

## WVLS Response to:

### INNOVATION

#### Topic Discussion for the MCPL Task Force

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to MCPL's questions. It is important that the MCPL Task Force understands that MCPL is looking to leave one library system and join another without expressing any substantive evidence of need. MCPL has [recently indicated](#) to the WVLS Board president that MCPL is "not aware of any service issues that we seek to resolve at the present time" (full letter has been provided to the MCPL Task Force). There is a disconnect between previous statements and the innovation topic discussion document. We feel that it is important for the MCPL Task Force to be as informed as possible regarding the nature of the MCPL director's and business manager's statements and the service that WVLS has provided and will continue to offer. As we drafted responses to the innovation topic, we recognized that more details are needed to provide complete responses.

*The first goal related to innovation would be our intention to make full use of the features available in the System's ILS (Integrated Library System). Currently, the ILS is the proprietary Innovative Interfaces ILS, which offers a wide array of features which could be very useful to MCPL. We have been denied access to features which are considered by the software maker to be primary advantages of their software by the current consortium. We would very much like to use those features, or the equivalent available in another System's ILS, to facilitate better customer service interactions while also improving financial reporting and other interactions with patrons.*

#### RESPONSE:

*"We have been denied access to features which are considered by the software maker to be primary advantages of their software by the current consortium."*

It is encouraging that MCPL sees features and functions within Sierra that would be useful for MCPL's service success. WVLS is unaware of any features that have been denied due to the actions of WVLS or the V-Cat Council. On at least one occasion, MCPL has shared misinformation about access to ILS features with the MCPL board as illustrated in a letter from WVLS to MCPL in 2018. Please see the additional document provided for further details. It would be meaningful for the MCPL Task Force to identify the specific features MCPL feels it has been denied by the consortium.

MCPL is strongly positioned in WVLS and the V-Cat consortium. It is possible that MCPL administration is misunderstanding the processes that WVLS and the V-Cat Council use to enable group and individual access to ILS features and functionality. MCPL staff members hold key leadership roles on V-Cat Council committees. Furthermore, the V-Cat consortium members have consistently aligned with MCPL on actions of the Council. The V-Cat Council and the ILS Administrator have scheduled a comprehensive review of ILS products and services in 2021. We anticipate that MCPL will be a key player in identifying additional facets to pursue during the review process.

Prior to the MCPL Task Force investigation, the WVLS board president [reached out](#) to the director of MCPL to inquire about service issues (full letter has been provided to the MCPL Task Force). As noted above, MCPL replied to the WVLS Board president that MCPL is “not aware of any service issues that we seek to resolve at the present time.” If MCPL is dissatisfied with the performance of the ILS Administrator or the ILS itself, it is in MCPL’s best interest to communicate their concerns to the V-Cat Council and the WVLS Board. The [V-Cat Complaint Procedure](#) gives guidance on how to do so.

*“Complaints about operational/structural/procedural matters related to WVLS’ shared automation system (called ‘V-Cat’) should, most profitably, be brought to the V-Cat Council as a whole. This is done by requesting that a discussion item be added to the agenda of the next V-Cat Council meeting. The request to have an item included on a future agenda should be sent to both the V-Cat Administrator and the V-Cat Chair.”*

In order to more objectively understand WVLS’ ability to support MCPL’s goals, the MCPL Task Force should seek comprehensive clarification regarding this service area including:

- the list of goals and objectives MCPL has developed framing its desire to:
  - facilitate better customer service interactions
  - improve financial reporting
  - improve other interactions with patrons
- what features MCPL is not able to utilize
- what features are available to MCPL to meet said goals and objectives that it is not using
- the processes MCPL has employed in its pursuit of ILS features and functionality it desires
- what features and functionalities MCPL has pursued with the assistance of WVLS and chosen to withdraw from during or after the discovery process

Once specific features are identified, WVLS will be able to respond with possible service solutions.

***Second, we need to find a less constrictive and less expensive RFID/processing vendor than our current vendor, 3M. We believe that Envisionware is that vendor. To our knowledge, SCLS has used the Envisionware products among its member libraries. We are not aware of any libraries in WVLS who use either technology to process their books other than Antigo.***

**RESPONSE:** WVLS has experience working with third party vendors and products across all service areas, and specifically within ILS services, including MCPL’s current RFID system when originally installed. WVLS has fostered a coalition of Sierra ILS Administrators from public library systems across the state, including systems in Milwaukee, Eau Claire, Green Bay, Ashland, Appleton, La Crosse and Wausau. This coalition offers expertise across common and distinct ILS functionality, including self-checkout capabilities, automated materials handling, and RFID. Along with its own vendor and product management expertise, WVLS will leverage

the experience of this group which includes at least two other systems with libraries employing Envisionware products.

WVLS will continue working with MCPL on an RFID needs assessment, product discovery and vetting, as well as project implementation when MCPL is ready. MCPL's most recent communication in January 2020 regarding RFID was that acquiring new checkout and check In equipment was on hold along with the MCPL renovations. When asked, MCPL indicated that WVLS did not need to gather additional information or pursue other options at this time. WVLS responded that MCPL should let us know if that changes, and that we are here to help.

Points of clarification for the Task Force to pursue so each system can respond more acutely to how it can support MCPL in this Innovation Topic.

- “less constrictive”
  - How does MCPL define constrictive in this context?
  - What are the current constraints?
  - How are each impeding the success of MCPL's operations?
- “less expensive”
  - What are the parameters?
  - Direct dollar costs/preferred budget cap?
  - Human resource component/costs?
- “RFID/processing vendor”
  - How is this defined?
  - RFID tag vendor(s)?
  - RFID tag application service(s)?
  - Other RFID-related capital and/or services?
  - Other non-RFID-specific capital and/or services?
- “To our knowledge, SCLS has used the Envisionware products among its member libraries”
  - Have the member libraries self-managed these implementations?
  - Does SCLS have reliable and meaningful experience supporting the implementation of RFID and related technologies?
  - How much does SCLS charge to provide support for third party service projects?

WVLS is ready to continue providing consultation and administrative support now that it appears MCPL is interested in resuming pursuit. Whether MCPL would prefer to utilize existing SIP2 licensing for product connectivity or explore additional functionality available with Item Status API or other components, WVLS will be able to support MCPL with any RFID product migration process.

*Third, we will be developing our MakerSpace with Engberg Anderson's designs over the next year. How do the systems compare in their support/development of MakerSpace technology?*

**RESPONSE:** WVLS is excited that MCPL is exploring the inclusion of dedicated makerspace technologies within its space at the Wausau location and possibly some of the branch locations. As MCPL works to develop and outfit its makerspace and related services, they will benefit through the continued use of the WVLS [Shared makerspace resources](#). Since 2015, WVLS has been offering learning opportunities for makerspace technologies including events relevant to our makerspace kits and events promoting broad applications for visionary planning.

There is much subjectivity allowed for in the abstract. To more accurately compare service capabilities, WVLS recommends that the MCPL Task Force engage with MCPL to seek a better understanding of the specific needs and goals regarding makerspace technologies and services.

Some things to consider:

- What has MCPL's makerspace needs assessment outlined as its target for success?
- Has there been a user survey process implemented to identify the desires and goals of MCPL's users and communities?
- What services will MCPL provide?
  - Adult/Teen/Youth programming
  - Open lab times
  - Circulation of makerspace items
  - Training and certification to use makerspace items
  - Interloan of makerspace kits to other library locations
- Is MCPL interested in collaborating with other stakeholders in Marathon County?
- Is MCPL interested in collaborating with other libraries or schools?
- Is MCPL interested in collaborating with a global network of partners?
- Would MCPL like help in determining what service elements to focus on?

A makerspace is not only about the technology the library procures but also about the services it provides within the space. The MCPL director and his staff have access to our planning and consulting services as a system membership benefit at no additional charge, though we generally do not push unsolicited consultation and advice upon our membership. One thing MCPL could choose to benefit from immediately would be to engage with WVLS in the clear identification and definition of service needs and goals. WVLS is able to draw from its network of state, national, and global institutions to connect MCPL with successful makerspaces. Also, financial support resources from WVLS may be available depending on the nature of MCPL's makerspace vision and goals. WVLS will support MCPL's innovation goals and ensure MCPL has the best chance for successful implementation of projects.

Libraries in both WVLS and SCLS have makerspace programs ranging from a few passive programming kits on a table to a team of staff focused on makerspace programming with an entire room dedicated to storing and utilizing makerspace equipment. Even institutions

participating in a common framework like FabLab build a diverse service and equipment set on top of core minimum requirements for participation. The presence of makerspaces at libraries within a system is not an indication of services received from library system staff. It is important for the MCPL Task Force to distinguish between the two, and ask the question of whether or not libraries have self-managed the creation of their makerspace with little or no system support.

Once the MCPL Task Force has a better understanding of MCPL's specific needs and goals regarding makerspace technologies and services, it will be able to more objectively compare system services. WVLS is confident that the MCPL Task Force will find that we have more makerspace consultation and support experience than SCLS, including working with individual libraries to help them find the best solutions possible to the needs and desires expressed, within often narrow budgets. Our leadership and makerspace expertise spanning experiences and engagements with nearly every other library system in the past ten years is second to none, and we can best evidence that by directly addressing the specific needs and goals expressed by MCPL administration.



# Member Library Board Meeting Information Review

## Report of Inaccuracies Discovered in Meeting Documents

Prepared by Administration Team  
Presented 11/19/2018

On occasions that warrant, Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS) will report significant inaccuracies discovered in meeting documents of member libraries and offer corrections or additional information which may lead to corrections.

Inaccuracies were discovered in the Monthly Business Report section of the November Director's Report to the Marathon County Public Library (MCPL) Board of Trustees (beginning on page 10 and continuing into page 12).

An initial draft of this review was in development prior to an inquiry by the WVLS/MCPL Board Liaison following the November 18, 2018 WVLS Board of Trustees meeting regarding that same section affirming the significance of the inaccuracies. The WVLS/MCPL Board Liaison is added as a recipient along with the MCPL Director.

## Monthly Business Report – October, 2018 (p. 10)

- *“The next step will be to list known questions and issues so that a course of action may be determined without the full benefit of historical data.”*

It is not immediately clear if this is referring to pre-Sierra data, new data starting in January 2013 on Sierra but now aged as of 2018, or both. However, additional context from the first few paragraphs in the next section (November, 2018) seem to indicate the former.

- For pre-Sierra data, WVLS maintains an archive including:
  - An original backup of the Horizon database from December 31, 2012.
  - A Microsoft Access export of the original Horizon database dated 2012.12.18.
  - Assuming appropriate data was present in the previous ILS application’s database, WVLS is confident it can help MCPL extract such data for appropriate reporting.
- For Sierra data originated post-migration we would need to better understand what facets of data are of issue in order to assist MCPL in generating appropriate reports.

- *“We continue to aggressively pursue resolution.”*

It is not immediately clear from this statement with whom resolution is being pursued. As much of the Business Report references WVLS it might be assumed by the reader that this statement refers to WVLS.

- The WVLS director and CIO anecdotally recall MCPL employees indicating that MCPL was going to write off the old debts for transactions which occurred in the previous ILS and there have been no inquiries from MCPL employees regarding this matter in several years to their knowledge.
- The current ILS Administrator has received no inquiries regarding this matter since accepting the position in March of 2018.
- If there is interest from any party we can review the full archives of the previous ILS Administrator’s email history to determine what requests or other communications in this respect may have occurred officially between MCPL employees and herself.

- *“Our second challenging factor is a refusal by Wisconsin Valley Library Service, the library system which oversees the consortia and manages the ILS software, to allow access to a REST API feature that is considered by the ILS software maker their current cornerstone of data access.”*

*“WVLS has repeatedly stated that they will not allow API access to any Patron information.”*

- To our knowledge WVLS has never asserted that any access via API or other mechanisms would not be allowed.
  - Contra to these statements, informal and documented correspondence with MCPL personnel in this respect have been entirely in terms of positive, supporting approach with appropriate due diligence by library and system personnel working in partnership being the only factor necessary to engage in such a project.
  - WVLS will continue to offer assistance establishing API access, including the patron table, in a safe and secure manner for all member libraries on a case by case basis. Depending on the level and type of access desired, the consortium may desire the opportunity to vet potential additional risks or liabilities, determine if the requesting library might need to formally accept full responsibility for them, and/or indemnify the other consortium members from them.
- *“This is despite their understanding that the only computers that would have access to the API reporting system now have ILS software making all personally identifiable information of concern available on those machines.”*
    - The primary concern specific to Patron Identifiable Information (PII) is the liability associated with exposure (accidental or otherwise) of such data to unauthorized persons.
    - The Sierra Desktop Application is the primary vendor-supported application which personnel of ILS consortium members may be uniformly and consistently trained for appropriate access to ILS data. Any third-party application (be it a canned or custom developed product procured from a vendor or a product developed in-house by member library personnel) which might access sensitive data such as PII should be appropriately vetted.



- *“The third challenge for this important issue is that it has not garnered needed support by others in our consortia to address the handling of accounting records overlapping other members. By this I mean if a book owned by library B is lost by a patron at library A, then the cost recovery invoice is issued by library A, the loaning not the owning library. This means a [write-off] of the invoice by library A would end the possibility of library B collecting their money as they normally would only after library B had been paid. Essentially one library could write off an asset of another library even though they are related only through consortia membership.”*

This appears to reference a hypothetical scenario which is fairly well-covered by [current guidelines adopted by the ILS Consortium](#) and published on the WVLS website for ILS consortium members to review.

- If this is indicative of a misunderstanding of policy, then this reference to that resource may be all that is needed. The Owning Library (referred to in the report as “Library A”) bills the Lending Library (“Library B”) which is liable to the Owning Library for the lost material. It is up to the Lending Library to then recuperate that loss from its patron or to write off that liability as its own loss (having paid the Owning Library). If the Lending Library refuses to pay the Owning Library, that would seem to be a different scenario, in which the Lending Library is breaking the rules set forth by the ILS Consortium.

<https://wvls.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Damaged-and-Missing-Items-1.pdf>

- The ILS Consortium’s interlibrary loan policies for overdue fines collection (i.e. not involving lost items) is based on State guidelines.
- “Wisconsin ILL Guidelines 2016” – Section: Public Libraries and Public Library Systems (p.15)

<https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/rl3/pdf/WisconsinILLGuidelines2016.pdf>

- If the scenario and outcome described are being misinterpreted by WVLS and there may be some potential for a Lending Library (referred to in the report as “Library B”) to write-off a patron’s lost-item debt for an Owning Library’s (“Library A”) asset, then we would like to further explore such possibility with MCPL and the ILS Consortium.

- *“The fourth issue concerns a not yet proven inventory module in the ILS system. This, like the statement generator, was promised as a deliverable being finalized at the time the consortia chose the new system in 2013. By early-2016, after years of trying to make it work, we were informed that since a much better replacement module was in development we should wait until October of that year for resolution. That update never came. In mid-2018 a versioning upgrade was believed to have addressed core inventory issues. Testing is now underway. Our ability to produce accurate inventory reports is an essential part of resolving receivables in that we need to be sure items for which patrons are charged were not returned without proper check-in. ILS software has been adapted for use in a multi-entity system, as opposed to being purpose written for such environments.”*

There is some accuracy in the timeline and the limited operational value of the Circa Inventory tool (the “inventory module” referenced). Other member libraries and libraries in other systems with the same ILS do engage in various methods of inventory management, including the use of Circa. The vendor has indicated that no further updates to the software are intended, though they had been indicating this prior to the 2018 patch.

- Prior to November 2017, the Circa inventory tool included with the ILS had a flaw that would cause predictable, undesirable and disruptive behavior for long running shelf scans. This made it difficult to use this particular tool efficiently for a large inventory project. The patch in 2017 addressed this, making it much more reliable for large jobs.
- The Circa inventory tool still has an issue with the use of a certain type or format of call number though a workaround was shared with MCPL in mid-2018.
- The new inventory tools the ILS vendor has been promising for many years is still not available for use in a consortium configuration.
- The TB Scott Free Library in Merrill has developed an effective process for inventory management and is willing to share that process with other libraries.

- *“Another question is the best way to collect when about two years ago the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction determined that Public Libraries in our state shall not utilize negative credit reporting or collection agencies as a tool in collections for what are determined to be benevolent organizations.”*

- “The Return of Library Materials bill” - 2015 WISCONSIN ACT 169

<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2015/related/acts/169>

This bill was designed to assist with return of lost/long overdue materials and/or payment for same per individual library board policies. A library may disclose to a collection agency or a law enforcement agency information about delinquent accounts of any individual who borrows from the library. Information to be disclosed is limited to the individual's name, contact information, amount owed and the number and types of overdue materials. A library may report delinquent accounts to a law enforcement agency only if the delinquency is at least \$50.

- “Book 'em Danno! New Law Facilitates Recovery of Library Materials”

<https://wilibrariesforeveryone.blogspot.com/2016/03/book-em-danno-new-law-facilitates.html>

- Unique Management Gentle Nudge Process

[https://www.unique-mgmt.com/#gentle\\_nudge](https://www.unique-mgmt.com/#gentle_nudge)

October 2018

The following is the response to an inquiry by the Auditors hired by Marathon County to verify systems and procedures are within policy and are capable of producing accurate reports. The last time a questionnaire was filled out for them was in 2013. At that time we had just begun using a new Integrated Library System through V-Cat and were very optimistic given the sales demonstrations we had seen. While some progress has been made, substantial limitations in the capabilities of the software used by the consortium when using real world data rather than the canned data used for sales calls have prevented MCPL from carrying out a reasonable campaign to clear aged debt. The next step will be to list known questions and issues so that a course of action may be determined without the full benefit of historical data.

November, 2018

The software that was just being implemented at the time of my last reporting date in 2013 has failed to work in a way that solved our fine collecting needs as we had hoped. At the time of the last writing in 2013 we had just seen a demonstration of our new software's reporting capability. We understood by early 2014 that the software demonstration was presented with canned data designed to successfully demonstrate their wares as opposed to printing out our historical information which the implementation team was not able to accurately map in a way that made needed fields available for meaningful reporting. For example, the dates and titles of historical fines are not now available in printable statements for fines transferred in from our previous Integrated Library Software (ILS). This failing makes credible collections requests impossible using the statement generator in the current version of that software. We continue to aggressively pursue resolution.

Our second challenging factor is a refusal by Wisconsin Valley Library Service, the library system which oversees the consortia and manages the ILS software, to allow access to a REST API feature that is considered by the ILS software maker their current cornerstone of data access. The Application Programmer Interface, or API, allows retrieval of several types of data including Patron data. It may be possible to use this newer method to access the information we would need to report on the collections issues. WVLS has repeatedly stated that they will not allow API access to any Patron information. This is despite their understanding that the only computers that would have access to the API reporting system now have ILS software making all personally identifiable information of concern available on those machines. Here again, we have studied and practiced programming like systems so that if our pursuit of access pays off, we will be ready. 11 The third challenge for this important issue is that it has not garnered needed support by others in our consortia to address the handling of accounting records overlapping other members. By this I mean if a book owned by library B is lost by a patron at library A, then the cost recovery invoice is issued by library A, the loaning not the owning library. This means a write off of the invoice by library A would end the possibility of library B collecting their money as they normally would only after library B had been paid. Essentially one library could write off an asset of another library even though they are related only through consortia membership.

The fourth issue concerns a not yet proven inventory module in the ILS system. This, like the statement generator, was promised as a deliverable being finalized at the time the consortia chose the new system in 2013. By early-2016, after years of trying to make it work, we were informed that since a much better replacement module was in development we should wait until October of that year for resolution. That update never came. In mid-2018 a versioning upgrade was believed to have addressed core inventory issues. Testing is now underway. Our ability to produce accurate inventory reports is an essential part of resolving receivables in that we need to be sure items for which patrons are charged were not returned without proper check-in. ILS software has been adapted for use in a multi-entity system, as opposed to being purpose written for such environments. This coming February will mark the tenth anniversary of my sincere interest in collecting, cleaning, or clearing our accounts receivable. Our Patron Rights Policy limits information stored in the ILS database as a result of an industry standard policy we also have. Patrons may use our facilities without fear of others learning what it is they are reading about. This limiting of saved information combined with limited access to the information we do have, creates a challenging task to aggressively chase receivables as one would do in the private sector or even for fines collected in other governmental arenas. The aging of our receivables and a limited kit of tools to aggressively address this as one would in another industry has somewhat shifted my concerns from one of very old receivables being collected to one of cleaning uncollectable fines equitably so that we are not denying service to residents based on a non-working system which is, in many ways, out of the control of Marathon County Public Library. This writing comes at a time when we are asking questions, such as how do we write off old debt without opening our door to those who have borrowed books and DVDs and demonstrated no effort to return what was in some cases hundreds of dollars of library inventory.

Another question is the best way to collect when about two years ago the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction determined that Public Libraries in our state shall not utilize negative credit reporting or collection agencies as a tool in collections for what are determined to be benevolent organizations. Our Board of Trustees is aware of both the challenges and concerns associated with having and in fixing this concern. In what has in one way become part of a self resolution, our DVD loan numbers are down substantially from the time of my 2013 questionnaire response. This is possibly due to our Patrons having alternative economical sources of many of the videos online. The disparity between the ten cents a day for a book fine, and a dollar a day fine for a late DVD, skewed our receivables higher as the ratio of DVDs to books increased in the early part of this decade substantially raising fines owed to us. As high fine items use has diminished, so too have the fines amount we are owed. The downside is that it reduces fine income for those paid, but it does reduce accruing receivables.



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November 5, 2019

Dear Ralph,

The Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS) Board of Trustees has learned that MCPL Administration is assessing its membership in WVLS and options for service through the South Central Library System. At this time, the WVLS Board (which includes 6 representatives from Marathon County) is unaware of a service issue that would prompt MCPL Administration to leave WVLS. To help the WVLS Board and staff better understand this matter, I wish to invite you to an upcoming meeting of the WVLS Board of Trustees to present your concerns. Your feedback would be very helpful to WVLS' efforts to best serve MCPL and the citizens of Marathon County. Anything you can do to help us to help you would be welcome.

The next meetings of the WVLS Board are on Saturday, November 16, 2019 and January 18, 2020. Meetings start at 9:30 a.m. and typically run for 2-3 hours. To accommodate a time most convenient for you, the agenda item under "Reports - Resource Library" may be adjusted accordingly. Should you be available to attend one of these meetings, please contact me and I will ensure this discussion is placed on the agenda.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Bobrofsky". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" being particularly prominent.

Tom Bobrofsky, President  
WVLS Board of Trustees

Cc Sharon Hunter, MCPL Board President and Task Force member  
Katie Rosenberg MCPL Board member and former WVLS trustee  
Kari Sweeney, MCPL Board member and WVLS trustee  
Gary Beastrum, MCPL Board member and Task Force member  
MaiGer Moua, MCPL Board member and Task Force member  
Sarah Thurs, MCPL Board member  
Scott Winch, MCPL Board member





Ralph Illick, **Director**  
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November 8, 2019

Dear Tom,

Thank you for the constructive and respectful invitation to join your board for the November 16, 2019 WVLS Board of Trustees meeting. After conferring yesterday with my Library Board President, Sharon Hunter, we are **not aware of any service issues that we seek to resolve at the present time**. I can tell you that we are presently forming a task force with the assistance of the Marathon County Corporation Counsel that will be charged with reviewing and comparing our present membership in WVLS with a potential membership in the South Central Library System in the future. We believe that there may be added benefit to our membership there, based on factors that would include the potential for collaborating with many other peer-sized libraries, a significantly larger aggregate system collection, and other factors to be explored.

I do appreciate that this will affect a large number of people and libraries, so we are determined to make this **a thoughtful and deliberate process**, which will take our board and the task force well into 2020 to ensure a **thorough process**. We will keep your board apprised of the process, and will look forward to the presentation by the WVLS team at our December meeting. I will therefore respectfully decline your invitation for the present time but would appreciate it if we could keep the invitation open for a later date.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Illick", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Ralph Illick, Director  
Marathon County Public Library

Cc Sharon Hunter, MCPL Board President  
Kari Sweeney, MCPL Board Vice President  
Katie Rosenberg, MCPL Board Trustee  
Gary Beaström, MCPL Board Trustee  
MaiGer Moua, MCPL Board Trustee  
Sarah Thurs, MCPL Board Trustee  
Scott Winch, MCPL Board Trustee