

OCTOBER 2020 UPDATE TO MEMBERS

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.



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DATE: October 5, 2020

TO: Mark Arend, MCPL Task Force Library System Inquiry Committee Chair

FROM: Erica Brewster, Director, Edward U. Demmer Memorial Library, Oneida County, Three Lakes

RE: Marathon County Public Library Task Force Library System Inquiry: use of SWOT analysis

I am curious about the methods being used by the task force as they work toward a decision about which library system best meets their strategic needs.

For your next meeting you are using a SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats), a common tool that many people have heard of or have used as a way of reviewing and analyzing a situation. However, in this scenario, I would not be surprised if the members of the task force feel incapable of fully participating in this meeting and exercise and find themselves confused.

Prior to becoming a library director, I earned my Master of Public Health degree and employed my training for more than ten years in facilitation and community development - six overseas and five as a family living educator for UW-Extension in Oneida County (2010-2015). I have guided multiple groups through long-range strategic planning and difficult decisions. The priority is always to make sure all members of the group fully understand all aspects of the situation so they are capable of contributing to the discussion and decision.

As I reviewed the questions for the SWOT analysis, I agree these are key questions that need to be answered. However, I would be challenged to answer even one myself despite my experience as a library director and having followed the task force.

As the Marathon County Public Library does not have a current strategic plan, many of these questions about a system's ability to respond to a library's strategic needs become impossible to answer, including:

- "What services do they provide that would allow MCPL to reallocate resources to other projects and services?"
- "Do they have expertise to that help [sic] MCPL enhance its services?"

If a library's director and trustees do not know and cannot communicate what services need outsourcing or enhancing, no system can be judged able to perform better or worse in providing opportunities for the library.

Several of the questions rely on the viewpoints of other libraries within a system outside of MCPL.

- "Have they earned a good reputation for service and support?"
- "Do they have solid relationships with member libraries?"
- "How willing are they to improve their service?"
- "How professional are they in helping you enhance your services?"
- "How does the system support libraries' advocacy efforts with local officials?"



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- "How stable is the system? Does there seem to be a lot of internal discord? This could be between system staff, between member libraries, or between system staff and member libraries."
- "Do libraries seem happy and satisfied with system services?"

At no point in the process have other libraries in WVLS, or, to my or other WVLS directors' knowledge, libraries in SCLS, been asked to respond to those questions. Absent direct inquiry to librarians at the grassroots level, it is unfair to expect task force members to assess from afar how things "seem" to be going in either system. Unedited comments responding to these questions from library directors and library trustees from both systems' libraries would be the only way of assessing these questions.

The task force has heard some limited reports from WVLS and SCLS staff that could help them respond to some questions, but leave them short of being fully fleshed out:

- "How innovative are they?"
- "Are their staff experienced and capable?"
- "Are there opportunities that MCPL might miss out on by choosing this system?"

These questions are a small minority of the list, and these three questions alone could be worth an hour's discussion.

In my experience, SWOT questions would be presented at the first or second meeting and it would have taken seven or eight meetings or more to explore them. As a facilitator, I would have charged individuals on the task force to research questions and report back to the committee members. Then, with full participation, the members could begin to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, or threats (constraints) of each possible future. These would be discussed by the whole group using the time necessary to reflect the weight of the decision.

Alternatively, there are other methods that could be far more useful and more efficient to helping participants make a major decision between two service providers, and all techniques would benefit from a trained and experienced outside facilitator.

When any situation this complex is misunderstood or under analyzed, the result is far too likely to come from the thoughts of the executive or administration of the organization and not from the independent understanding of the public representatives appointed to provide governance to that organization.

I am curious as to why are you choosing to use the SWOT method at this point in the process? Will the task force, library trustees, and members of the Marathon County EEE Committee truly have confidence in the results of the discussion to date?

Like you, I want all stakeholders to have a clear picture of both futures, with WVLS or SCLS.

Thank you.

October 2, 2020

Dear MCPL Public Library System Task Force; MCPL Board of Trustees; and Marathon County Extension, Education and Economic Development Committee Members:

My name is Jamie Matczak, and I am the Education Consultant for the Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS). Before joining WVLS in 2018, I served as the Interim Director, Assistant Director, and Education Consultant (2006-2017) for the Nicolet Federated Library System (NFLS) in Green Bay, where I served 42 libraries in eight counties throughout Northeast Wisconsin.

I take my work very seriously. When people ask what I do for a living, I say, "I serve and help public libraries." It is a simple answer, but it is at the heart of what I do. Unlike most of the WVLS team, my office is located offsite from the resource library, a situation that is similar of staffs in 13 of 16 public library systems. I can be reached easily and quickly by phone or email, and I make a point to respond to all inquiries from member library colleagues within 24 business hours.

Like many in the WVLS community, I am very concerned with the possibility of Marathon County Public Library (MCPL) leaving our system to join South Central Library System (SCLS). What unsettles me even more are the [MCPL administration letters \(under Staff Training\)](#) included in the September 21 MCPL Task Force packet, and subsequent comments from the MCPL Director during the MCPL Board meeting that followed. The comments about continuing education that MCPL receives have me concerned and confused, because this was the first time I heard about dissatisfaction. Before addressing this, I wish to point out that I agree with this statement in the September Task Force Packet: *SCLS provides a wide variety of specialized hands-on training and conducts workshops in-person and via web conferencing.* I have worked with Jean Anderson, the SCLS Continuing Education Consultant, for a number of years. I consider her a colleague and friend, and she does excellent work in this area.

WVLS also provides specialized hands-on training, workshops in person, and web conferences. In my almost 15 years of experience in the library profession, I have:

- Coordinated over 150 web conferencing events on a variety of topics for libraries
- Coordinated over 80 in-person face-to-face workshops
- Produced over 20 in-person trainings for libraries larger than MCPL
- Produced over 50 digital trainings as part of the Digital Byte series, that libraries can view at any time (several of which are shared by SCLS staff for SCLS member libraries in its blog, [Tech Bits](#))
- Created coursework for five different classes on behalf of the iSchool at UW-Madison since 2014
- Presented at over 30 statewide events and national conferences on topics in the areas of marketing, social media, communications, personnel, and technology.

There is also additional training being coordinated by my WVLS teammates in the areas of web design, cataloging, graphic design, public speaking and more.

I communicate continuing education and training opportunities with MCPL administration and staff via:

- Weekly email correspondence called Monday Mentions
- WVLS Monthly Newsletter
- Blog Posts via the WVLS website

Given the magnitude of MCPL's desire for relevant continuing education and training opportunities and the criticisms about the WVLS continuing education service program, I am surprised that I have not received any suggestions or ideas for improvement from MCPL administration and staff. Surveys are sent

out at least once a year gathering feedback to our members CE and training needs. Is MCPL staff participating in these? One of the letters in the September MCPL Task Force meeting packet states: *SCLS has a deeper and broader level of service and experience.* What kinds of service and experience is MCPL staff looking for?

If MCPL administration and staff do not believe that my work has met their needs, here is what I can and would like to do:

Attend quarterly meetings with MCPL management on continuing education and training needs, statewide and national resources.

Coordinate a series of hands-on training specifically for MCPL staff needs (As the Continuing Education Coordinator for NFLS, I coordinated and presented on a year-long training series for Brown County Library staff)

Organize a yearly workshop for MCPL staff, an opportunity I offered to MCPL Administration in 2018 (I coordinated something similar for Brown County Library and its 100+ staff from 2011-2017).

I'm hoping the attached letters will convince you that if MCPL is not receiving continuing education and training to the level that they need and expect, it's not because I don't have the ability or the willingness to try. These letters also reiterate that when it comes to continuing education and training - as in areas of marketing, youth services, consulting, and technology – public library systems work together. We collaborate. We share resources and expertise. I would enjoy collaborating with MCPL to plan opportunities to meet the staffs' continuing education and training needs.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email and the attached correspondence. I am happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have, regarding continuing education and training for our member libraries.

Sincerely,

Jamie Matczak (she, her, hers)
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September 28, 2020

To: Marathon County Extension, Education and Economic Development Committee
MCPL Library System Task Force
MCPL Board of Trustees

From: Marge Loch-Wouters, Southwest Wisconsin Library System Youth Consultant, 2018 Wisconsin Library Association President and 2010 Wisconsin Librarian of the Year

Re: WVLS Continuing Education

I was highly dismayed to learn recently that the administration of the Marathon County Public Library feels that it doesn't have advanced support for Continuing Education (CE) opportunities with the Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS).

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you the level of excellence in the provision of Continuing Education by WVLS and its staff, particularly their Education Consultant, Jamie Matczak. To introduce myself to you, I have over 40 years of experience as a public librarian in Wisconsin (retiring from full-time work in 2015) and recently retired after seven years as an adjunct lecturer for UW-Madison, teaching graduate library courses for the iSchool. I continue to work as a consultant.

The quality of the CE and training coming out of WVLS is outstanding. The *Digital Bytes* series of over 60 videos is a well-regarded resource not just in WVLS but also around the state. There are multiple examples of collaborative workshops and CE efforts among all 16 library systems that Jamie has helped coordinate as well as pitched in, to bring to WVLS libraries. The [Wild Wisconsin Winter Web Conference](#), coordinated by Jamie for the last 8 years, has brought national experts on management, leadership, diversity and a host of other topics together for an outstanding educational opportunity for beginning and advanced librarians in libraries of ALL sizes in Wisconsin.

Jamie is one the most highly regarded Continuing Education consultants for libraries in our state. Her ability to plan, organize, inspire, seek out expert voices from inside and outside our state and coordinate vital CE is greatly admired. Her outstanding work at WVLS was preceded by her outstanding work at Nicolet Federated Library System, based in Green Bay. She is a consummate collaborator - always seeks input and is a great listener and brainstormer when she is approached with ideas for potential content.

I am aware of her great work, because, like most public library systems, WVLS opens their CE opportunities to interested library staff throughout Wisconsin. Staff from all sizes of libraries have been able to access WVLS online/web content as well as attend workshops (just as other WVLS members are welcome virtually and in-person at system CE offerings around the state). This strong cross-pollination in learning means that in Wisconsin libraries have access to many fantastic opportunities.

Based on the number and quality of these collaborations and opportunities, I have a difficult time understanding why MCPL library staff have not been able to benefit from or utilize WVLS CE. I worked for a number of years at La Crosse Public Library (also a resource library for the Winding Rivers Library System, WRLS, based in La Crosse) and many times our LPL staff not only participated in WRLS CE but also presented as part of WRLS workshops to share our expertise. We understood that our library's ability financially to support attendance at CE opportunities within the system and, more widely, at other WI systems and beyond, gave us a unique perspective: we could both learn and share with and

from our WRLS peer libraries. That was the strength that made our system resource library CE learning so vital.

Jamie is a stellar example of the best that a library system can offer in a Continuing Education and training consultant. I believe we have this strong CE presence in WI because of her support, collaboration and leadership. WVLS is considered one of the powerhouses of continuing education for libraries of all sizes in the state, and MCPL is fortunate to have her as a resource.



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September 25, 2020

To the Marathon County Extension, Education, and Economic Development Committee; the MCPL Library System Task Force, and the MCPL Board of Trustees:

I was surprised to read and hear that the Marathon County Public Library director and staff were unsatisfied with the continuing education offerings of the Wisconsin Valley Library Service. Jamie Matczak, the Education Consultant at the Wisconsin Valley Library Service is well-regarded among her continuing education peers across the state. Her work is consistently innovative, responsive to the needs of the librarians she works with, and of very high quality. People from all over the state participate in the webinars she develops. I regularly refer library staff from the IFLS area to the Digital Bytes trainings she and her colleagues have produced.

All 16 of Wisconsin Public Library Systems do not compete with each other in the area of continuing education, but rather freely share ideas, access to programs, and offer both financial and tactical support. The Wisconsin library systems' continuing education consultants work together as a team, sharing ideas and programs and collaborating to bring speakers and events that would be difficult to accomplish as a single system. Jamie has always been an extremely valuable member of that team. She has innovative ideas, including the Wild Wisconsin Winter Web Conference, now in its eighth year. She has the skill and attention to detail to keep the ball rolling on large and small projects alike. She listens to the librarians she works with and is sensitive to their needs, she comes up with in-person and virtual options that are tailored to the training need, and she is intentional about her work. She is ready to lend a hand to other consultants, and is never afraid to bring our focus back to the needs of our libraries and library staff.

Because of Jamie and her WVLS colleagues' work, and because of the work she engages in with consultants from other systems, library staff from all over the state (and beyond!) have access to a wide variety of high-quality resources.

Sincerely,

Leah Langby
Library Development and Youth Services Coordinator
langby@ifls.lib.wi.us



September 28, 2020

Dear Marathon County Education, Extension and Economic Development Committee:

For the past 15 years, I have worked in continuing education (CE) for library staff at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Information School (iSchool) and my job duties often extend into the Wisconsin public library CE community. I attend statewide meetings of library system education consultants, participate in the statewide library CE listserv, and partner with library systems on projects.

Based on my background, I was surprised to read that the Marathon County Public Library was unhappy with the continuing education provided by the Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS). Library systems often coordinate with each other to brainstorm ideas, share access, and divide costs for both in-person and online training. Library systems strive to ensure public libraries in all parts of the state have access to the same types of training resources and a culture of sharing prevails. In fact, the WVLS education consultant Jamie Matczak was one of the first people to bring the idea of widely shared CE content across systems with her inception of the Wild Wisconsin Winter Web Conference each January. The conference began in 2013 and invites all library systems to participate at a very low cost. In my experience, WVLS provides training opportunities to their libraries on par with or even exceeding other library systems in the state.

Ms. Matczak's prominence in the Wisconsin library community led the iSchool to hire her in 2014 to teach online CE courses, and she continues to teach for us every year. Her courses are so well designed that they are used as models for other instructors, and she regularly suggests new course ideas that turn into popular classes. In course evaluations, students rate her content as being extremely applicable to their jobs. One student comment on a course evaluation reads "this was a great class, and Jamie was a wonderful instructor. I would take another class with her and would highly recommend her classes to others." The strong evaluations are due in part to the thoughtful course design, but also because of her ability to weave ideas from other disciplines into library contexts. This gives students a contemporary, holistic view of work and services that can be applied to all library settings. In my opinion, Ms. Matczak is tuned into the challenges library staff face, offering creative, practical solutions that bring libraries to the next level.

I have observed Ms. Matczak's abilities on large and small scales and am confident that she has the background, connections, and drive to bring high-quality educational experiences to WVLS member libraries. She is an innovator in the library CE community and does work to lift up all libraries throughout the state.

If I can provide further information, please do not hesitate to contact me (ahpalmer@wisc.edu or 608-509-6861).

Sincerely,

Anna Palmer
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September 24, 2020

Becky Buch
Marathon County District #7 Supervisor
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Dear Ms. Buch,

I am addressing this letter to you as my Marathon County District Supervisor. My name is Laurie Ollhoff. I am a librarian who has been a Marathon County resident for the majority of my life. My connection to Wisconsin Valley Library Service and its relationship to Marathon County runs deep. I was employed with the Wausau School District for many years working in various capacities in the school libraries. Most recently, my career includes a stint as Library Director for the Edgar School District before transitioning to public library work at the T.B. Scott Free Library in Merrill, where I am currently the Assistant Library Director. Given my local library background in various capacities, I feel comfortable expressing my concerns regarding the Marathon County Public Library (MCPL) administration's quest to move from the Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS) to the South Central Library System (SCLS).

I was greatly troubled after reviewing letters referencing the service and leadership of WVLS that were in the MCPL September Task Force meeting packet. As the T.B. Scott Free Library Assistant Director, I find them to be inaccurate and misleading. Our staff has always considered WVLS staff to be extremely helpful and accommodating. They are well trained in their areas of expertise, they work hard, and they provide great customer service equally and equitably to their member libraries. WVLS staff go above and beyond their local responsibilities and have developed an amazing network throughout Wisconsin and beyond to provide high-quality services and advanced training at no additional cost. I find it difficult to believe that the MCPL administration and staff do not similarly benefit from WVLS staff expertise and services.

I question whether the current MCPL administration has truly spent adequate time discussing their concerns with staff of the Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS) and whether MCPL administration has allowed ample time for WVLS to address any service issues. How is it otherwise possible for a decision of this magnitude about system membership to be made without those factors being addressed? I also question whether a MCPL strategic plan of service and future goals has been put on the table for the competing systems to address.

We are all in the midst of operational chaos and economic challenges as a result of COVID-19. Given the financial uncertainty local governments are facing now and well into the future, would a decision to move service from WVLS to SCLS be a financially prudent decision?

Especially when it would result in thousands of state library aid dollars being removed from Marathon County's economic infrastructure and transferred to staff and service support expenditures based in Dane County.

My knowledge of this situation comes from my connection to the weave of the Marathon County Public Library and the Wisconsin Valley Library Service in the local and regional library fabric. I do not, however, believe that Marathon County taxpayers have been informed that this decision is currently under discussion, especially those who live closer to and use libraries from adjacent WVLS counties. MCPL is deeply woven into the fabric of the surrounding small counties and communities as well as Marathon County. Are county taxpayers aware that their ability to use the libraries most convenient to them may change? Or that major regional library initiatives and decisions would essentially be made by Dane County employees and residents instead of library system professionals based in the MCPL downtown branch if this move happens?

MCPL has been the WVLS resource library since public library systems were established by state law decades ago. It is an important north central regional partner, but it doesn't exist in a vacuum. Shared resources from the other 24 WVLS libraries service Marathon County residents because MCPL is a net borrower from the other 24 collections. The system membership costs paid by T.B. Scott Free Library and others make possible the annual WVLS \$10,000 collection development grant to MCPL. The entire state network of 16 public library systems share resources and training opportunities to fulfill Wisconsin's goal of providing universal library service to all residents. MCPL should be proud of the role its library plays in the region, but the administration letters to the Task Force don't reflect that. To imply MCPL doesn't fulfill or benefit from that role because the rest of the WVLS libraries and their staff members are somehow inferior is as disingenuous as it would be to regard the small community libraries which became branches after the Marathon County consolidation as inconsequential. There is nothing currently stopping MCPL administration from taking advantage of wider collegial relationships with the three similar sized libraries in SCLS or anywhere else in Wisconsin. WVLS facilitates networking for any and all of its libraries.

I have worked closely with several MCPL staff over the years and on various issues, as our libraries serve many of the same patrons. I believe both libraries benefit from our association. As a Marathon County resident/taxpayer and Assistant Director of T.B. Scott Free Library, I strongly encourage you and other members of the Board to table a decision of this magnitude to a time when chaos is not at the front door and when the economy has had an opportunity to reach some stability.

Thank you for your time and consideration as you consider this decision of such great magnitude.

With kind regards,

Laurie A. Ollhoff

City of Wausau & Marathon County Resident

cc: MCPL Task Force and Board Members
MC EE&ED Committee Members
MCPL County Executive

October 15, 2020

Dear MCPL Task Force, Library Board members, and MCEE&ED Committee members,

As a former MCPL employee, avid library user, and current Marathon County appointed representative to the WVLS Board, I am writing again to express my sincere concerns over the MCPL Library System Inquiry Task Force process. I have continued to follow the Task Force's work and find the process to be flawed and terribly one-sided.

Please consider the following points as a follow up to my letter of [August 15, 2020](#).

- Library budgets are currently strained due to issues related to the economy and COVID 19. Imminent reductions in revenues at local, county and state levels have potential to impact current library revenues/services for several years to come.
- A migration to a new library system is costly and would only be a lateral move for MCPL. Both systems have functioning catalogs that get the work done. Absent a survey of both SCLS and WVLS libraries addressing specific frustrations with, features, and cost of WVLS V-Cat vs. SCLS LINKcat, it is impossible to accurately assess and compare practical functionality and member library satisfaction.
- Access to UW-Madison's collection is not improved through SCLS membership. As UW-Madison's collection is not included in the South Central Library System's online catalog database, the inter-loan process for these materials is the same whether MCPL is a member of WVLS or SCLS. All libraries in the state have access to materials from academic libraries through the WISCAT interlibrary loan system which is distinctly separate from the online catalogs of public library system consortiums.
- MCPL's communications about WVLS services continue to be ambiguous and inconsistent. While recent letters from MCPL staff enumerate dissatisfaction with WVLS services and leadership, MCPL has indicated for over a decade that "WVLS has provided effective leadership" in its annual report submitted to DPI. This opinion was implicitly reinforced in a November 8, 2019 letter from Director Ralph Illick to WVLS Board President Tom Bobrofsky which stated "[they] are not aware of any service issues that [they] seek to resolve at the present time." If there have not been significant service issues, why is there an investigation at all? MCPL's service goals and unmet service needs have not been articulated. Invitations to meet with the WVLS Board have been turned down. If interpersonal issues are getting in the way of straightforward communication, they should be honestly addressed before subjecting Marathon County taxpayers to a potentially costly and disruptive move.
- MCPL loses influence and opportunities for leadership as a SCLS member. Membership in a larger system means MCPL is in a larger pool of libraries. Contrary to the rhetoric that weighted voting offers greater influence, MCPL would have less of a voice/impact on system services and its influence would be diluted in SCLS. Marathon County appoints seven of the 15 seats on the WVLS Board.
- Implementation of recommendations from the Public Library System Redesign (PLSR) project, a 5-year study of public library systems, is just getting underway. Under direction by the state legislature, and supervision by the gubernatorial appointed Council for Libraries and Network Development, this project will logically and fairly restructure library system services across the state. Making a speculative decision to leave one system for another at this point in PLSR implementation is premature.

I had high hopes for this process to be transparent, thoughtful, and diligent. I hoped for sincere conversations, not monologues. I hoped for a clear definition of desired results based on a strategic plan; data and stories from the public about whether a change in system membership is needed or desired given estimated costs;

spreadsheets on how the extra costs to join SCLS and maintain membership would be paid over the next five years, and what would have to end in order to afford them; and a thorough analysis on why changes cannot happen with the current system. So far, the system membership decision is riding on marketing information provided by the systems absent any guidance articulating MCPL's future service needs, as well as on pronouncements and unproven assumptions that a bigger system provides better service because it offers opportunities for MCPL to more closely align with large libraries. It is a process totally without input from the residents of Marathon County and places the cart prominently before the horse.

Please carefully consider the implications of your decisions in the coming weeks.

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