

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

Thank you in advance for reading this brief letter. By way of introduction, I am the Executive Director of the Rhinelander District Library (RDL). I have been a librarian in schools, corporate settings, and public libraries for over twenty-five years. I am on the Cooperative Circulation, and V-Cat committees. I am also President-elect and serve on the Cooperative Circulation Committee. As member of WLA, I have served as WAPLs Programming Conference Chair. In addition, I served on the Public Library System Redesign Project member, Chapter 43 Committee. I have worked in both IFLS and Wisconsin Valley Library Service Systems as well as in the cooperative and state library organizations in Michigan.

I am extremely concerned about the abrupt nature which MCPL is considering leaving the Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS). To be direct, Marla Sepnafski and the staff of WVLS have always been responsive to any topics or issues my staff or I have with WVLS. We have found that they are easily reached by all available communication methods. WVLS staff take their time, coming in early, staying late, or traveling to provide information, programming, technology installations RDL would not otherwise access locally, further clarifying points of information or being a sounding board to concerns. There have been good, solid discussions to all our benefit improving procedures, and routines. This has led to in-person programming during in-services and direct practices among my staff in their communication with staff at WVLS. This has strengthened understanding of the role of WVLS in assisting its member libraries. Why hasn't the Marathon Public Library Director, or Board, engaged with WVLS in a similar fashion expressing any concerns regarding provided services or how those services are provided? Rhinelander District Library knows that if these questions regarding services and needs were asked, answers would come in a timely, clear manner. It does not appear they have been asked or wish to be answered. Why has the Marathon County Library Board not discussed this with WVLS or their board?

Wisconsin Valley Library Service was instrumental and highly effective in properly closing libraries—and then instrumental and highly effective in opening them back up with few issues from circulation to technology during this pandemic. Their staff kept all communication lines open—to WVLS and between the libraries—with multiple weekly emails, online meetings and newsletters that aggregated information. They suggested and helped implement technology that allowed staff to work from home and staff and boards to meet safely and virtually. Their staff presented technology and helped with keeping libraries in touch with their patrons. They shared virtual programming from around the state. They were completely reachable—by phone and email—and responded to communications as quickly as possible. This ongoing situation is a single example of how WVLS works for its member libraries. And it makes me wonder, why is MCPL insistent on pushing through the process now? What is so very urgent, now? Because it is not clear why this move would have ever been discussed, without some prelude or warning.

RDL staff truly appreciates the collection and staff contributions of MCPL to the larger WVLS community. We would prefer not to lose their perspective. Thank you again for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Virginia Roberts, MA, MLS
Executive Director
Rhinelander District Library

