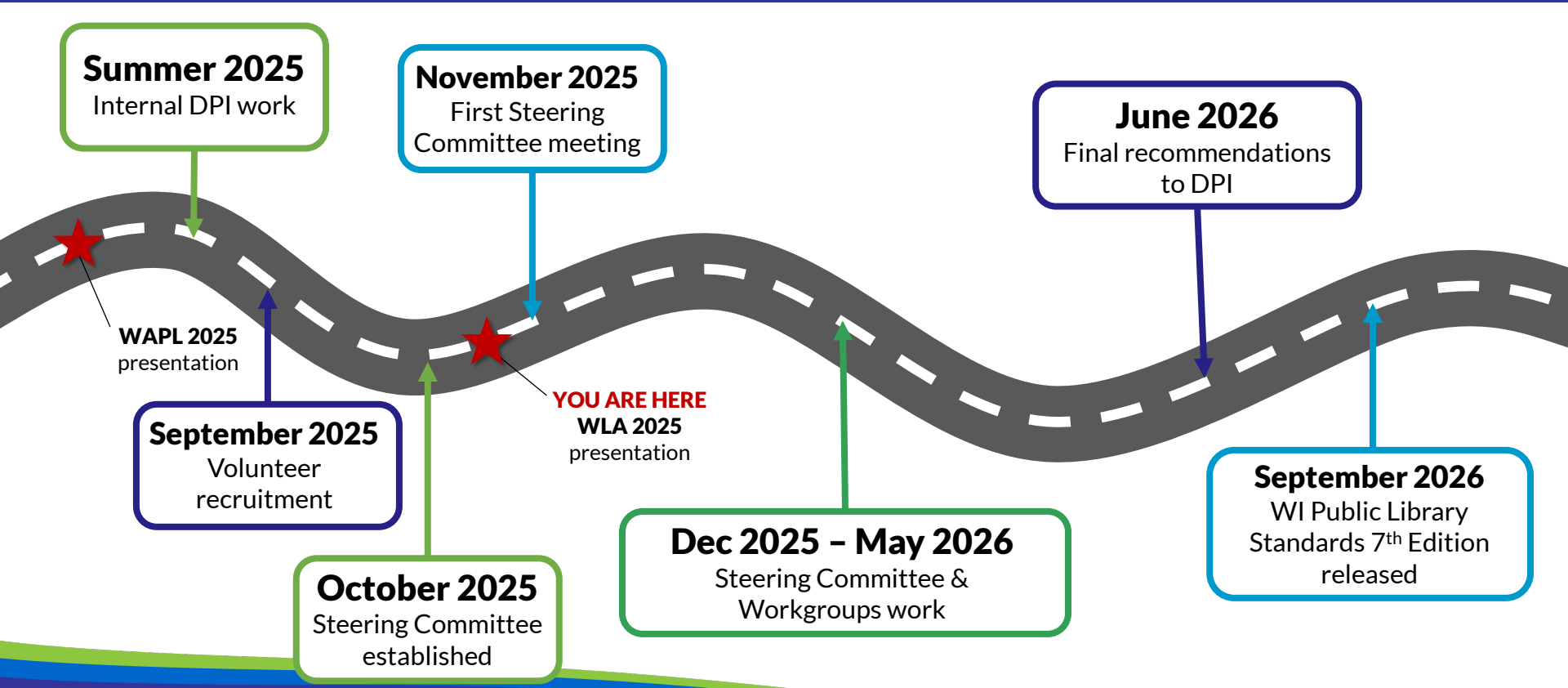


Steering Committee



Nancy Bell, Ripon Public Library
Rebecca Buchmann, Door County Library
Nick Demske, Racine Public Library & SRLAAW
Brendan Dooley, U.S.S. Liberty Public Library in Grafton
Darryl Eschete, Oshkosh Public Library
Kristie Hauer, Nicolet Federated Library System
Jamie Healy-Plotkin, UW-Madison iSchool & COLAND
Kristina Kelley-Johnson, Somerset Public Library
Emily Kornak, Lake Geneva Public Library
Kayla Mathson, Independence Public Library
Brooke Newberry, La Crosse Public Library
Joseph Scribbins, Brewer Public Library
John Thompson, IFLS Library System

Standards revision timeline



Standards resources

- **Standards project communication**
  dpi.wi.gov/pl-standards-7th-ed
- **Wisconsin Public Library Standards, 6th Edition (2018)**
  dpi.wi.gov/libraries/public-libraries/planning-evaluation
- **Libraries for Everyone blog**
  dpi.wi.gov/wilibrariesforeveryone/stories

Questions?

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Jill K. Underly, PhD, State Superintendent