

To: Marathon County Public Library Board of Trustees  
 From: Library System Task Force  
 Re: Recommendation to the Library Board  
 Date: 11 January 2021

In 2019 the Marathon County Public Library (MCPL) Library Board established a task force to examine whether the Library should remain a member of the Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS) or become a member of the South Central Library System (SCLS). While the needs of other WVLS member libraries and the library community as a whole was considered, the Task Force's goal was to determine what was best for MCPL and the people it serves.

At their meeting on 21 December 2020 the Task Force voted 3 to 1 (with one abstention) to recommend to the Library Board that the Library should leave WVLS and become a member of SCLS. The remainder of this memo will explain the process the Task Force used and their reasons for this decision.

### **Task Force**

The following persons were appointed to the Task Force by the Library Board:

- Sharon Hunter, Library Board President
- Gary Beaström, Library trustee and Marathon Co. Supervisor
- Scott Winch, Library trustee and Stratford School District Administrator
- Rebecca Frisch, Director, Marathon County Conservation, Planning, & Zoning Department (retired)
- Shannon Schultz, Public Library Administration Consultant, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Division for Libraries & Technology
- Mark Arend, Assistant Director, Winnefox Library System (retired), Task Force Chair

Beginning in January 2020 the Task Force met monthly, except for April.

### **Process**

The Charge from the MCPL Board was to prepare a "comprehensive list of pros and cons regarding whether the Marathon County Public Library should move to the South Central Library System or remain with the Wisconsin Valley Library Service. The Task Force shall also assess the pros and cons and shall formulate a final recommendation to the Library Board regarding the ultimate question."

Among the factors the Task force examined were:

- Employee Attraction and Retention: When looking at library systems, does system membership impact MCPL's ability to attract and retain exceptional employees?
- Technology: What are the capacities of each system for identifying, promoting, and supporting existing and emerging technologies to ensure that MCPL is positioned to be an industry leader in Wisconsin.
- Financial: What is the Cost/Benefit for MCPL for each choice.
- Institutional Culture
- Innovation (Organizational Excellence).
- System Governance, including organization and decision-making.
- Service to Customers (Internal)/SWOT analysis/summary.

Extensive information was provided by both systems, for which the Task Force gives warm thanks. The Task Force also thanks the many library directors, trustees, system staff, and others who provided information and comments.

### **Reasons for Moving to SCLS**

After examining all factors, the Task Force concluded that MCPL would be better-served by joining SCLS than by staying with WVLS for these reasons:

- SCLS would be more cost-effective than WVLS. Although the stated cost would be greater, this would be offset by savings elsewhere in the library budget.
- SCLS has a larger, more specialized staff for MCPL to call on.
- Because of its larger staff, SCLS is able to offer more services of use to MCPL than WVLS does.
- Unlike WVLS, SCLS contains several other county libraries and other similar-sized libraries, offering more chances for collaboration.
- SCLS offered more continuing education and professional development opportunities relevant to the size of MCPL
- The SCLS catalog contains a larger collection of library materials.
- The SCLS ILS (shared library catalog, patron database, and system for checking items in and out) would serve MCPL better.
- The organizational culture of SCLS aligns more closely with that of MPLC and Marathon County.

### **Task Force Documents**

The documents listed below had significant influence on the Task Force's decision.

- Final analysis of fees charged by systems (Included in July meeting packet)  
[https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/mcpl\\_task\\_force\\_library\\_system\\_inquiry\\_packet\\_2020-07.pdf](https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/mcpl_task_force_library_system_inquiry_packet_2020-07.pdf)
- Advantages and disadvantages of staying with WVLS or moving to SCLS, as identified by Task Force members <https://wvls.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Advantages-and-Disadvantages.docx>
- SWOT Analysis by the Task Force  
[https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/swot\\_analysis\\_2020-10.pdf](https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/swot_analysis_2020-10.pdf)
- Marathon County Public Library Attributes and Outcomes as approved by the Library Board, to be used for strategic planning purposes. (included in February meeting packet)  
[https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/mcpl\\_task\\_force\\_library\\_system\\_inquiry\\_packet\\_2020-02.pdf](https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/mcpl_task_force_library_system_inquiry_packet_2020-02.pdf)
- Organizational charts and information on key staff for SCLS and WVLS (included in February meeting packet)  
[https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/mcpl\\_task\\_force\\_library\\_system\\_inquiry\\_packet\\_2020-02.pdf](https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/mcpl_task_force_library_system_inquiry_packet_2020-02.pdf)
- Revised organizational charts for both systems (Included in July meeting packet)  
[https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/mcpl\\_task\\_force\\_library\\_system\\_inquiry\\_packet\\_2020-07.pdf](https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/mcpl_task_force_library_system_inquiry_packet_2020-07.pdf)
- Analysis of each systems' decision-making process (Included in July meeting packet)  
[https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/mcpl\\_task\\_force\\_library\\_system\\_inquiry\\_packet\\_2020-07.pdf](https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/mcpl_task_force_library_system_inquiry_packet_2020-07.pdf)

- Statements from MCPL staff (Included in September meeting packet)  
[https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/mcpl\\_task\\_force\\_library\\_system\\_inquiry\\_packet\\_2020-09.pdf](https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/mcpl_task_force_library_system_inquiry_packet_2020-09.pdf)
- Report from Shannon Schultz (included in November meeting packet)  
[https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/mcpl\\_task\\_force\\_library\\_system\\_inquiry\\_packet\\_2020-11.pdf](https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/mcpl_task_force_library_system_inquiry_packet_2020-11.pdf)
- Summary of comments received from WVLS library directors and trustees (included in November meeting packet)  
[https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/mcpl\\_task\\_force\\_library\\_system\\_inquiry\\_packet\\_2020-11.pdf](https://www.mcpl.us/sites/default/files/attachments/mcpl_task_force_library_system_inquiry_packet_2020-11.pdf)

All documents relating to the Task Force can be found at <https://wvls.org/mcpl-system-exploration/> and <https://www.mcpl.us/about/board/library-system-task-force>