

SEPTEMBER 2019 UPDATE TO MEMBERS

WVLS Colleagues and Friends,

Since mention of the Marathon County Public Library's consideration to join the South Central Library System (SCLS) was included in the September WVLS Director's Report, I have fielded questions and requests for more information from many of you. Here is some additional background for your consideration.

- During a brief conversation on January 2, 2019, Ralph indicated to me that MCPL would be looking at other systems and considering its options. He mentioned that he wanted to challenge and motivate his staff, and that being more "aligned" with Madison Public Library was an idea being considered.
- Since then, the information shared in director reports and minutes with the MCPL Board – posted at <https://www.mcpl.us/about/board> and routinely included in the WVLS Board packets – has been puzzling and offered no direction to WVLS with which to assist MCPL staff. See below for a compendium of those mentions, shared exactly as they appeared in MCPL Board documents.
- PLEASE NOTE: Although the [Final PLSR Recommendation Report](#) does address the topic of delivery, there is much work to be done before an implantation plan moves forward after facilitated input from the library community. SCLS presented a proposal to representatives of WVLS, IFLS Library System and Northern Waters Library Service on March 26 whereby SCLS administered delivery services would be extended to territory presently served by WALTCO, at a higher cost that was not accepted. Wausau is currently a hub for WALTCO services and has no plans to drop library delivery services.
- To be clear, WVLS is not aware of any quality of service issues compelling MCPL Administration to think leaving WVLS is its only option. MCPL administration has not initiated any conversation regarding service issues. WVLS initiated conversation between Ralph and I, most recently on October 23, provided no additional helpful illumination to assist WVLS in addressing specific service issues. Meanwhile, WVLS and MCPL staff continue to work together, as before, for the benefit of the citizens we both serve.
- At the September MCPL Board meeting, WVLS suggested that if their board saw the value, WVLS staff and trustees were willing to form a committee with MCPL counterparts to create a structured, objective analysis of MCPL Administration's desire to more closely align with Madison Public Library, to identify the challenges of maintaining membership in WVLS, and to develop a strategic process to achieve its goals. Perhaps colleagues from other systems and resource libraries could be invited to these meetings to share their best practices and to vet solutions.
- At its October 21 meeting, the MCPL Board agreed to form a committee to form a taskforce to look more closely at this matter. Also, during this meeting, SCLS presented on the services it provides member libraries. WVLS has been invited to do a similar presentation at the MCPL Board meeting in December.

You will find below what has been reported in the meetings of the MCPL Board since December 2018, offered exactly as printed. Use of first person "I" and "my" and "we" denotes statements speaking for MCPL Director Ralph Illick and MCPL administration to the "you" of the MCPL Board.

Minutes of December 2018 MCPL Board Meeting (under PLSR Update) "PLSR was a project that started three years ago. The idea behind it was to talk about ways we can make systems more responsive to libraries. There are 16 different governance models and 16 different systems that work 16 different ways. This doesn't focus on efficiency or maximizing the support. There are 26 libraries in the Wisconsin Valley Library Service consortium and we are 40% of the consortium. If we were part of the South Central Library System, their governance model is weighted and everyone based on their participation gets weighted voting. Every service they provide is ala-cart, so if you're not getting it, you're not paying for it. What I will be doing and also ask this board to do is start considering how we might be better served by being a member of another system. The PLSR group has released a draft of what their recommendations will be. I did include the website link in my monthly

report. What I ask this board to do over the coming months is to review our different options. It does take about a year to merge with another library system. One of the challenges that we have is that our perspective, our needs as a library are not aligned with the libraries in our consortium. I am really going to focus on what we could get from a consortium that would be more aligned with what we need. There were additional discussions among the Library Director and Library Board Members regarding this topic.”

Minutes of January 2019 MCPL Board Meeting (under PLSR and MCPL Opportunities in the Future)

“I did talk at the last meeting about the upcoming final report for PLSR. My belief is we could benefit from being part of a different system. The system we are currently in is highly responsible to the other libraries. I would like for us is to be in a system where we are able to calibrate with and work with libraries of a similar size. There are a lot of opportunities for us if we take a look at joining the South Central Library System. In the report there is a star in the center of the map regarding deliveries, noting that we would be a great place to be a part of the state wide delivery system. I received a call from the director of the South Central System. The vendor they use for the northern part of the state will be getting out of the library delivery services. The director asked if we could have a conversation about potentially being a hub for the state wide delivery system. It would give us an opportunity to be part of something bigger. As I mentioned before we don’t receive services that we pay for. That doesn’t happen in the South Central System, everything is prorated and ala- carte. I ask that we start looking at this during the 2019 calendar year. It does take a whole calendar year by statute to change systems. There were additional discussions among the Library Director and Library Board Members regarding this agenda item.”

Minutes of February 2019 MCPL Board Meeting (under Statement Concerning System Effectiveness)

“If you look on page eight of the annual report. We have always checked the box that they did provide effective leadership. I don’t think this is the kind of think we need to make contentious as we look at our options of other system memberships. We added wording from the 2019 WVLS System plan. It describes the challenges they have in meeting our needs. I do believe the WVLS consortium can gain the benefit in merging with the Norther Waters System and/or the Indianhead System. I think they can be stronger and better suited to serve the libraries that are in those consortiums.”

Minutes of February 2019 MCPL Board Meeting (under PLSR and Delivery Opportunities)

“The Director of the South Central System did come up and talk with us. The Director has also had a courtesy conversation with WVLS, about making MCPL the hub for deliveries in the northern part of the state. There is no negative effect for us, we will benefit from the state to make this happen. This will however affect WVLS, but in the end it will benefit every library. All the parties that will be affected are aware of what we are talking about and the potential outcome could be.”

Minutes of March 2019 MCPL Board Meeting (under WVLS Report)

“Report handed out at the meeting. Board Member Sweeney reported the WAPL meeting will be held in Rothschild this year. The WVLS Board did share some concerns regarding MCPL potentially changing systems.”

Minutes of July 2019 MCPL Board Meeting (under SCLS Update)

“We are gathering data on our circulation and other factors that will be added into process of determining the costs we might incur in changing to that library system. We are moving forward getting closer to having some numbers that will give this board a chance to do some comparisons. We have already had a conversation to try either in August or September to have some people from South Central Library System come and speak about the process and about what we might look forward to in the future.”

Minutes of August 2019 MCPL Board Meeting (under Wisconsin Valley Library Service)

“Information handed out at the meeting. Board Member Sweeney also reported that the strategic plan and budgeting for 2020 was discussed. They also have a concern of MCPL moving to the South Central System.”

Minutes of September 2019 MCPL Board Meeting (under Public Comments)

“Marla, Erica and Dominic expressed concern about how Marathon County Public Library’s departure would affect Wisconsin Valley Library Service and the remaining libraries.”

NOTE: While not in the minutes of the meeting, the WVLS presentation also included the following: “... WVLS is not aware of any quality of service issues compelling MCPL Administration to think leaving WVLS is its only option. ... If this Board sees the value, WVLS staff and trustees are willing to form a committee with MCPL counterparts to create a structured, objective analysis of MCPL Administration’s desire to more closely align with Madison Public Library, to identify the challenges of maintaining membership in WVLS, and to develop a strategic process to achieve its goals. Perhaps colleagues from other systems and resource libraries could be invited to these meetings to share their best practices and to vet solutions. WVLS strives to provide the best service to member libraries and takes this matter very seriously. Given the significance of what is being proposed by MCPL Administration, Wisconsin’s library users and the wider library community deserve more from MCPL and WVLS leadership.”

Minutes of September 2019 MCPL Board Meeting (under South Central Library System Update) “The Director of South Central Library System will join us at the October meeting as well. We thought it was important to have all board members here.”

Minutes of September 2019 MCPL Board Meeting (under Request for Future Agenda Items) “Task Force.”

Following the September meeting, MCPL Board President Sharon Hunter sent the WVLS Director a letter which stated “I want to let you know that the Board of Trustees is only investigating the idea of the Marathon County Public Library moving to a different service area. We are moving very cautiously and want to make sure we have all the information to make a sound, informed decision. Therefore, we would like to invite you to be on the agenda at our Board of Trustees meeting on Monday, December 16, at 12:00 p.m. to present information on WVLS.”

The WVLS Director sent a letter of response on October 17 which indicated that we appreciated her reassurance that the MCPL Board was only investigating the idea of moving the library to a different service area; we hoped the MCPL Board would endorse MCPL trustee Katie Rosenberg’s recommendation to create a task force to study this matter in more detail; and thanked her for the opportunity in December to share information about WVLS.

October 21 MCPL Board meeting minutes are not yet published, however highlights include:

- Under “Public Comment” WVLS presented a listing of ways in which WVLS collaborates with other systems to provide service.
- Under “South Central Library Systems Presentation About Their Services Model and Standards – For Discussion and Possible Action,” SCLS presented on the services it provides their members. Also, the MCPL Board approved the formation of a task force to study the issue further and to clarify what MCPL needs and what their patrons need. Members of the task force include Sharon Hunter, Gary Beastrum, and MiaGer Moua.

WVLS will continue to share information via this email list as news develops. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

Warmest regards,

Marla