

Dear MCPL Library System Task Force and MCPL Board of Trustees:

My name is Jennifer Thiele, and I am the director of the Marinette County Library System, a consolidated county library comprised of seven libraries that are mostly rural. Our main branch, however, is the second largest library in the Nicolet Federated Library System, with only our resource library, Brown County Library, being larger. NFLS functions very well, but only with the equal participation of its large AND small libraries. We work together to allocate resources in the most fair way possible.

If Marinette County were to exit NFLS, there would be huge repercussions for everyone in NFLS. Not only would Marinette County libraries lose some really great resources and support, the other member libraries would suffer just as badly, if not worse. NFLS is very similar to WVLS in that it has few large libraries, but several rural libraries who absolutely depend on their system as their only means of support. These small libraries do not have municipal technology support, accounting or human resources. Often times, small libraries need both legal counsel and consulting, both of which the systems provide.

But this is not all that library systems provide. I have been fortunate to be able to work with WVLS through their Director Mentorship Program, a very supportive endeavor to pair new directors with seasoned ones. I have been more than impressed with the system's outreach to directors outside of WVLS (like me). WVLS does a lot of research to find a good match to benefit the libraries as a whole. Throughout this process, I have found Marla to be extremely warm and approachable when it comes to questions and concerns. She cares very much about WVLS, and the services it provides to its directors.

I think Marathon County should reconsider its haste when exiting this system. I think a better route would be to speak directly with Marla, as she has always been more than accommodating to try to compromise on issues. The only way we can get better as libraries is to work together in a myriad of ways, the first step being to take more time to discuss the issues at play. You are not just hurting the library system by exiting so quickly, you are also sacrificing the small libraries who might as a result, have to experience service cuts in the future.

Whether MCPL decides to stay part of WVLS or join South Central Library System, it's not going to affect the libraries in Marinette County. However, I do think it would be beneficial for MCPL to not rush this decision or process. I think working together makes all libraries stronger, and this is especially true in the current environment we are in.

Thank you for your time,

--Dr. Jennifer Thiele

Director

Marinette County Library System