

Village of Weston Eyes New Branch Library (Possibly Part of New Municipal Center)
Written by Chad Dally and Daniel Guild

For the first time in more than a decade, the Marathon County Public Library (MCPL) could see growth among its branches.

Officials from the Village of Weston and Marathon County have begun conversations to construct and operate a brand-new branch library that, if approved, would be housed in a new municipal center the village is considering building by 2020.

According to Weston Village Administrator Daniel Guild, although discussions about a new branch are recent, the idea for a Weston branch dates to at least 2013, when some village officials included a library in the list of goals in a long-term plan developed that year.



Library Director Ralph Illick

More recently, Guild approached Library Director Ralph Illick in late 2016 and asked that the library's Board of Trustees and Marathon County officials consider the possibility in coordination with construction of a new municipal center for Weston.

Guild's request prompted the library to hire a consultant to conduct a system-wide study of MCPL's operations and if, or how, a new branch might fit into the mix. Based on that report online (at <http://www.westonwi.gov/administrator>), Marathon County's Education & Economic Development Committee on August 28 voted in favor of proceeding with the idea of a Weston Branch Library, following a similar vote of approval by the library's Board of Trustees this summer to continue negotiations.

Guild said that residents of a growing community like Weston desire public amenities like a library:

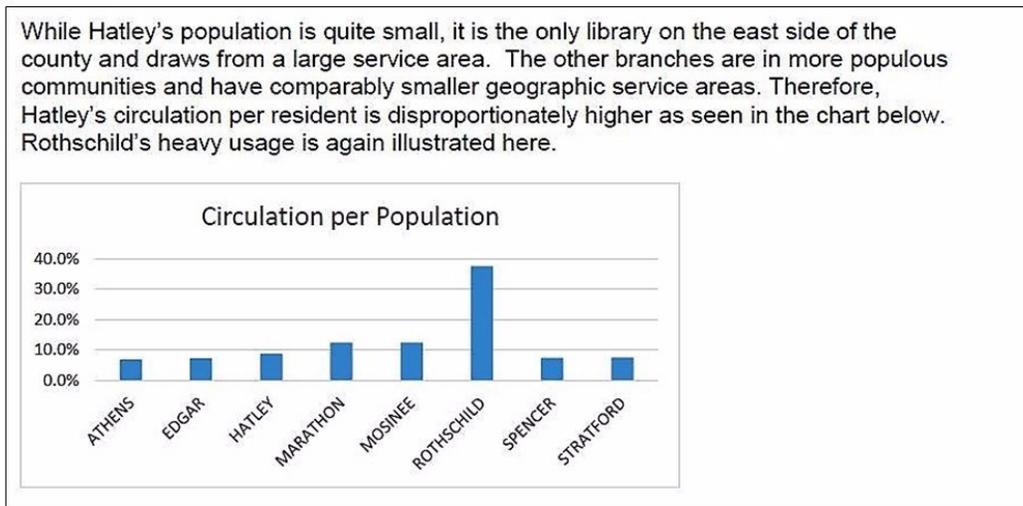
"We're a young community — the average age of our residents is the mid-30s — so those folks are earlier into their adult relationships and marriages, many of them have young kids, and having place to bring their children for programming and education and reading that's based within the community would be a wonderful amenity, which, I believe, would be appreciated by that age group. A branch of the county library here in Weston would contribute to the community's placemaking efforts and our officials desire to have Weston be a preferred location of choice for business, families, and property owners."

Guild added that not only would the proposed Weston branch benefit village residents, but residents throughout the eastern part of Marathon County also could benefit, since MCPL's Hatley Branch is the only one serving that part of the county.

Village officials have suggested that a Weston Branch Library follow the same path financially as other MCPL branches:

The village and county would split the cost of construction, and the operational costs would be fully paid for by the county, though those costs have not yet been determined. Any agreement between the village and the county would require the approval of the full Marathon County Board of Supervisors and Village of Weston Board of Trustees.

Outside of the Wausau MCPL headquarters, **the populations served by the eight library branches vary widely, from 605 in Hatley to more than 5,300 in Rothschild.**



By contrast, Weston's population was more than 15,000 in 2017 and is expected to grow to more than 20,000 by 2040, according to the Wisconsin Department of Administration. Guild added that, north of Highway 29, **Weston has the third-highest population behind Wausau and Superior** (and fourth-highest if you include Eau Claire, which lies just south of Highway 29.)

The village's population is one reason why a branch library in Weston would make sense, the report's authors note:

"The Village of Weston has the economic resources, demographics, and access to major arterial roads needed to support an effectively used branch library."

The report's authors also express optimism that a Weston library would result in a net gain for residents, and would likely not result in putting the Rothschild library out of business — even though the two branches would be relatively close to one another, and both are relatively close to the Wausau headquarters. (The Rothschild branch is just over 5 miles from the Wausau HQ, and the Weston branch would be a little more than 3 miles from the Wausau location.)

Marathon County, WI Distances Between the Village of Weston Municipal Center and Marathon County Public Library Branches



According to the report:

“Establishing a new branch library in Weston would have the positive effect of relieving some of the pressure on the Rothschild Library. While studies have shown that opening a building in a new service area may slightly reduce usage of surrounding libraries, most of the time a new branch results in a net gain in visits and circulation as a result of greater convenience and publicity.”

Although no decisions have been made regarding the future of any of the other eight branches, the fact that the village’s population is growing at the same time as a general trend toward **declining populations in rural areas** *“may require the closing of other branches in the future,”* according to the report.

“Establishing criteria for making this decision now will create clear parameters before the process becomes fraught with the emotion of losing a valued service,” the report states.



However, the report also strikes a cautionary note that a Weston branch library cannot happen on its own while business continues as usual at the other nine locations, and that ***“support required for a new branch of the size needed in Weston would not be achievable within [MCPL’s] current budget.”***

In short, opening a new branch will take some creativity on the part of county officials.

An initial capital investment will help but won’t solve the long-term operational costs, and restricting of current branch services would give the library some economic flexibility, *“but will not cover many of the ongoing expenses,”* according to the report.

So, as the village and library move forward with negotiations over a Weston library, creating a long-term, sustainable plan that incorporates a Weston library into MCPL’s mix of branches will require not only another look at funding and service priorities at existing locations that reflects the library’s ability to serve the greatest number of residents, but more importantly will also require a clear process that is guided by community input.

If the details can be ironed out, Illick said:

“The growing community of Weston would be a welcome addition to the Marathon County Public Library family.”

Although village and county officials are excited about the possibility of a new MCPL branch in Weston, **the process is still in the early stages and by no means is a done deal.**

That, in turn, means **community input is still very much a valued part of the equation**, whether it’s comments about a Weston branch or other changes MCPL leadership might make to accommodate (or not) a Weston branch.

So...

- Do you think a MCPL library branch in Weston is a good idea or unnecessary?
- Would you like to see a branch in Weston but would like county officials to try to minimize impact to the existing eight branches and Wausau Headquarters?
- Do you have some ideas for how MCPL might add a Weston branch into the fold while maintaining the services our communities expect from the library?

If you'd like to weigh in with your thoughts, please contact the Weston Village Board (trustees@westonwi.gov), Marathon County Board, and/or the MCPL Board.



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Chad Dally is a library specialist with the Marathon County Public Library, where he's worked since 2012. He splits his time at the library between reference and programming, and generally prefers to read nonfiction over fiction. He's heard chickens are smart, but the small brood he keeps at home provides evidence to the contrary.

a report to the
Marathon County Public Library

July 17, 2017



AN ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT BRANCH SERVICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POTENTIAL FUTURE SERVICES

Presented to the
Marathon County Public Library
By Library Strategies
July 17, 2017

Introduction

Marathon County has the largest geographic area of Wisconsin counties. In order to provide good, cost-effective library service to the greatest number of residents, Marathon County Public Library (the Library) has organized its operations around a central library in Wausau and eight branches distributed throughout the county. In 2016, approximately 36% of the total circulation of materials was generated by branches located in the communities of Athens, Edgar, Hatley, Marathon City, Mosinee, Rothschild, Spencer, and Stratford. These communities see the value that a branch library brings to their residents and make available community spaces or buildings for library services. Marathon County Public Library then staffs, equips, and stocks these spaces to bring services to residents.

The most populous village in Marathon County, Weston, recently requested that the county explore the possibility that a branch library be established in its community. Weston leaders foresee a collaborative relationship between the library, education, and the community. They are eager to explore how a library can provide traditional services while evolving and adapting to community needs in the future.

Weston's request reinforced the desire of the Library's administration to evaluate the services delivered by branch libraries. Studies had been conducted on the central library building in Wausau, but an examination of service models, cost effectiveness, and projected demographic changes in branch communities had not been done. The Library engaged the services of Library Strategies, a consulting group of The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library, located in St. Paul, Minnesota to evaluate:

- Individual library branches and their cost effectiveness;
- Demographic trends and development projections for currently served communities that will affect future library service needs; and,
- Need for library services in the Weston community.

The Library's administration also requested recommendations for potential new service models and suggestions for high level strategies for implementing and evaluating the recommended service models.

About Library Strategies

Library Strategies is a non-profit consulting group of The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library formally established in 2006 to provide consulting services to libraries and library organizations across the country and internationally. Formed to serve libraries and library organizations exclusively, Library Strategies' consultants are leaders in the national library community and bring decades of experience to the industry and individual clients.

In addition to working directly with library clients, Library Strategies has developed a wide-ranging, state level capacity building training program for small and rural libraries. The consulting group has also published, through the American Library Association, *Beyond Book Sales: A Comprehensive Guide to Library Fundraising* and served as a contributing columnist to *Public Library*, a bi-monthly journal, writing a series of columns on library fundraising.

Marlene Moulton Janssen was the primary consultant assigned to this project. Moulton Janssen is the former Executive Director of the Anoka County Library (MN) and MELSA, the regional public library system that coordinates services for the Minneapolis/St. Paul area libraries. Moulton Janssen's leadership positions have honed her skills in fostering community-based strategic planning, development of partnerships, and utilization of intentional business models to create excellent customer service.

Project Process

The assessment process utilized Marathon County Public Library administration to assist in identifying and providing access to key documents to be reviewed from the county, branch library communities, Weston, and the Library system. These documents served as the backbone in creation of an analysis of branch services and a profile of demographic and other trends impacting future library services. Reports from Wisconsin Valley Library Service, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, and the Minnesota Department of Education were used for library usage data. The consultant toured branch communities and spoke with branch coordinators and city clerks and administrators. Wherever possible, local comprehensive plans were used for background information on communities. In addition, the *LIFE Report of Marathon County*, the Wausau area *Metro Region Economic Development Assessment*, and the State of Wisconsin's *Wisconsin Population & Household Projections* provided data. Using the resources of the American Library Association's Center for the Future of Libraries, current research from organizations such as the Pew Research Center, and library management best practices, the consultant has suggested potential service models and high level strategies for implementation and evaluation.

General Observations

Marathon County Public Library branches are consistently well-maintained with attractive book stock, effective displays, and friendly staff. Program offerings are extensive with new STEM concepts and other innovative approaches evident. The communities that they serve are proud that they provide a portal to meet the cultural, recreational, and informational needs of their residents. A number of branches, however, have more shelving and other fixtures than the space can comfortably accommodate. Computer terminals and seating options are wedged into less than optimal locations. This is a common challenge for libraries. While demand for traditional services remains strong, communities are seeking new ways of using their libraries that require additional space and resources. How to balance those competing needs provides libraries with an opportunity to engage their communities in decision-making for the future.

Marathon County Public Library's *Attributes and Outcomes* prioritizes assessment of community needs and working collaboratively with policy makers, departments, employees and customers. The Library's guiding principles focus on:

- literacy and lifelong learning for all ages;
- empowerment of residents to use technology to connect to the world and the future;
- forming strong partnerships; and
- provision of equitable access.

In addition, Marathon County Public Library's mission emphasizes serving as a community center by providing access to ideas, information and opportunities to connect.

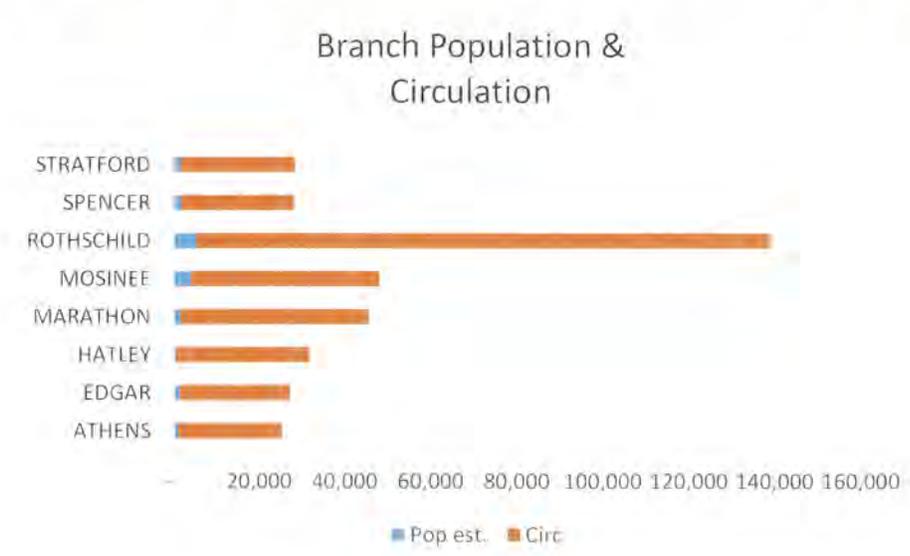
Branch Measurements

To analyze the cost effectiveness of individual branch libraries, various data points that were readily available, were standardized, and were deemed consistently accurate were used. It is important to note that this analysis did not consider customer satisfaction, job performance, or community support. That was beyond the scope of the project. Nonetheless, all of the information gathered during the process indicates that the communities that have branch libraries view them as an important local asset.

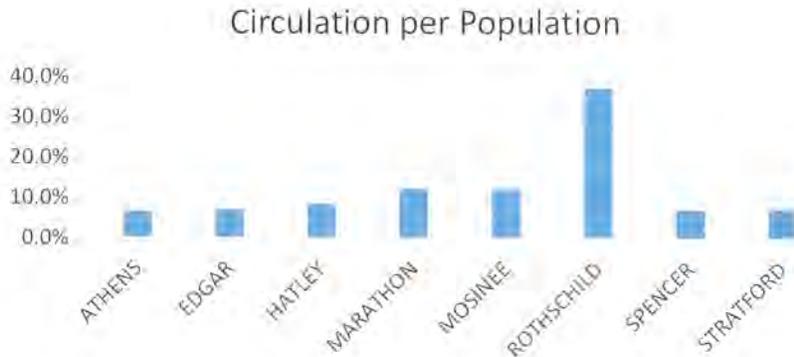
This report will first contrast and compare the branches within Marathon County among themselves and then consider how they compare to two peers. Roughly comparable libraries were used from the Wisconsin Valley service area and from Great River Regional Library (GRRL) in Minnesota. While GRRL is a regional system, it functions as though it is one very large county library and is analogous to Marathon County Public Library's operations in both community size and economies.

Marathon County Public Library's branches serve communities with a wide range of populations, from Hatley at 605 to Rothschild at 5,325. The efficiency of a county-wide library system is that it encourages a free flow of usage across all branches. The following chart illustrates 2016 circulation and the estimated population of each of the communities. It does not include the populations of surrounding communities and townships in the branch libraries' service areas.

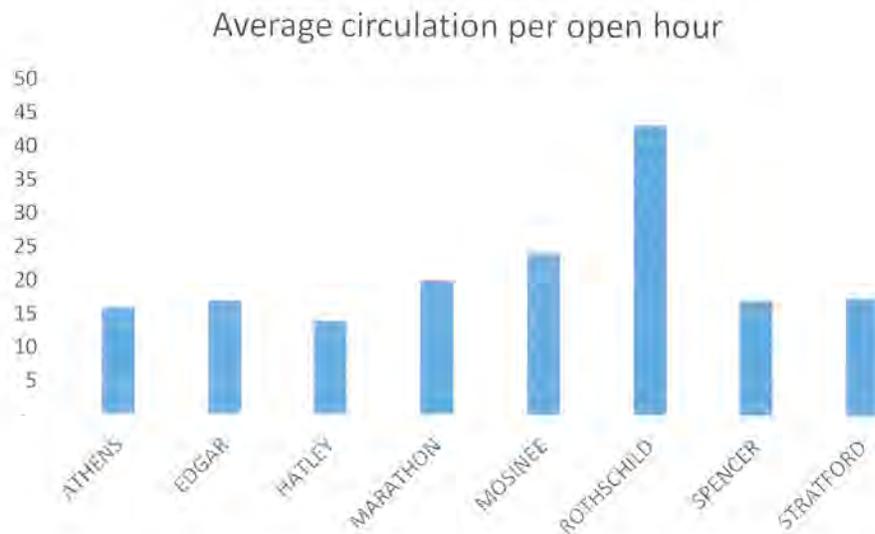
Rothschild has the largest circulation, by far, of all the branches. Its service area includes much of Weston and offers service to those who want a larger branch experience but are concerned about driving uptown to Wausau. The population density map included in Appendix A illustrates the concentration of residents in this area.



While Hatley's population is quite small, it is the only library on the east side of the county and draws from a large service area. The other branches are in more populous communities and have comparably smaller geographic service areas. Therefore, Hatley's circulation per resident is disproportionately higher as seen in the chart below. Rothschild's heavy usage is again illustrated here.



Another way of viewing efficiencies of branch operations, is to examine the amount of circulation per open hour. This also helps to measure traffic in the branch library and evens out any discrepancies created by differences in the number of open hours. This view again illustrates Rothschild's popularity with library patrons and shows the more extensive usage of Marathon City and Mosinee's services.



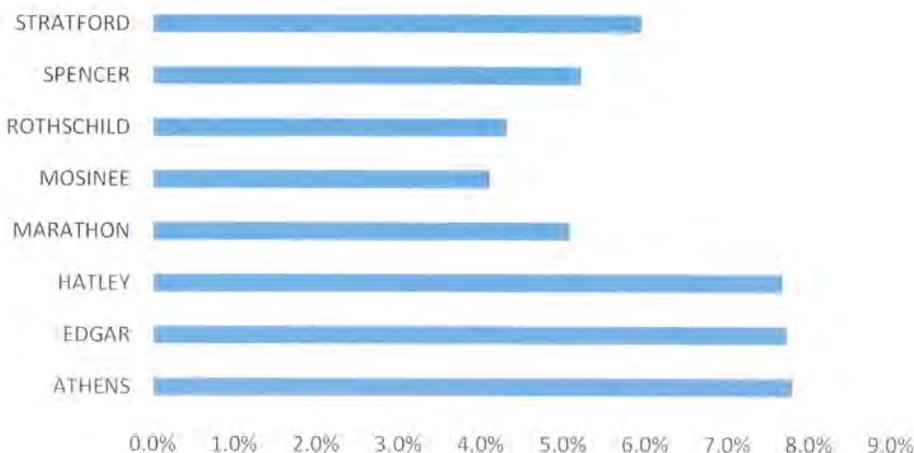
The space available for library services varies by community, as well. A number of the buildings were built in the 1990s while other branches occupy historic buildings. All of the branches have maximized their use of space but changes in how libraries are used over the last 20 years are presenting challenges. As an example, more comfortable seating close to electrical outlets has become much more important as residents find they need the broadband access to the Internet that libraries provide. Some libraries are choosing to downsize the number of shelves and reduce book stock to open up

additional space for seating and programs. The following chart compares the population, building size and amount of space per capita in Marathon County.

Branch	Pop est.	Space Sq. Feet	Sq. Feet per Capita
ATHENS	1,102	2,750	2.5
EDGAR	1,468	2,046	1.4
HATLEY	605	3,707	6.1
MARATHON	1,568	3,050	1.9
MOSINEE	4,013	5,942	1.5
ROTHSCHILD	5,325	3,240	0.6
SPENCER	1,936	2,072	1.1
STRATFORD	1,600	3,000	1.9

Building size also limits the number of items that can be held in the physical collection. Many residents receive some of their library materials electronically through the popular e-books program. Over 96,500 library materials were checked out by Marathon County residents from OverDrive in 2016. However, the majority of circulation remains in physical formats. Residents' placement of "holds" or reservations on items available at another branch is a vital method of ensuring that they have access to the newest and most popular items. A direct correlation can be seen between the size of the building and the percentage of circulation that comes from reserved materials. The smallest buildings have the greatest percentage of items delivered to them to fulfill resident's requests.

Picked up Holds % of Circulation



The greatest expense for service industries and government is often personnel expenditures. Libraries are no different in that personnel costs are normally 75-80% of the budget. However, the impact of that trained, knowledgeable staff makes all the difference. Studies have consistently shown that the single greatest factor for customer satisfaction is directly correlated with successful interactions with library staff.

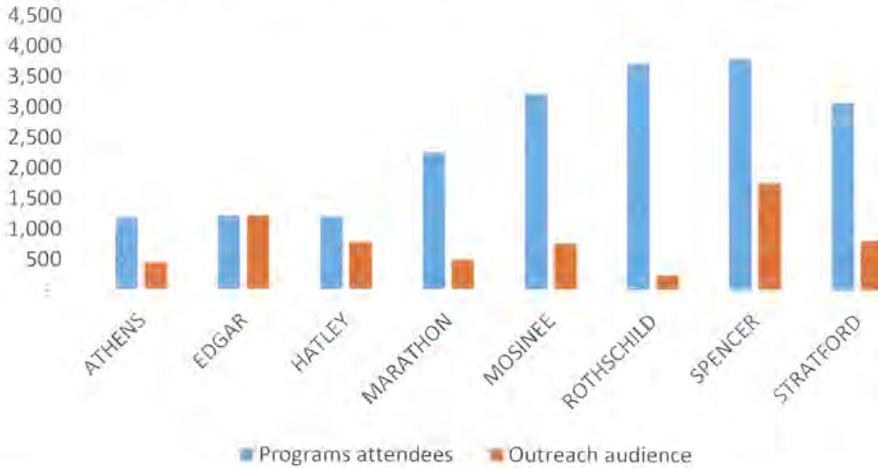
One way of measuring cost efficiency is to analyze the circulation per full-time equivalent (FTE) of staff. Of course, staff do a myriad of tasks in a library. Outreach and programs are an increasingly vital component of library services and draw time from the tasks associated with circulation of materials. Building inefficiencies and other factors can force a lower circulation per FTE. If the circulation per FTE is too high, it can drive down customer satisfaction because staff interactions are seen as too abrupt. Nonetheless, circulation per FTE remains one of many effective benchmarking tools.

The chart below compares a number of factors. It shows the number of FTEs assigned to each building, the percent of total branch FTEs assigned there, the individual branch circulation, its percentage of total branch circulation, and the circulation per FTE. Most of the branches fall in the same range for circulation per FTE. However, both Hatley and Rothschild are outliers indicating a need for a closer look at the buildings, community usage, and the staffing to understand the underlying causes.

Branch	FTE	% of Total Branch FTE	Total Circulation	% of Total Circulation	Circulation per FTE
ATHENS	1.15	9.7%	25,758	6.8%	10.12
EDGAR	1.125	9.5%	24,808	7.3%	11.06
HATLEY	1.75	14.8%	34,517	8.8%	8.59
MARATHON	1.55	13.1%	47,552	12.4%	13.68
MOSINEE	1.5	12.7%	44,004	12.4%	14.17
ROTHSCHILD	2.5	21.1%	132,438	37.5%	25.73
SPENCER	1.13	9.5%	27,220	7.4%	11.17
STRATFORD	1.13	9.5%	26,523	7.5%	11.42

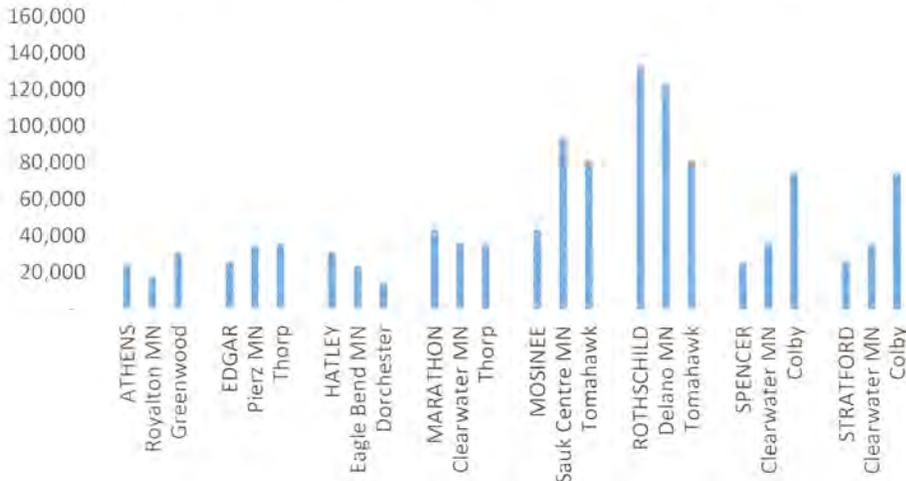
As noted above, offering programs and reaching out to residents beyond the four walls of the library is seen by communities as an ever more vital service. Marathon County Public Library has provided training for its staff and launched a number of new programs. These changes have been favorably received as seen by the number of community members that have used this service.

Program Attendance and Outreach Audience

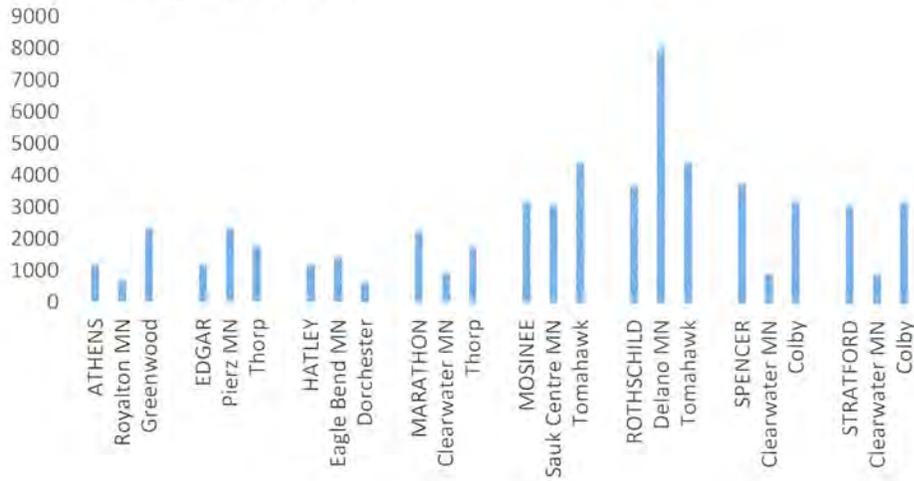


The benchmarks used above were then applied to comparable libraries found in the Wisconsin Valley Library Service and Great River Regional Library (MN). While finding other libraries that match the situations in Marathon County exactly is impossible, the libraries used here were analogous in population of the village or town. It should be noted that the Wisconsin libraries are independent city libraries that do not collaborate on a county-wide basis. That means that the cost efficiencies found in central ordering and processing of materials, administration, and staffing specialization are not available to them. They are all members of Wisconsin Valley Library Service, however.

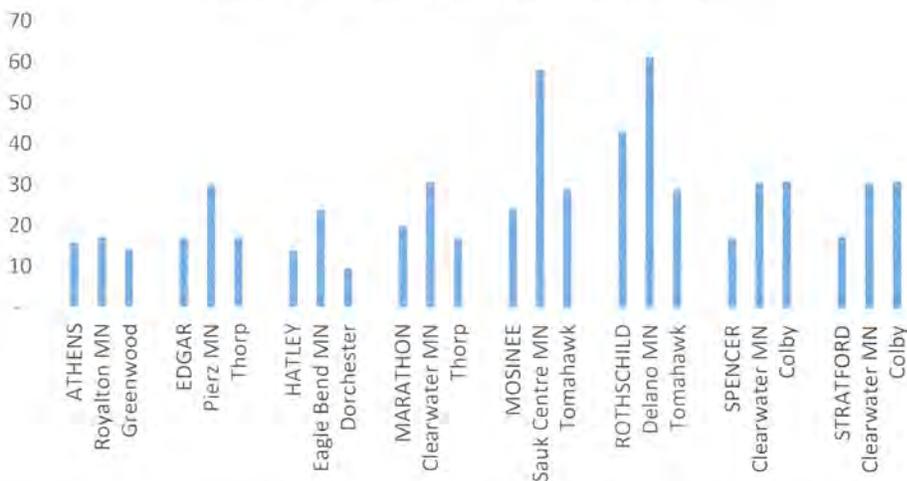
Circulation Comparisons with Comparable Libraries



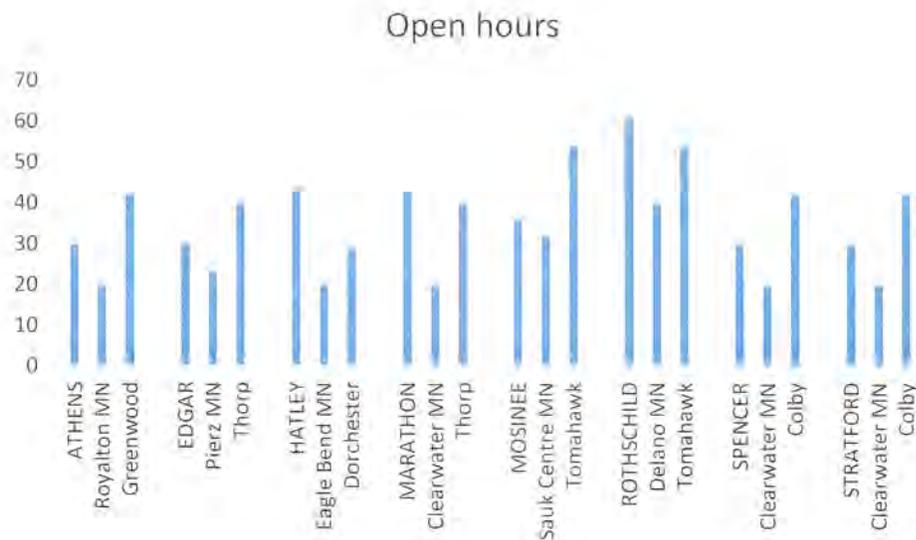
Program Audiences



Average circulation per open hour



It should be noted that GRRL has far fewer open hours in its branch libraries which drives up its average circulation per open hour. As a very large system with over 30 branches, GRRL has reduced the number of open hours at its branches as a method of economizing.



These output measurements illustrate that Marathon County Public Library has had a number of successes as it focuses on its mission “To enrich lives by promoting lifelong learning and actively providing the community with access to ideas, information and opportunities to connect.” There are challenges, however. The spaces used to house libraries will require adaptation to better serve future needs. For example, providing more space for comfortable utilization of high-speed Internet access will require a fresh look at current floor plans and the stock of materials. Methods to freshen the collection of smaller buildings, in particular, should be explored. As suburban areas grow faster than smaller towns and villages, the methods the Library will use to provide equitable service to the greatest number of residents will require community direction on priorities, establishment of clear goals and objectives, and development of effective and efficient tools to receive accurate feedback. Marathon County has an experienced outcome based measurement committee which can support the Library as it seeks continuous improvement. Balancing the need that small communities have to maintain amenities with the desire for library branches in growing areas in the Wausau suburbs will require fresh investments, compromise and commitment.

POTENTIAL WESTON BRANCH LIBRARY

The Village of Weston has expressed interest in adding a branch library to its community. According to the Wausau *Metro Region Economic Development Assessment*:

The Village of Weston occupies much of the southeast portion of the metro region. The Village incorporated in 1996 from the south western portion of the Town of Weston. The Village is the second largest in the metro region in terms of population and in 2015 it had a population of 15,276. The Village enjoys a fairly diverse economic base. The local economy includes a significant amount of retail, commercial, institutional and industrial development. Overall the Village is expected to continue growing steadily through 2040.

The State's *Wisconsin Population & Household Projections* predicts that Marathon County will add 10,346 individuals by 2040. Fifty-one percent of the additions are expected to come from growth in Weston. The Village has announced planning for the Southeast Quadrant, a 300-acre tract of land for a multi-use area that is envisioned to become a significant component of the community's economic base.

The leaders in Weston have recently developed a comprehensive plan to manage the village's growth and plan for future amenities for its residents. As they seek to update their municipal center, they have begun to discuss a branch library as a collaborative partner to the new development. Within the *Wausau Metro Region Economic Development Assessment* the term "placemaking" was highlighted to describe future development. Their definition could fit well with a new branch library.

"Placemaking" is a term used to describe the process of creating a strong sense of place in a given location within the community, most often public spaces, to make them vibrant and well-used. In addition to paying attention to designing the physical elements of a site – building materials, landscaping, site furniture, signage, and security, placemaking should also be a conscious effort by public and private management to organize, operate and sustain neighborhoods and commercial centers with activities that welcome and engage visitors and customers with both formal and casual events.

The Village of Weston has the economic resources, demographics, and access to major arterial roads needed to support an effectively used branch library. The map included in Appendix B provides the distances between the proposed location of the Weston Library and other branches. Library standards normally call for five miles between suburban library locations and ten miles in ex-urban sites. The proposed site meets this criteria.

Establishing a new branch library in Weston would have the positive effect of relieving some of the pressure on the Rothschild Library. While studies have shown that opening a building in a new service area may slightly reduce usage of surrounding libraries, most of the time a new branch results in a net gain in visits and circulation as a result of greater convenience and publicity.

Government stakeholders expect prudent fiscal management. Marathon County Public Library has been effective in using a centralized system to achieve cost efficiencies with no loss of public service. However, the support required for a new branch of the size needed in Weston would not be achievable within its current budget. Alternative budgeting options will need to be developed. Library stakeholders should consider re-aligning some of the branch open hours and staffing. Investment of capital funds will help initially. Restructuring of the current branch service mix could gain increased economic flexibility but will not cover many of the on-going expenses.

Demographic Change and Other Trends

According to the *Wausau Metro Region Economic Development Assessment*, "Over the next thirty years, from 2010 to 2040, 55.2 percent of the growth in Marathon County will be in the metro region. The County will grow 14.0 percent, from 134,063 to 152,790. The metro region will grow 13.9 percent, increasing by 10,346 persons." In 2013, the State of Wisconsin prepared projections of population change to 2040. The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) provides relevant spreadsheets on its website at: <http://www.doa.state.wi.us/Divisions/Intergovernmental-Relations/Demographic-Services-Center/Wisconsin-Population-Projections/>

A chart of growth expectations from the DOA for communities currently served by the Library's branches shows that most communities will experience some population growth but not enough to trigger significant changes in numbers of library users, except for the Village of Weston. Instead, the greatest driver of change will be the expectations that residents bring regarding library services.

MCD Type and Name	2013 Estimate	2015 Projection	2020 Projection	2025 Projection	2030 Projection	2035 Projection	2040 Projection	Growth	Percent Change
Athens	1,103	1,110	1,145	1,170	1,185	1,185	1,180	77	7%
Edgar	1,473	1,485	1,535	1,570	1,595	1,605	1,600	127	9%
Hatley	595	615	665	715	760	795	820	225	38%
Marathon City	1,531	1,530	1,545	1,540	1,530	1,505	1,465	-66	-4%
Rothschild	5,280	5,340	5,525	5,655	5,755	5,795	5,790	510	10%
Spencer	1,931	1,945	2,000	2,035	2,060	2,065	2,050	119	6%
Stratford	1,591	1,605	1,660	1,700	1,730	1,740	1,740	149	9%
Weston	15,052	15,520	16,770	17,870	18,890	19,700	20,330	5,278	35%
Mosinee	4,018	4,050	4,160	4,225	4,270	4,270	4,235	217	5%

Residents' demographics are often a useful predictor of library usage. Families with children tend to use libraries extensively. Individuals in mid-life may scale back their use of libraries and then return again once the multiple demands of their lives ease.

The *LIFE Report of Marathon County* has provided a forum for discussion of community issues for twenty years. In its most recent report, the executive summary noted that:

In 1996, the median age for Marathon County was 32.7. By 2013, it had increased to 39.8. In 1996, only 12.7% of the county's residents were 65+. People 65+ now make up 14.6% and, with aging Baby Boomers, it is projected to reach a quarter of the population by 2035 if we maintain current demographic patterns.

The increase in older adults projected for Marathon County will drive changes to library service. More instruction in technology will be needed to develop and hone seniors' skills in remaining connected. A welcoming place for informal gathering and information browsing is another likely service. Delivery of library materials from the Library's home-bound service will continue to increase in importance. Targeted marketing to those in

need of the delivery service with ongoing evaluation and augmentation of its amenities will benefit this burgeoning segment of the county's population.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration, Marathon County's population of school age children is projected to remain stable and grow slightly over the next 20 years. This means that library services geared towards children will remain a vital and valued service for its communities. Expanding on the current STEM programs, book clubs for kids, and focus on development of literacy will be important components of the Library's service mix. Those communities with a stable or increasing population of children will continue to see strong library usage and the Library should continue to work with its community partners to maximize the impact of its services.

Recommendations

- **Institute routine data collection and reporting for making key decisions.**
 - Compiling the data requested for this report was burdensome for the Library.
 - The Library has an opportunity to determine what key decisions need to be made, identify the data needed to support the decision-making process, and then select the measurement tools that will best deliver the information. The Library will then need to monitor the gathering of the data to ensure consistency and accuracy.
 - Partnering with other county agencies and the Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS) to establish routine reporting will be vital for data driven decision-making. Collaboration along with setting clear deadlines and mutual expectations will make it easier to gather needed data. For example, identifying the density of library card holders within the county would help in making decisions about branch locations. Receiving this information in a clear, usable format would require assistance from both WVLS and county GIS systems to gather the information and map the locations. The Library will want to collaborate with both to make this tool possible.
 - The Integrated Library System (the software upon which all library operations rests) is administered by WVLS. This system is rich in data that should be used as a decision tool. For example, the system can provide reports of hourly and daily circulation activity which would be extremely helpful in adjusting branch library hours to match community usage. Once the software for these reports is written, it can be scheduled to run on a routine basis. At this time, the Integrated Library System reports are not detailed enough or in a format that can be easily manipulated to enable in-depth analysis. Wisconsin Valley Library Service support is vital to make better usage of this resource.
 - Marathon County Public Library is the largest library system in Wisconsin Valley Library Service. MCPL's size and breadth of service requires sophisticated, in-depth reports in order to make informed decisions. While smaller libraries may not realize the benefits of more precise reporting, they, too, would likely benefit

from tools that enhance their ability to evaluate the cost effectiveness of their services.

- Providing high speed Internet access for residents has become an important service for libraries. Equipment and software are available that would give the Library information on demand and usage patterns in its branches. The Library may want to explore those options to better track allocation of resources.
- Working with other agencies and stakeholders to determine measurement tools will provide them with a better insight into the complexities that Library administration confronts when making service decisions.

➤ **Create a branch library development policy.**

- In the future, other communities may join Weston in seeking new branch libraries. Establishing the parameters for when and how to add new branches would allow the Library, stakeholders, and funding agents to effectively plan for change.
- Changes in library service are also altering how buildings serve their communities. Greater emphasis on programming, outreach and technology require different building designs. Recognizing that in an overarching plan will help guide expectations.
- Wisconsin's rural areas are projected to slowly decline. Because Marathon County is considered a metropolitan county, it is anticipated that it will experience moderate growth as a whole. However, the trend toward declining populations in rural areas may require the closing of branches in the future. Establishing criteria for making this decision now will create clear parameters before the process becomes fraught with the emotion of losing a valued service.
- Many of the Library's stakeholders will be interested in influencing this policy. Providing a clear process that is guided by community input and funding agent priorities will encourage community involvement in determining the future of their libraries.

➤ **Explore the possibility of partnering with the Village of Weston to open a new branch library in its municipal complex.**

- Opening a new branch library in Weston is warranted by a number of factors. The community's demographics, support, and vision for the future would contribute to making this a successful branch library.
- The current schedule for the development of Weston's municipal facilities allows enough time for a deliberative process.
- Funding will be a critical piece of the decision-making process. While additional funds will be required for supporting this new branch library, some adjustments in current library operations could also be used to contribute to the operational costs. Identifying funding agent concerns and receiving their direction now will enable better planning.

➤ **Examine branch library usage and consider alternative models in order to reflect community usage patterns and prioritization of services for the greatest number of residents.**

- Some of the current branch libraries have a low circulation per hour rate which may mean that the number of open hours in those branches could be reduced for greater cost efficiencies.
- There may be opportunities to adjust open hours to better coincide with community usage patterns such as school visits or industrial plant shift changes.
- Most successful library systems open their libraries on Saturdays. While three of Marathon County Public Library locations are open on Saturdays (Marathon City, Rothschild and Wausau), the remaining communities are not. These communities are likely to benefit from Saturday open hours, at least during the school year. It is recommended that a pilot program be launched in one or two of the underserved library branch communities to explore the possibility of opening on Saturdays system-wide.
- The percentage of circulation from holds in some of the branches indicates that a few may benefit from using “lockers” or other types of technology for residents to access their materials when the library branch is closed.
- If buildings are open fewer hours, ensuring that outreach, programing, and access to high speed Internet services remain available will be important.
- The keys for success in any of these changes will be data driven decision-making, stakeholder and community input, and clear communication.

Conclusion

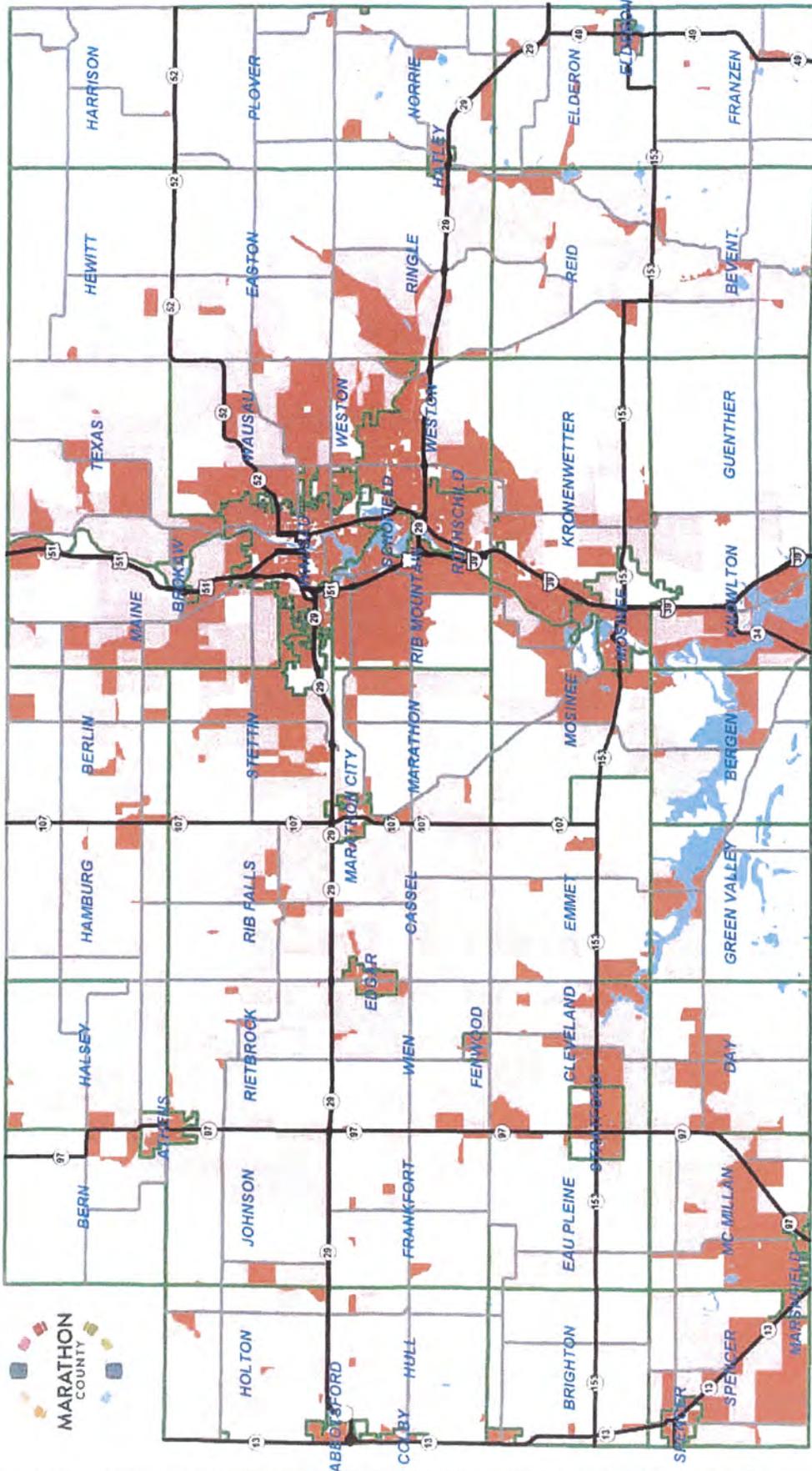
Marathon County Public Library seeks to best serve the majority of Marathon County's residents and their library needs now and in the future. The Library has done a good job of adapting to the changes desired by its communities. The future will demand more change from the Library and a delicate balance between serving smaller community libraries while the urban areas grow and seek more convenient access. Selecting key goals, determining the strategies to reach them, and ensuring that appropriate evaluation using the right measurement tools will be vital. Community involvement will make the difference in the Library's success. It used to be said that the library was the heart of the community. Librarians are now recognizing that to serve their patrons best, the community needs to be the heart of the library.

Appendix A

Marathon County, WI
Population Density

Map courtesy of The LIFE Steering Committee *Focus 2015-2017 LIFE in Marathon County: Local Indicators for Excellence*. Wausau, WI, 2015.

MARATHON COUNTY, WI POPULATION DENSITY



2010 Census

- 0 - 25.0 Persons/SqMile
- 25.1 - 50.0 Persons/SqMile
- > 50 Persons/SqMile

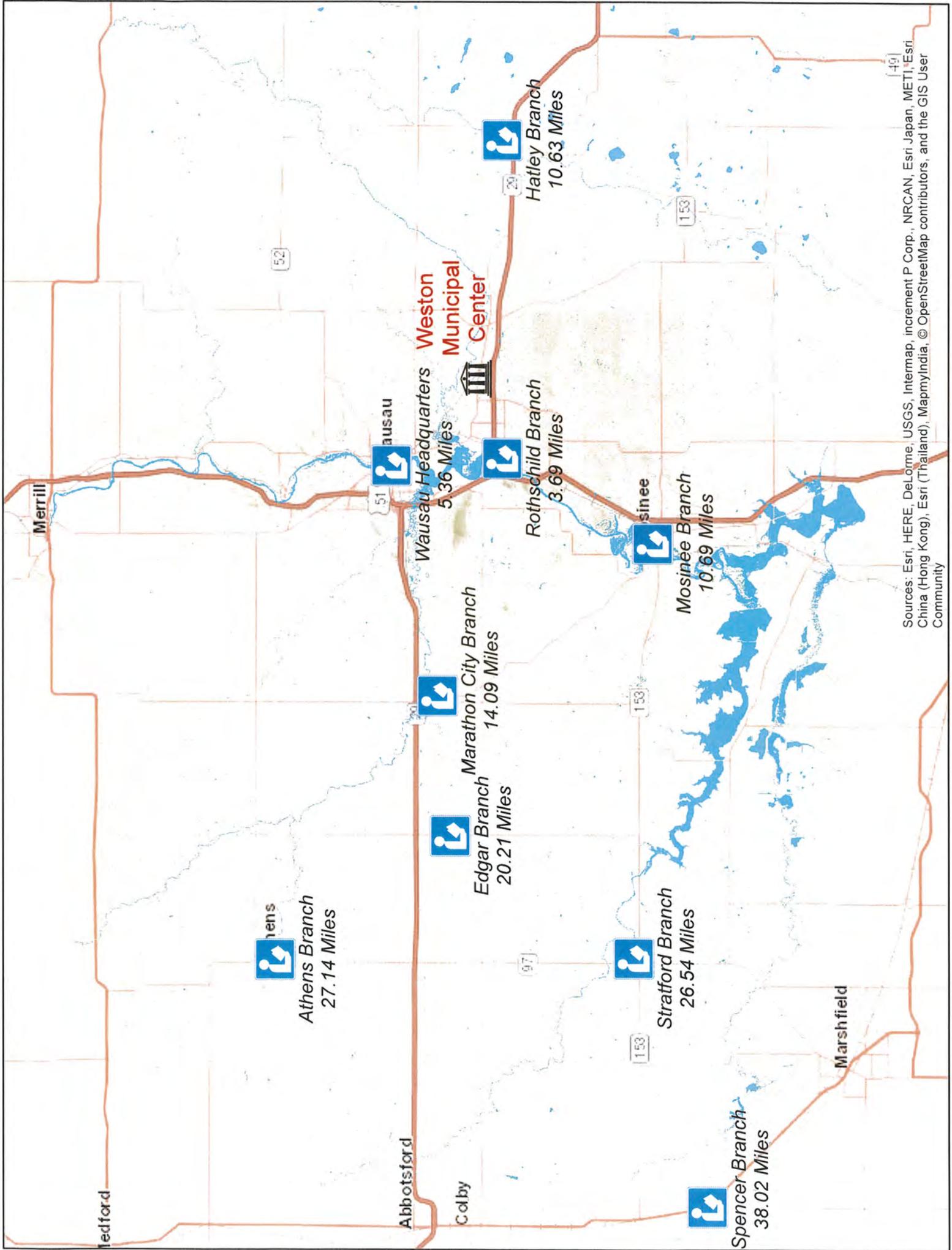
- State & US Highways
- County Roads
- Municipal Boundary
- Hydro Features



Map Date November 3, 2011

Appendix B

Marathon County, WI
Distances Between the Village of Weston Municipal Center
And Marathon County Public Library Branches



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, USGS, Intermap, increment P Corp., NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community