

At the end of 2019, the Marathon County Public Library (MCPL) Director asked his Board of Trustees to consider moving Marathon County from WVLS to the South Central Library System (SCLS), headquartered in Madison. The Library Board formed a Task Force which held six one-hour meetings in January, February, March, May, June and July 2020. [Public notice for the seventh Task Force meeting on August 17](#) stated that a “possible recommendation” might be made to the MCPL Board scheduled to meet an hour later on the same day. However, Task Force members’ discussion identified enough unfinished business to occupy four more meetings and they deferred a recommendation “to the end of the year.” The Library Board approved the extension.

The next meeting of the MCPL Task Force and Library Board will be on **Monday, October 19**. The information packet for the 11:00 a.m. Task Force meeting, available [here](#), indicates there will be a review and discussion of a SWOT Analysis. Task Force members were each asked to complete the SWOT and email their responses to Task Force Chair Mark Arend prior to this meeting. A summary of their comments is attached.

The packet for the 12:00 p.m. Library Board meeting is available [here](#).

Also attached are copies of correspondence shared with MCPL Task Force members and other library/county leaders since the September meeting:

- A letter from **Erica Brewster**, Director of the Edward U. Demmer Library (Three Lakes), that shares her concerns about using a SWOT analysis to evaluate WVLS and SCLS, especially at this point in the process.
- A response from **Jamie Matczak**, WVLS Continuing Education and Training Consultant, to recent comments about WVLS' Continuing Education and Training Program reported by MCPL Administration to the MCPL Task Force, Library Board, and Marathon County Extension, Education & Economic Development Committee in September. Her letter includes 3 accompanying endorsements/letters from: **Anna Palmer**, UW-Madison, iSchool; **Leah Langby**, Library Development and Youth Services Coordinator, IFLS Library System; and **Marge Loch-Wouters**, Southwest Wisconsin Library System Youth Consultant.
- A letter from **Laurie Ollhoff**, Marathon County resident and Assistant Director at the T.B. Scott Free Library (Merrill), to **Becky Buch**, Marathon County Supervisor, in response to the letters from MCPL Administration regarding WVLS services and leadership that were included in the September Task Force meeting packet.
- A letter from **Sonja Ackerman**, Marathon County Representative on the WVLS Board of Trustees, that shares her concerns over the MCPL Library System Inquiry Task Force process, and lists points for the Task Force to consider.

The [Marathon Co. Public Library System Exploration Information and Updates page](#) on the WVLS website includes information about MCPL Task Force meetings since January along with the letters mentioned above. Anyone with an interest in the MCPL

Task Force process and future of WVLS should take the time to read this information. MCPL also maintains its own Task Force web page [here](#).

WI Statute [43.18](#) outlines the process for a county withdrawing from a library system. The earliest date Marathon County could withdraw is January 2022, following adoption by 2/3 vote of a resolution by the Marathon County Board of Supervisors at least 6 months prior to the close of the system's fiscal year.

Please feel free to contact me with any thoughts, questions or concerns you may have about the information shared in this update. Your feedback is always welcome.

Have a wonderful weekend!

Marla

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SCLS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Larger collection of materials	Voting system?	Continuing education and professional development more relevant to the size of our library	Smaller libraries who rely on MCPL for resources will need to find other resources
Weighted voting system	Smaller fish in a bigger bowl?	Chance to collaborate with like size libraries	Loss of revenue from WVLS rental space
A la cart pricing	Deliveries less often	MCPL can reorganize to do services offered by being involved with SCLS such as ILS database and collection and patron list	Does this eliminate MCPL as a resource library?
Larger resource staff for MPLS to approach with questions and get ideas	Physical distance from Wausau	MCPL could be a resource library for the northern part of the state	More expensive initially?
Specialized staff	Staff not located in the same building	Chance for MCPL to enhance its services and programming with support of SCLS	Does northeast Wisconsin lose the service of a resource library?
Size of area and organization	They are large enough that some have questioned whether they are already too large	More materials available to all patrons.	Larger system with more members
More services are available.	The geographical shape of SCLS is undesirable, and that will be magnified if MCPL joins.	Resources available provides MCPL the ability to reorganize/ restructure to eliminate existing staff positions resulting in short and long term savings	Transitioning
Volume of materials available	Long wait time for high-demand materials and SCLS patrons are very active at placing holds - MCPL patrons will not expect this and it may take a lot of PR to justify it	New people = new ideas and innovation	Building new relationships
Members include representation from vibrant, growing urban centers	Expensive - I would estimate MCPL member fees to be somewhere around \$300K	Increased training options	Limited understanding of MCPL operations, functions, needs

WVLS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Located at MPLS	Paying for services MPLC does not use or need	Restructuring and merging with other systems might be more cost effective for WVLS and provide opportunities for the other libraries in its system	ILS limitations
Close by - ease of contact and delivery	Communication between WVLS & MCPL	Resource library for northeast Wisconsin	Loss of MCPL as a resource library
Big fish in a smaller bowl.	Relationship between the two have deteriorated	Staff understand how MCPL works and potential to improve relationships/communications/service	Loss of largest library in WVLS.
Existing system with known staff and resources	MCPL is the largest library so no peer libraries	MCPL is a net borrower and has been for years. This means they utilize collections from the smaller libraries to fill their own holds, rather than supplying their materials to the smaller libraries (which is the opposite of what nonlibrary professionals would expect).	A MCPL departure would force WVLS to reduce its offering of services and probably lay off staff. This will widen the inequity of library service to WI residents that the state has spent years trying to fix (through the PLSR effort). This is a significant setback from a statewide perspective
Support of smaller member libraries	Specialized staff to enhance MCPL programming	Having the system located in the library building allows for a close working relationship that can be advantageous for both organizations.	Decreasing financial support from member counties with limited resources now and in the future
The location of the system and its relatively compact geographical structure allows for truly regional focus.	Apparent difficulty of accessing some services		Smaller system does not allow MCPL to transcend its mission to transform lives, be on the cutting edge, innovate
Skilled and talented consultants	Some services no available.		MCPL departure will take money and jobs away from Marathon County.

