



City Library Collective

2023 Year in Review

Incubating solutions to challenges facing mid-size city public libraries today.

What is the CLC?

The City Library Collective (CLC) was formed in order to provide time and resources for similar-sized libraries (serving population sizes of 30,000-100,000) to solve shared problems and reach shared goals. From Superior to Beloit, La Crosse to Manitowoc, CLC members are working together to address common issues and use collective knowledge and experience to improve their organizations and services to their communities.

The CLC determines annual priorities based on member needs and through consensus. These priorities become projects, and members, supported by the project manager, drive the discovery, data, and decision-making.

Who is the CLC?

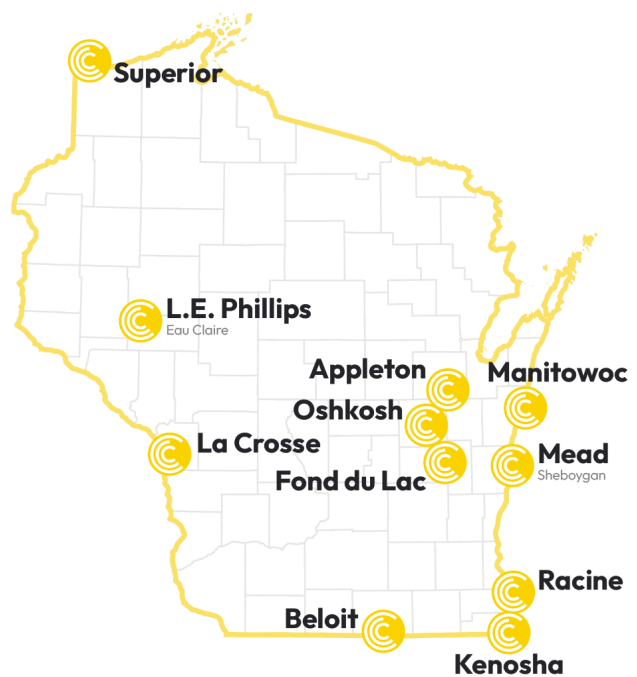
CLC member libraries have a lot in common.

Many of our members are:

- Designated as a small city library
- Located within a county seat
- Located at least 30 miles from a large, urban center
- Their library system's resource library or one of the largest libraries in their system
- Interested in working collaboratively and creatively to address common issues
- Committed to actively participate in the collective's work

If your library shares similar characteristics and you are interested in joining, please

contact Jennifer Chamberlain, WiLS Executive Director, at jennifer@wils.org. The group welcomes new members in January, the beginning of the membership year.





2023 Highlights

The City Library Collective is, first and foremost, a community of practice that brings together mid-size city library leaders. Through the monthly meetings and via an online community management platform, the CLC participants have a ready-made community to bounce ideas off of and solicit experiences and feedback from others facing similar challenges and opportunities. Some of the more popular discussions this year have included:

- Strategic planning approaches: impact reports and visual representations of strategic focus
- Engaging a younger workforce through the Wisconsin Teen Internship program with DPI
- Library security and approaches to conduct and behavior policies
- Managing popular streaming platforms
- Position descriptions and postings
- Connecting staff with colleagues in similar positions across libraries

2023 Project Focus: Strengthening Staff

In April and May 2023, four focus groups were facilitated around the 2023 CLC theme of “strengthening staff.” Three focus groups were held with staff from participating CLC libraries, while one was held with participating CLC library directors/administrators. Both groups were asked comparable questions about job recruitment processes, career advancement, professional development opportunities, and addressing staff burnout.

Across the three staff focus groups, 22 staff from 8 CLC libraries participated (Appleton, Mead, Eau Claire, La Crosse, Superior, FdL, Manitowoc, and Oshkosh), with 6 CLC directors/leaders participating in the fourth focus group. Findings indicated that CLC directors/administrators are largely calibrated to CLC staff when it comes to the topics addressed during the focus groups. Some of the emerging themes were: a shared passion for libraries and patrons, an appreciation for the dynamic nature of libraries, entry-level job recruitment may be a barrier to diversity in the field, career advancement is bottlenecked, and staff continue to be overwhelmed by the social service-orientated needs of patrons. In the coming year, the CLC will be digging further into understanding how public-facing time at service desks impacts staff satisfaction and overall retention.

Other Activities

Members of the City Library Collective presented at WAPL in April on building staff, community resilience, and meeting the psycho-social needs of community members through social work concepts.

CLC in the News

In February 2024, the [Superior Telegram](#) featured Superior Public Library’s Community Resource Connections program, connecting community members to resources they need in consultation with the library’s social worker.