

Colby Community Library  
Board of Trustees  
505 W. Spence Street  
Colby, WI 54421

January 22, 2021

MCPL Board of Trustees:

As a community located on the border between Clark and Marathon Counties, it is with great consternation that we watched three members of the Marathon County Public Library (MCPL) Task Force recommend to the MCPL Library Board that MCPL desert the libraries of Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS) to join with South Central Library System (SCLS).

A few questions:

Does the average taxpaying citizen of Marathon County even know about this potential move and how it will affect them? The fact that this is being considered without full disclosure to residents is troubling.

Does anyone pay attention to the fact that many more people are competing for the materials owned by SCLS libraries? Clark County residents talk to Wood and Portage County residents who are amazed at how quickly patrons obtain materials through WVLS by comparison. That is NOT the case in their experience as they have very long wait times for new SCLS items. The two systems also use entirely different online catalogs for checkout. Why has there been no study of potential changes impacting the Marathon County residents who use libraries in adjacent WVLS and SCLS counties?

Does anyone realize the full potential financial impact of lost state library aid funding attached to Marathon County that will move with it to fall under the control of Madison based SCLS instead of WVLS based in Wausau?

Does anyone care to fully explore MCPL administration intent to balance their books by funding this plan through attrition of central Wisconsin jobs (both at MCPL and the Wausau based WALTCO courier service) that will instead be performed by Dane County employees?

Does the fact that 24 libraries in north central Wisconsin would be left without a resource library required by state statute bother anyone after Wausau has been our regional hub for half a century?

Does anyone care to imagine what Wisconsin would look like if all resource libraries shirked their regional leadership responsibilities to focus exclusively on themselves and not their neighbors?

Does anyone care to research past recruitment presentations SCLS has made to other counties to see how those turned out?

Does it matter that in the 50-year history of public library systems no county has left a system citing unavailability of library materials or inadequate continuing education and collaboration opportunities? Wisconsin's network of library system services and inter-loan has porous borders rather than stop signs regardless of geographical location.

Does the fact that this decision will impact Marathon County and surrounding areas for years to come, even after current management changes, bother anyone? Or that there is a potential for disruption of library service throughout the northern half of the state?

Does the timing of this potential move seem foolhardy to anyone? Like the rest of the world, library services have been turned upside down with COVID-19. It will take time to get things back on track. We all need to be there supporting our communities. The upheaval of a library system break up is the last thing needed during these turbulent times.

We ask that you carefully consider the repercussions of your actions before making a hasty decision that will affect thousands of people in Marathon and surrounding counties.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Hediger, Nancy O'Brien, Cathy Johnson, Terra Newman, Lee Kaschinska, and Kris Woik  
Members of the Colby Community Library Board of Trustees