

Dear MCPL Board & Task Force,

August 14, 2020

My name is Stephanie Schmidt and I am the director of the Crandon Public Library and the Co-Chair of V-Cat Council for 2020. I am writing to you regarding Marathon County Public Library's consideration of joining South Central Library System. Before making your final decision, I have a few thoughts and questions for you to consider.

WVLS has always provided superior service to the Crandon Public Library. The WVLS staff is a group of innovative, capable, and supportive individuals who meet the needs of member libraries every day. MCPL does not seem to contest this claim, as it has never identified any service issues with WVLS. What prompts the recommendation by MCPL administration to leave our library system if there are no identifiable shortcomings?

South Central Library System's service offerings may seem attractive, given their a la carte service menu. What does that mean? You pay for services you want and decline services you do not want? Presently MCPL can choose whether or not to receive 5-, 4-, or 3-day per week delivery. MCPL can choose whether it supports the OverDrive Advantage account. MCPL can choose to utilize the technology services that WVLS offers. Are choices similar for libraries in SCLS? Would it be fair to say that WVLS also offers an a la carte service menu? Additionally, what services is MCPL currently paying for with WVLS that it does not want?

In addition to clearly defining any service-related issues, it is also important to consider the current economic climate and the impact MCPL leaving WVLS would have on Marathon County and the other six counties in our system. If MCPL chose to join South Central, this would remove significant federal dollars from Marathon County and transfer them to Dane County.

MCPL staff has provided leadership within WVLS for 58 years by making important contributions to strong, influential committees which play a major role in the decision-making process within our system. In making the switch to SCLS, MCPL would lose much of its decision-making power—in comparison to SCLS counterparts like Madison Public Library, as well as funding, power and influence from northcentral Wisconsin. Why leave a system when you have so much influence within it?

In closing, let me express appreciation for how difficult it must be to make a major decision such as this, especially in a time of global pandemic. At the time the Task Force was established, no one could have predicted the extent to which COVID-19 would disrupt all types of public services, as well as affect revenue sources at all levels of government. It is my hope that the current state of uncertainty might persuade the Task Force and MCPL Board members to take their time with a thorough problem-solving analysis of the choice before you.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Schmidt
Crandon Public Library Director