

September 14, 2020  
To: Steve Hesel  
From: Michael Koszalka

Steve,

At the 9/3/2020 LDAC meeting you included in the agenda packet a copy of the DPI Public Library System Plan, and asked for input from member libraries (I've attached page one of the plan for the purposes of my comments). I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

As you know, over the years, the West Allis Public Library Board and myself have placed a great emphasis on the importance of retaining local control among member libraries. Undoubtedly, the importance of system libraries serving their individual communities with exemplary public library service, depends greatly upon identifying and implementing policies that fit each library's citizens. In fact, within chapter 26 of the DPI published guide that covers the Public Library System Board, "Trustee Essentials: A Handbook for Wisconsin Public Library Trustees," support for that principle is clearly stated:

*"Like your counterparts at other service levels, you are policy-makers. As a system trustee, however, you cannot make policies for any system member libraries. **You should avoid any unnecessary interference with the autonomy of member libraries.**"*

With the above in mind, I would (again) implore the MCFLS Board to continue to respect the autonomy of members as well as their library boards. Particularly distressing is the following statement included in the Public Library System Plan:

***Because of the system's small geographic area and dense population, MCFLS member libraries need to work together closely to meet the needs of residents that often don't notice or understand the differences between each library. This has affected the development of this plan and other plans. The 2020-2024 MCFLS Strategic Plan in particular includes language specifically aimed at providing more system level resources and seeking consistent circulation policies across libraries to reduce confusion among patrons.***

I would respectfully ask that the statement, "seeking consistent circulation policies across libraries" be stricken from the document. Again, such intent runs counter to the principle of local control of member libraries. From my observing recent LDAC meeting comments, I've noticed a group of directors who seem to advocate the uniformity of circulation policies whenever the subject is inferred. To your credit, you've responded cautiously – even when some of those directors have quickly attempted to make motions supporting system-wide standardization. However, my concern with the abovementioned statement, is that it misrepresents both the interpretation of Chapter 43 as well as the commitment from other directors and system library boards to sustain local autonomy. Yes, at times there may be a small percentage of patrons who are confused by the lending rules of other libraries. However, that is insufficient reason to promote the dissolution of an integral aspect of system membership, and threatens to set a dangerous precedent.

Finally, the last paragraph of page one in the document refers to the pandemic, potential negative financial impact it may have on member libraries, as well as the issue of reciprocal borrowing. Speaking for West Allis, the pandemic will undoubtedly result in some financial challenges as our municipality (like others) struggle with the staggering impact of loss of revenue. As a result, the need to retain reciprocal borrowing rates at an equitable level is imperative for those libraries receiving direct support from reciprocal payments, as well as those who may be indirectly impacted by a reduced disbursement to municipalities that receive those payments.

Again, thanks for the opportunity to respond to the DPI Public Library System Plan update.

**Michael Koszalka**

Director | Library  
City of West Allis  
7421 W. National Ave. | West Allis, WI 53214  
Office: 414-302-8534 |  
[thatswhywestallis.com](http://thatswhywestallis.com)

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**From:** Steve Heser  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 15, 2020 2:09 PM  
**To:** Michael Koszalka  
**Cc:** Elizabeth Suelzer; Paul Ziehler  
**Subject:** RE: Library System Plan

Hi Mike,

Thanks for your message and taking the time to review and respond to the 2021 MCFLS System Plan. I will include your message as part of the board agenda going out later today.

Paul and I had a conversation earlier today and I'm going to modify the text in response to your concerns regarding the language you've highlighted below. The new draft sentence will read something like this:

"The 2020-2024 MCFLS Strategic Plan in particular includes language specifically aimed at providing more system level resources and **working with all our members to seek more consistent circulation policies while respecting their autonomy as individual libraries.**"

We really want to make it clear that the system does not want to infringe on any member's autonomy and only seek these consistent circulation policies where it makes sense for everyone. If we need to rework that section even further after consultation with the board, we certainly will do that. I'll also point that out as we discuss the system plan so that all the trustees are aware of your concerns and the new language.

With regard to reciprocal borrowing, the system and trustees are very sensitive and aware of what that funding means to net lenders within MCFLS. As you know we have a multi-year agreement that runs through 2024 and we feel confident that the system will fulfill those terms. The IRST agreement provides for renegotiation of the terms if system aid is reduced by 10% or more, but there's been no indication from DPI that such a cut is eminent, even with the financial fallout brought on by the

pandemic. I'll certainly keep both you, the MCFLS Board and other members aware of any changes that appear on the horizon.

Thanks again, Mike. I do appreciate the time you took to review the plan. Talk to you soon.

Steve Heser  
System Director  
Milwaukee County Federated Library System  
414.286.8149  
[steve.heser@mcfls.org](mailto:steve.heser@mcfls.org)