

DIRECTOR'S REPORT
Northern Lights Library Network
Kathy Enger, Executive Director
September 16, 2023

FY2023 Audit

The fiscal year 2023 audit was conducted by Carpenter, Evert, and Associates and is complete. NLLN is under budget by several hundred dollars this fiscal year.

Minnesota Library Association (MLA) Legislative Priorities

The following multicounty, multitype (MCMT) priorities were presented at the Annual MLA Legislative Forum on August 8, 2023, based on a July 24, 2023, email from Ann Walker Smalley at Metronet:

- “Tie future increases in mcmt aid to the Basic Education Formula the same as RBLSS
- Consider revisions to 134.351 to reflect the actual activities of the mcmt and eliminate those that will not happen either because another organization(s) is doing so (cooperative storage facilities) or the money isn't there. Add what we do--continuing education and other services--What else can be added? Clarify the meaning of items in Subd 3.
- And, if we want to start a fight, refocus the work of the mcmt on school library programs.
- Governance Subd 4
 - Change how board members are appointed--take out being appointed by RPLS, and make the boards self-sustaining.
 - Reconsider if and/or how many board members should be citizens. We don't provide service to citizens and many have reported that citizens on the mcmt board can be confused about their role in relation to public libraries.”

I contacted the presenter for the multicounty, multitype systems, Ashley Dress, in three emails, stating that NLLN does not agree with changing the multicounty, multitype statute, but the presentation was made, anyway. There was no motion, no discussion, no vote at a joint meeting of the MCMT before the presentation was made.

The proposed changes went forward as legislative priorities for the 2024 legislative session at the September 6, 2023, MLA legislative committee meeting. These are the proposed changes:

“MCMT statute changes

- Tie future increases to the Basic Education Formula
- Reflect the actual activities of MCMT
- How board members are appointed
- Audit requirements”

Changing the multicounty, multitype statute 134.351 will diminish the mission of the multicounty, multitype systems, which is to serve all types of libraries throughout Minnesota. It will also reduce fiduciary oversight by limiting yearly audits to bi-yearly or fewer.

Three regional public library systems have currently absorbed the multicounty, multitype systems: Arrowhead, Selco/SELS, and Traverse du Sioux. Prairielands in Marshall, Metronet in St. Paul, and Northern Lights Library Network in Moorhead remain independent of the regional public library systems in Minnesota. Central Minnesota Library Exchange (CMLE) is in the process of becoming absorbed by the East Central Regional Public Library System (ECRL) in Cambridge, where CMLE has one office cubicle, owns one file cabinet, the CMLE budget is managed by ECRL, and the CMLE director is a temporary consultant - working part-time. The regional public library systems that absorb the multicounty, multitype library systems generally devote part-time service to the multicounty, multitype mission, but since they are run by a regional public library system, the activities of the MCMTs no longer align with the 134.351 MCMT statute. My grave concern is that the way the statement is going forward reads as though the MCMTs are not adhering to the statute and thereby breaking the law. Not only that, the mission of the MCMT system, which is to be inclusive and broad reaching, is lost altogether. The proposal is to limit MCMT service to mostly school libraries.

\$1M One-Time MCMT Appropriation

The legislature funded a one-time \$1M appropriation to the MCMT systems to support school library media centers and to support licensed media specialists in the centers. Ann Walker Smalley of Metronet proposes that the \$1M be dispersed to the Traverse du Sioux (TdS) regional library system/multitype system, then dispersed to the MCMTs from there. Tamara Lee, the State Librarian, stated that State Library Services does not have the personnel to manage the funds. I have grave concerns that the funds will not be managed by State Library Services, but by a joint regional/MCMT system (TdS). NLLN will not receive the funding directly through State Library Services, as we do now. Introducing one more entity to manage the funds leaves room for misuse and fraud. At the same time, the NLLN Governing Board has fiduciary responsibility for these funds that are coming to us from the legislature. I spoke with NLLN's auditor, Marc Colin, about my concerns and he noted that if TdS has an audit, we should be okay.

The MCMT directors plan to hire a consultant to conduct a census of licensed library media specialists currently working in Minnesota and conduct a needs-based assessment to identify gaps in licensed library media specialist services. The RFP is currently being written and developed by Ann Walker Smalley of Metronet.

In addition, a plan will be developed to determine how to provide tuition support to candidates seeking to attain school library media specialist licensure and how to provide professional development opportunities for licensed library media specialists. A team of MCMT directors from NLLN, Prairielands, CMLE, and Selco/SELS are examining these possibilities. NLLN has gone forward with the intent of the statute and funded the last course at Mankato for a librarian at Cass Lake who is completing her graduate degree there. Once the funding comes through, NLLN will have a solid continuing education budget to achieve the intent of the statute. We will be forming a committee to create the policies associated with the funding.

These are the parameters to the statute presented to the MCMT directors by State Librarian Tamara Lee:

The following memo provides information related to the one-time multicounty, multi-type (MCMT) Licensed Library Media Specialist Appropriation.

Statute Reference: Laws of MN 2023, chapter 55, article 9, section 18, subd. 5

(a) For aid to multicounty, multitype library systems to increase the number of licensed library media specialists:

\$	1,000,000	2024
\$	0	2025

(b) The aid awarded under this subdivision must be used for activities associated with increasing the number of licensed library media specialists, including but not limited to conducting a census of licensed library media specialists currently working in Minnesota schools, conducting a needs-based assessment to identify gaps in licensed library media specialist services, providing professional development opportunities for licensed library media specialists, and providing tuition support to candidates seeking to attain school library media specialist licensure.

(c) This is a onetime appropriation.

Availability: FY 2024 (and ongoing)

Revenue Type: One-time Appropriation

Spending Requirements/Restrictions: Yes

New UFARS coding: No

Fund Balance: Yes (This means that funds can be held in reserve and used over multiple years)

Interim/Final Report Required: Yes

Budget Approval Required: Yes

Who is eligible to receive these funds?

This appropriation is available to multicounty, multi-type library systems to increase the number of licensed school library media specialists.

How can these funds be used?

The appropriation must be used for activities associated with increasing the number of licensed library media specialists, including but not limited to:

- Conducting a census of licensed library media specialists currently working in Minnesota
- Conducting a needs-based assessment to identify gaps in licensed library media specialist services
- Providing tuition support to candidates seeking to attain school library media specialist licensure

- Providing professional development opportunities for licensed library media specialists.

Professional Development Support

NLLN support of the fall Tri-College staff development workshop on November 2 at NDSU. Focus on indigenous library collections and services. Librarians from all types of libraries across the region are included.

Gina Drellack, Education Consultant with Northwest Service Cooperative, is working with Dr. J. from MSUM to create and upload an electronic instructional on Native American Literature that will be made available to educators and librarians in the region for no charge. NLLN is supporting Gina as she develops the course.

School Library Data Team

A group of library media specialists from ITEM is meeting regularly with the statistician with MDE to create a complete list of library media specialists in the region. Sheri Levasseur is a member of the team.

Historic Wesley Hospital Building and the Wadena County Historical Society

From Lina Belar:

As you may know, there have recently been a series of events about the Historic Wesley building. All have been opportunities for people to share their ideas about possible reuse of the building.

The first opportunity was at the Rotary Corn and Chicken Feed where Su Legatt, a social practice artist, had set up a table and handed out doodle sheets where people could write their ideas for a possible re-use of the building. There was also a booth at the Wadena Farmer's market where more doodle sheets were handed out and guided tours of the Wesley were available.

Next month there will be a table at the Farmers Market on September 15th and guided tours of the Wesley will again be offered. There will also be a table at Salsa Fest on September 16th from 11am-6 pm.

In addition, three (3) conversations about the Wesley will take place this fall: Tuesday, October 24th from 10am to noon, Thursday, November 2nd from 6pm to 8pm and Sunday November 12th from 2pm-4 pm.

This is all wonderful activity as Astera Health desires to preserve the historical Wesley Building as a community asset. Astera Health has been and is committed to ongoing discussions with the Wadena County Historical Society (WCHS) for both building preservation and potential redevelopment for their or other uses. Astera Health will continue to participate in the community vision process (led by WCHS) and in the event a mutually agreeable redevelopment plan is achieved, are prepared to consider all opportunities.

Towards this goal, the WCHS has been fortunate to accept an offer from the Housing Assistance Council, (HAC) a national housing nonprofit who will provide, at no cost, technical assistance, and support in our endeavors.

Among other things, HAC will:

Work with the WCHS and/or interested partners formalize and launch the steering committee to engage in the preliminary activities of evaluating and planning for the proposed project;

-Work with the steering committee to identify and/or organize the appropriate ownership entity (OE) that would assume ownership of the Wesley (Tri County Area) Hospital and the role of all of the proposed partners;

-Review OE's organizational finances and debt service capabilities for a USDA CF loan/grant.

-Assist OE in identifying and planning for a repurposed building, including necessary upgrades and amenities needed.

-Assist OE in the development of project budget estimates; and Research other potential funding sources that OE could consider utilizing for the repurposed Wesley.

We at WCHS are very excited about our opportunity to play a role in the preservation of the historic Wesley. And we invite you to join us and share in the excitement of the Wesley Building continuing to be a community asset and wish to be a part of the planning process for its redevelopment.

Lina Belar
Wadena County Historical Society