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205 East Hampden Fergus Falls, MN 56537-2930  
Phone 218-739-9387 • Fax 218-736-5131  
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### **Minnesota Library Association Annual Meeting, Odds and Ends Report**

I made a one-day trip to the Annual Conference in St Cloud on Friday, October 16<sup>th</sup>. Erin Smith, Emily Millard, Mary Jo Igelstad, Myra Domes and Peggy Brause all made one-day trips to St Cloud Wednesday and Thursday. Their trips were subsidized by the Northern Lights Library Network scholarship fund, and my registration was paid too, by virtue of my NLLN Board membership. The trip was productive for me, but not as fruitful as full attendance would have been.

The overview of the “State Plan for Minnesota Libraries” was the first session I attended, and its 8:00 AM starting time seemed to prompt some napping among the 15 attendees. The draft plan, at least four years in the making, was distributed as a 692 line, 16 page document. A four page overview prompted a variety of comments as State Librarian Suzanne Miller read it as a “power point” presentation. The Plan’s “boiler plate” language was close to being totally unreadable, and that prompted two comments worth noting. First, a trustee from the Arrowhead Library System pointed out that perhaps library trustees, with a fresh perspective, should really be the people reviewing the draft. And, secondly, Peg Werner noted that Trustee Lina Belar has had a great track record for doing that very thing and has addressed this very plan. She observes, Peg told the group, that the library community **should** change the structure of library services if it isn’t working, but it should **NOT** change the structure just because individuals or offices cannot explain it.

While it was referred to, there was no information on the results of the “Legislative Audit” currently under way. It was my understanding at one point that the audit results would play a huge role in formulating or fine-tuning the “State Plan,” but apparently something changed when I wasn’t paying attention.

The second program I attended was on the new “Cultural Heritage” funding available thanks to the increase in our Minnesota sales tax. There were still some eyes closed among the 26 attendees, I noted. Moderator

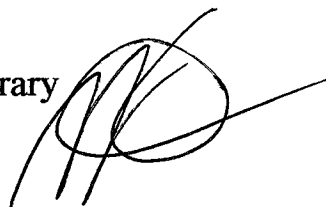
Mark Ranum from the Pioneerland Library System made several points crystal clear, beginning with a reminder that the \$4.5 million this year and next are guaranteed, but beyond that the library community can hope for more funding ONLY if it produces the "WOW" factor Representative Mary Murphy expects of it. As Peg explains it for me, 10% of the funds coming to Viking are earmarked for a statewide project on "The Greatest Generation," while 50% will be spent regionally, and 40% will go to local projects. Audience members had various comments on what their libraries might do, with many addressing programming for baby boomers "sorry to see free go" with ever-tighter library budgets. At Great River Regional it was "The Story Corps," while elsewhere historical re-enactors were being lined up, multi-generational projects were being conceived and traveling exhibits were being developed.

We were told new experiences and partnerships are being encouraged to "energize" our communities with our new programming, and it was suggested we talk with our local legislators about any suggestions they would like to pass along to us. (I will contact Van Skogen and Budd Nornes.) Historic sites, state parks, and educational and cultural centers were forwarded as places for things to happen, the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center and Trollwood Park for example. Here at FFPL I continue to see potential for a number of project possibilities, but as was the case for many of us during the Friday meeting, we question how we will find staffing for something new when we lack adequate staffing for what we are doing now.

The noon luncheon speaker was Joe Raiola, a MAD magazine (You will remember its "What, Me Worry?" slogan.) staffer, whose talk was "The Joy of Censorship." Half First Amendment advocate and half stand-up comic, his message was a graphic reminder that we still have right-of-speech battles to fight. Although seemingly very humorous for most of his audience, it was obvious that the language he used in his spirited harangue bothered other attendees. He seemed to insult pretty much everybody in the audience, in a thought-provoking way, and many of his assertions would be a good fit for Fergus Falls' community-wide reading of Fahrenheit 51.

Although it was a shorter visit to an MLA Annual Conference than I have ever made in the past, it was time well spent and I appreciate having had the opportunity to attend.

Walt Dunlap, Fergus Falls Public Library

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'WD', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.