

Mission: The mission of Manitowoc Public Library is to promote a culture of reading and to provide access to information. Through services, we strive to foster an environment that meets the educational, recreational and cultural needs of the community.

June 2025

- The biggest highlight of June was the completion of the WiLS Data Classroom training that Karen Hansen and I have been participating in for the past 6 months! We collected real-world data, conducted basic data analysis, and created a presentation with impactful data visualizations. With this training, both Karen and I feel we will be able to create compelling data-informed stories about our library using the data we are already collecting.
 - WiLS was so impressed with our project and presentation of our collected data that they highlighted us in their monthly newsletter! Please see the attached article for a detailed look at our project and the overall training.
- I attended the Annual Manitowoc County Library Advisory Committee Meeting on June 12. Funding from Manitowoc County for the 2026 Budget will be at 100%: \$588,901.
- I attended the Lakeshore Area Resource System (LARS) meeting on June 13 with MCLS and all other system Directors. The system will be looking into a software product that will streamline the library card application electronically, making online card applications possible. We will be setting up a demonstration with the product in July.

Other Meetings

- One-on-Ones with Managers and Staff
- Meetings with City Department Heads and the Mayor
- Meet with Department of Public Works about HVAC replacement project
- City-wide Civility Training
- Lakeshore Balloon Glow Committee meetings, August 15

Coming Up

- Summer Reading Program, June 16 – August 9!
- Touch the Trucks, July 16
- Brew 'N Bee V, adult spelling bee competition at Petskull Brewing, July 23
- National Night Out, August 5

**Mayor Justin Nickels**

June 26 at 2:31 PM · 🌐

I want to take a moment to recognize the incredible Department Heads who serve the [City of Manitowoc](#). These individuals work tirelessly behind the scenes every day to keep our city running smoothly, solve problems big and small, and ensure that our community continues to thrive. Their dedication, professionalism, and care for our residents are unmatched.

As Mayor, I'm proud to be part of this team. It's an honor to work alongside people who are not only experts in their fields but who also genuinely love this city and its people.

It takes a team to accomplish all the great things happening in Manitowoc. And we have a great one.

Karin Adams, Library Executive Director
Shawn Alfred, Finance Director/Treasurer
Todd Blaser, Fire Chief
Courtney Hansen, Director of Tourism
Dan Koski, Director of Public Infrastructure
Jessie Lillibridge, Human Resources Director
Eric Nycz, City Attorney
Mackenzie Reed, City Clerk/Deputy Treasurer
Nick Reimer, Police Chief
Adam Tegen, Community Development Director
Greg Vadney, Rahr-West Art Museum Executive Director





Inside the Data Classroom

by guest author, Kim Kiesewetter



As someone who works with data for a living, I've been hearing about "data for storytelling" for years as it has become an increasingly popular strategy for explaining how to bridge the gap between data and action. Also, as someone who works with data for a living, I know that this strategy is easier said than done. Using your data to tell a compelling and accessible story that is evidence-based is a yay! But... how do you *actually* do this? This is the question that led me to develop the [WiLS Data Classroom](#) cohort.

The Data Classroom walks participants through a six-month course to increase data literacy, skills, and confidence. By working our way through a full research cycle, each student creates a data-driven story by the end of the process. Each month of the Classroom is a different phase of the process, beginning with the basics of research design. Participants identify their own research question which allows them to take the theoretical learning of Data Classroom and apply it in the real world. While there is no requirement for participants to carry out any real-world research, the majority of participants in the first two cohorts went for it! Their projects have been innovative and inspiring. The second Data Classroom cohort included two participants from [Manitowoc Public Library](#) (MPL), Karin Adams and

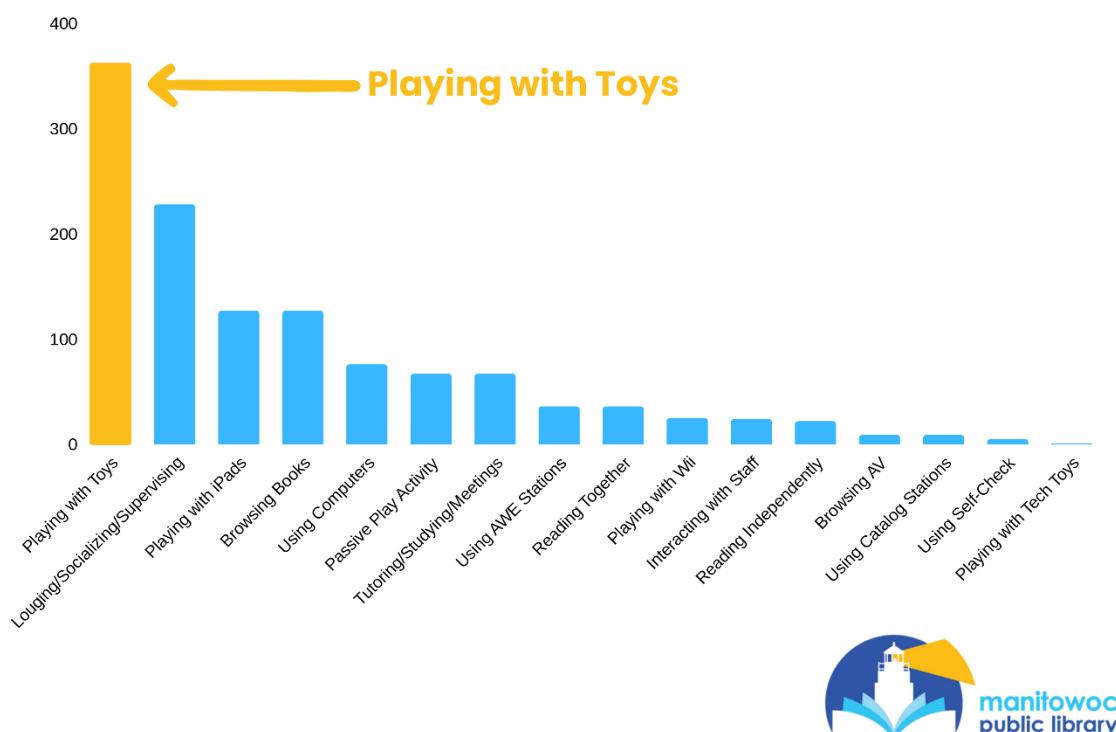
Karen Hansen. WiLS wanted to highlight their project as a great example of the work of Data Classroom graduates, but also as a general inspiration to library professionals about the ways you, too, can use data for storytelling at your libraries without expensive and time-consuming coursework.

For their project, Karin and Karen wanted to focus on understanding real-world usage of the children's area of their library. Their own novel research study began with a two-week observational period where they gathered data on how patrons utilized the space throughout the day. This was done, first, by crafting a data collection tool. MPL created a spreadsheet to gather this data. This included a variety of activities that patrons could be engaged in while in the space along with patron age categories. Activities included interacting with staff, using computers, using AWE stations, playing with toys, reading, and so on. Age categories were broken down into children aged 0-5, children aged 6-11, teens, and adults. Once these were identified, MPL determined the dates and time windows for the observational periods and provided training to staff on how to observe and complete the spreadsheet over the course of two weeks. Here is an example of a day's observations:

1	SUNDAY MARCH 9	INTERACTING WITH STAFF					USING COMPUTERS				
		A (Child 0-5)	B (Elementary Child 6-11)	C (Teen 12-18)	D (Adult 18+)	Hourly Totals	A (Child 0-5)	B (Elementary Child 6-11)	C (Teen 12-18)	D (Adult 18+)	Hourly Totals
2											
3	12:30 PM	2			1	3					0
4	1:30 PM		1			1		3		2	5
5	2:30 PM		1			1		2		1	3
6	3:30 PM				1	1					0
7	SUNDAY TOTALS	2	2	0	2	6	0	5	0	3	8

After gathering the data, they analyzed trends and created a presentation highlighting key findings such as the types of activities people were mostly likely to be engaged in (spoiler alert: playing with toys was the clear winner!) to the relationship between programming and youth checkouts. Check out some highlights from their presentation!

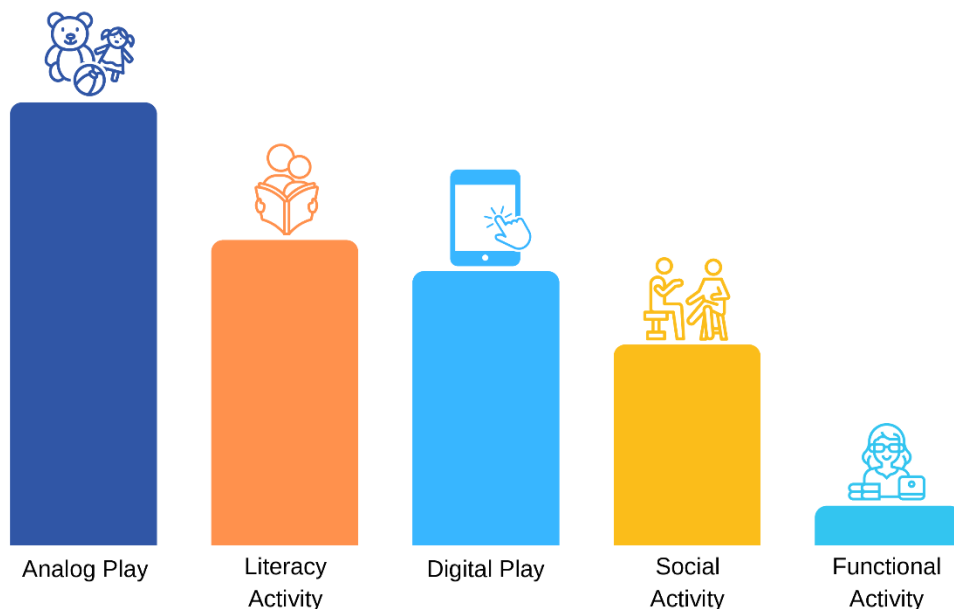
OBSERVED ACTIVITIES



One of MPL's key findings was that playing with toys was the most observed activity by a large margin. While not necessarily surprising (per many of the findings in their project), having actual data points can create a clear and dramatic picture of reality.

The final phase of Data Classroom focuses on data visualization and, using that knowledge, MPL created a variety of different visualizations for their presentation. The following are great examples of the power of simple, bold, stripped down visualizations.

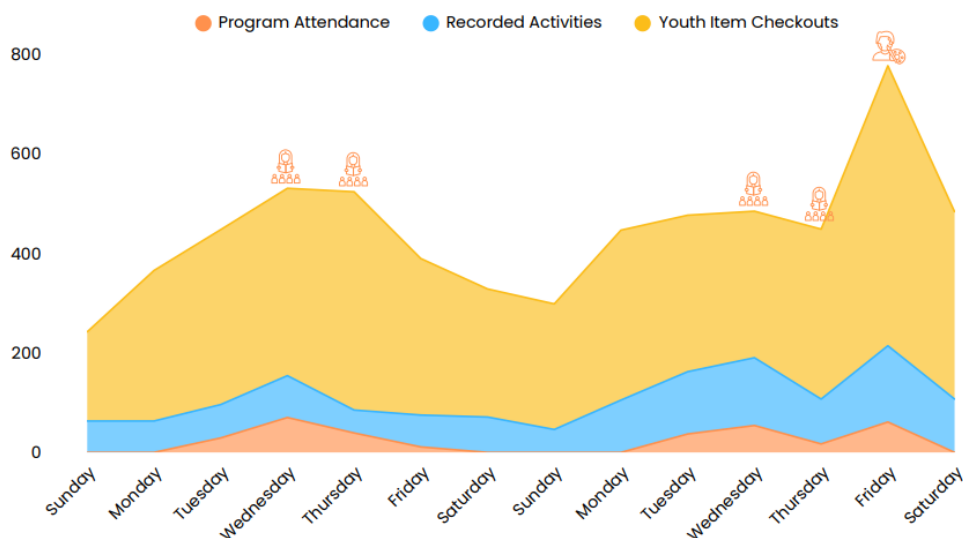
GENERAL ACTIVITY BREAKDOWN



Rather than using a lot of numbers and percentages, they created a chart that takes the data from the previous visualization and simplifies it even further by collapsing categories together, using icons and simple labels to describe the data points, and stripping the chart down to bars. While this visualization doesn't rely on the precision of statistics, it tells a clear, easy-to-digest story about the different activities happening in the library's children's area.

MPL also layered different data sets to create a compelling visualization:

ACTIVITIES & THE IMPACT ON CIRCULATION



Circulation patterns can be influenced by programming.



In this case, they paired program attendance data with their recorded activity data and layered on youth checkout data. The five icons represent programs MPL put on, differentiated by type; Friday's special program drew a much larger audience than usual. Project data, paired with circulation data, show a clear relationship between programming, increased activity, and checkouts in the children's area.

I reached out to Karen and Karin to learn more about their project background, their experience, and the insights they gained.

Kim: What was the inspiration for your project?

MPL: We wanted to gather concrete data about how patrons actually use our Youth Services space to make informed decisions about its future layout and amenities. Creating our own observational study seemed like a way to harness the

Data Classroom experience into something very practical for staff and stakeholders.

Kim: Was it challenging to create staff buy-in to the data gathering process?

MPL: Staff were supportive of the concept of the study and curious about what we would discover. They bought into it more heavily once they actually started gathering the data. By making our staff actual participants in data gathering, we hope it will lead them to embrace the results and continue to seek data-based information.

Kim: Did anything surprise you about your project or findings?

MPL: Although anecdotal evidence supported the popularity of play-based activities in the Youth Services space, it was still surprising to see how strongly the data supported this pattern of usage. It was also fascinating to observe the activity breakdown, which demonstrated the ways in which patrons still prioritize what we called “analog play,” or non-digital play activities. We often hear about how children are overly dependent on digital play, but in the Youth Services space, observed activities challenge those assumptions. While not necessarily surprising, it was also fascinating to observe data that validates the influence of programming over levels of activity and circulation. The direct relationship of programming on circulation affirms value and connection of these core library services.

Kim: Are there ways you plan to use your project findings at MPL in the future?

MPL: While this study may play a part in guiding decisions about long-term Youth Services space improvements, we hope it will also serve to inform staff as they make everyday decisions about programming, activity offerings, and decisions about staffing needs.

Make sure to check out [Manitowoc Public Library's full presentation](#) for more inspiration and to see the full scope of their work!

If you are looking for ways to increase your data confidence and create compelling data-informed stories, the third cohort of Data Classroom is coming together now, and we would love to have you. For more information, [visit our website](#) or reach out to Kim Kiesewetter at kim@wils.org.

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