

**WISCONSIN LIBRARY SERVICES**  
**BYLAWS APPENDIX II**  
**Historical Background**

NOTE: Historical Background is for information only.

**GOVERNANCE - BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The Council of Wisconsin Librarians was created in *July 1972* as an “action organization.” Bylaws approved in September 1972 defined “membership in the Council of Wisconsin Librarians shall be of Wisconsin libraries, groups or associations of libraries, or educational institutions, public and private.” Membership at that time was limited to sixteen representatives of which “no fewer than ten must be persons in library positions.”

UW Madison Memorial library	1
UW Milwaukee	1
UW Green Bay	1
UW Parkside	1
Former Wisconsin State University Campuses	4
Marquette University	1
Wisconsin Assoc. of Ind. Colleges & Univ.	2
UW Center System	1
State Historical Society	1
State Vocational and Technical Schools	1
Library Services Div., DPI	1
UW Madison Campus professional school lib.	1

The first truly substantive change in board structure came in 1977 when positions on the board were distinguished as “six permanent” and “fourteen selected.” Permanent members were: UW Madison, UW Milwaukee, Marquette University, the Division for Library Services in the Department of Public Instruction, Milwaukee Public Library and the State Historical Society. The intention was to “broaden and expand membership to better represent all the various types of libraries throughout the state.” (COWL Statement on Restructure and COWL minutes: February 24, 1977.) As a result of this restructure, a major revision of the organization's bylaws was undertaken (COWL minutes: April 28, 1977) and the original version of organizational and operational guidelines was completed (COWL minutes: May 4, 1978). The restructure as reflected in these two documents took effect July 1, 1977.

The Council restructure of 1977 was considered a transitional reorganization because of the evolving nature of resource sharing within Wisconsin and so in October, 1980, COWL again undertook a review of its governance and structure through the appointment of a Long Range Planning Committee. The Committee recommended five changes in the organization.

- (1) Restructure of the Council to provide increased representation for all types of libraries and information resources in Wisconsin beyond what was done in 1977.
- (2) Restructure of the COWL committees to broaden their responsibilities and authority.
- (3) Change of names for the individual service programs, Wisconsin Interlibrary Loan Service and the Wisconsin Library Consortium, to a single name, Wisconsin

Interlibrary Services.

- (4) Change of the name of the organization from the Council of Wisconsin Librarians to the Council of Wisconsin Libraries.
- (5) Designate the position of WILS Director as the Executive Director of the Council (Long Range Planning Committee Recommendations to COWL: August 27, 1981).

The recommendations on restructure were approved as amendments to the Council bylaws (COWL minutes: *December 10, 1981*) and guidelines (COWL minutes: May 13, 1982) to become effective July 1, 1982.

COWL membership remained unchanged until 1989 when the multitype organization representative (that had been created in 1981) was replaced with an additional representative of special libraries to reflect the evolution of multitype organizations. At the same time the number of school library representatives was reduced from three to two in order to facilitate the selection process and assure representation for the two major associations of school libraries within the state (COWL Minutes: May 18, 1989). The composition of COWL remained constant over the next ten years.

In *May 1998* a COWL Review Committee was created to “re-assess the purpose, examine the structure and identify future directions” for COWL. Following a one-year study of the mission and structure of the organization (COWL Review, Final Report, April 1999), the Review Committee recommended, and COWL approved in (May 1999), three major changes for the organization.

- (1) Representation on the Board reduced to twelve voting members
- (2) The organization (COWL) and its service program (WILS) merged to a single identity known as the Wisconsin Library Services
- (3) The mission of the organization revised to focus on serving member libraries.

A re-write of the Bylaws and Operational Guidelines reflecting the changes was approved in March 2000.

### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

As the size and structure of COWL evolved so too did the role of the Executive Committee. This Committee was initially established a “five-member Board of Directors including the Chairperson to manage the affairs of the Council.” In May 1974, this Board was re-defined as the Executive Committee consisting of the Chairperson, three (3) elected members, and the immediate past Chairperson. The initial duties of the Committee were those delegated to it by the Council and each succeeding Chairperson utilized the Committee in a different manner. In the 1977 Council restructure, the Chairperson-elect, Secretary and Treasurer were added as Committee members, but the Committee's duties remained the same, operating at the discretion of the Chairperson. The 1982 Council restructure formalized and expanded the Committee's duties and responsibilities and added an additional elected member and three appointed members. In 1993 the Council voted to change the Committee's composition to include Council Officers, the Executive Director and seven (7) members elected from the Council membership. The Board restructure of 1999 established an Executive Committee composed only of the four officers of the Board.

### **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

A COWL Funding Committee was established in May 1973 (COWL minutes: May 3, 1973). The initial charge was to investigate the possibility of state funding for COWL activities, specifically to allow for the continuance and expansion of WILS. In November 1974, (letter dated November 24, 1974, Joseph Boisse) the committee's charge was broadened to include exploration of "other avenues of funding for WILS and COWL activities" in addition to state funding. In May 1975 the Funding Committee was restructured as a Funding and Finance Committee with the additional charge to analyze the proposed WILS budget, and to develop a WILS assessment logic (COWL minutes: May 2, 1975). This charge was expanded in August 1976 to include the development of a WILS funding formula (COWL minutes: August 26, 1976). Previously, an ad hoc committee had been appointed to study the WILS fee structures and assessments (COWL minutes: September 27, 1973). Additionally, at the direction of the Council, the Committee acted on financial matters such as a COWL travel reimbursement policy, a COWL base assessment and the WLC budget and assessment proposals. As a result of the 1982 Council restructure, the Funding and Finance Committee was replaced by the Subcommittee on Finance operating under the direction of the Executive Committee. In 1993 the Council voted to again make the financial oversight function a Standing Committee but did not change the committee composition.

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The academic librarians who organized and incorporated COWL in 1972 were concerned with creating a vehicle that would facilitate sharing of resources and further interlibrary cooperative activities in Wisconsin. As its first task, COWL set out to coordinate sharing of resources among and between academic libraries in the state. The Wisconsin Interlibrary Loan Service (WILS) was born of this effort. WILS was established on October 9, 1972 for the purpose of providing maximum and equitable multiple use of Wisconsin library resources with a minimum of effort and without conflict of interest (COWL minutes: September 21, 1972). A program such as WILS was to help libraries and their users by supplementing local resources and enabling libraries to provide services that they could not offer independently.

Funded by the participants, WILS provided direct access to the University of Wisconsin-Madison library collections and facilitated the sharing of resources among Wisconsin public and private academic institutions of higher education. In addition, WILS facilitated access to other intra and interstate information networks. A resource contract begun in the 1973-75 biennium with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction provided access through WILS to these academic resources for public, school, institution and state agency libraries, as well as for individual citizens.

The next COWL program was the Wisconsin Library Consortium (WLC). WLC began as a group of Wisconsin libraries which joined together to access the OCLC, Inc. database and to participate in the OCLC shared cataloging system. This group was formed in April 1975 by nine University of Wisconsin System libraries under a Board of Regents' contract with OCLC. In the spring of 1976, COWL agreed to serve as the contracting agent with OCLC in order to provide OCLC products and services to libraries outside of the UW System. (COWL minutes: April 29, 1976.) At the same time, COWL established the WLC Network Office and housed it with WILS in the UW-Madison Memorial Library. This location provided for a convenient sharing of office facilities and OCLC equipment. The participants in these two programs of COWL overlapped considerably and this joint location served to enhance their

common goals of improving resource sharing in Wisconsin. Any library in Wisconsin could contract with WLC and participate in the OCLC system as long as COWL's tax-exempt status is not jeopardized.

COWL continued for many years serving its resource sharing mission through the two programs of interlibrary loan and OCLC training and support. By 1987 the needs and interests of Wisconsin's libraries were moving in new directions and COWL responded with the creation of two new service programs. The Wisconsin Preservation Program (WISPPR) was established in 1987 as a joint venture with the University of Wisconsin Madison General Library System. WISPPR was intended to assess preservation needs in the State, provide training and education in preservation issues and techniques, and coordinate preservation services such as microfilming and conservation treatment (COWL Minutes: May 21, 1987). The New Technologies Information Service, established in 1989 (COWL Minutes: February 16, 1989) as an on-going program after an eighteen-month trial period, was designed to assist libraries in keeping current with and understand new technologies applicable to libraries.

By the early 1990's a Cooperative Purchasing service began to emerge taking the concept of resource sharing in a somewhat different direction. This program was designed to offer discounts to members on library-related products and services and at the same time to generate income for the organization to subsidize other projects. Group buying was later expanded to encompass consortia licensing of electronic resources. Also in the 1990's COWL began an investigation into distance learning technologies. Initially driven by an interest in use of the technologies for member training and meetings, by the end of 1999, the emphasis was more focused on sharing of resources with students in distance learning degree programs.