WISCONSIN PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM TECHNOLOGY COLLABORATION PROPOSAL

JULY 23, 2018

SUMMARY
This is a proposal developed by a group of technology experts representing several Wisconsin Public Library Systems. It stems from a meeting held on June 20, 2018 to discuss collaborating on statewide technology services. The premise is that staff at Library Systems will continue working on implementing solutions together in order to offer more uniform and affordable technology services to public libraries throughout the state. Staff are the most important resource that Systems have and united, they will be able to accomplish more than as individuals.

CHALLENGES WE ARE TRYING TO OVERCOME

● Figuring out how to provide opportunities to libraries to upgrade outdated equipment and software that cannot be supported and/or replacing substandard network solutions
● Offering the same suite of services to all libraries across the state
  o Infrastructure / back end that is not visible
  o Services at the front line that are visible
● Recognizing that not all libraries need system-provided technology services
● Long-term goal of providing consistent solutions to create economy of scale (email, website hosting, PC images, reliable equipment)
● Identifying ways to provide high-quality, stable and sustainable services at the lowest feasible cost to the public libraries in Wisconsin
● Developing a statewide network of technology experts who can work together empowering and provide all partnering Library Systems with greater depth and breadth of the skills required to provide reliable, high-quality redundancy of technology service

FRAMEWORK

● Work to incorporate appropriate facets of the plan laid out in the PLSR Technology Workgroup Report
● Project would begin with existing public library staff and address additional staffing needs as it moves forward
● Project would be based on collaboration and cooperation
● Find funding for startup costs, travel expenses and perhaps ongoing costs
● Develop a governance and system funding structure
● Create mechanisms for more frequent meetings
• Create an easily-maintainable structure for communicating to others what this group is about and what they are doing (web sites, email lists, notes, etc.)

**FIRST TASKS**

• Update and expand Techa-Talka survey to identify what services we are already providing that are identified in the PLSR Work Group Report [https://goo.gl/DApN9J](https://goo.gl/DApN9J)
• Identify staff are at each system and their areas of expertise
• Identify a first project

**PROPOSED FIRST PROJECT: CONNECTING PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM NETWORKS**

A shared network is the first step toward enabling the consolidation of services. Resources across existing data centers can be pooled across a converged network fabric increasing the durability of the overall infrastructure. A shared platform spanning multiple data centers regionally offers a common framework on which each Library System may base their technology services.

In order to facilitate additional collaboration and resource sharing among Wisconsin Library Systems, we are proposing an effort to interconnect Wide Area Networks (WANs) between participating Systems. It has been recognized that a staging project of this nature would be necessary for any two or more organizations to share network and computer infrastructure resources.

**An analogy:** Each Library System’s WAN is akin to a local community’s road system, connecting the various members of that community to each other. This proposal would be similar in concept to connecting the local road systems in those communities via highways. The highways do not automatically blend all of the traffic from each community, but rather, enable traffic to pass between communities. The ability for any one community to directly access other communities empowers them to explore ways to meaningfully share resources for mutual benefit.

There is precedent for multiple systems interconnecting WANs to facilitate collaborative efforts. This project proposal aims to inclusively invite and encourage all Wisconsin Library Systems to opt in to a Statewide interconnected WAN. This project is not seeking to converge all WANs into a single larger network at this time, but rather to maintain existing WANs to the extent possible. A natural “next step” which will be considered during the planning phase is the hand-off of network management from any Library System which might significantly benefit in reducing that duplication of effort, to one or more Library Systems already highly vested in converged WAN maintenance.

Interconnecting the WANs of many or all Wisconsin Library Systems will allow for a variety of collaborative efforts. Two Library Systems may work with each other to share storage resources, while two other Library Systems work with each other to converge management of a specific application. Collaborative efforts may be informed by fortuitous timing as much as long range planning. As individual and larger scale efforts mount, the group as a whole will be able to regularly reassess a joint management strategy.
Aside from project development itself, two preliminary efforts have been identified for the information gathering (research) phase as we continue to build a full project scope. One effort is ensuring full communication between all Wisconsin Library Systems in messaging the proposal and seeking (ideally 100%) participation to ensure the project is inclusive from the start, and as it matures. The other is building a shared awareness of each participating Library System’s current production status: networking architecture, equipment and licensing capital, and the staff who manage and support the networks.

**INTEREST IN PARTICIPATION IN TECHNOLOGY COLLABORATION**

The following Wisconsin public library systems have indicated their interest in participating in future technology collaboration projects. Since this is a proposal with details yet to be defined, inclusion in this document in no way commits any system to participate at this time.

Connie Meyer, Bridges Library System
John Thompson, Indianhead Federated Library System
Rebecca Petersen, Manitowoc-Calumet Library System
Steve Heser, Milwaukee County Federated Library System
Amy Birtell, Monarch Library System
Sherry Machones, Northern Waters Library System
Martha Van Pelt, South Central Library System
David Kranz, Southwest Library System
Kristen Anderson, Winding Rivers Library System
Jeff Gilderson-Duwe, Winnefox Library System
Marla Spenafski, Wisconsin Valley Library System