

WESTCHESTER LIBRARY SYSTEM
Central Library Study Committee
August 10, 2017

Committee members present: Dave Donelson, Susan Morduch, Sean Ryan, Edris Scherer

WLS Staff present: Terry Kirchner, Executive Director; Fran Feuerman, Chief Financial Officer (CFO); Elise Burke, Recording Secretary

Dave Donelson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM. He noted that several emails have been received in favor of keeping Mount Vernon Public Library (MVPL) as the Central Library (CL) for WLS. The Committee continues its information gathering, and this meeting's focus is on the WLS staff perspective. The following questions [*in bold italics*] were asked and the responses and general discussion regarding each are noted below.

Please explain the governance committee of the Central Library (CL), how it works and its membership structure.

For WLS, a cooperative public library system, the CL advisory committee is part of the Public Library Directors Association (PLDA) of Westchester. The CL advisory committee evolved over time. Initially, there were 3 committees: Database, e-Content, and the CL Coordinating Committee. First, the Database and e-Content Committees combined; and then that committee and the CL Coordinating Committee eventually merged into the current committee—e-Content/CL Coordinating Committee.

The membership is taken from the member library directors. The PLDA Executive Committee puts out a call for members, and the goal is to have a representation of each library size (small, medium and large) as well as the CL Director and WLS Director as members.

The basic function of this committee is to review current library trends and to get a sense from the member libraries what is needed at the libraries as well as to review the use of items purchased and whether they are a worthy investment. As a library cooperative, any future changes or recommendations for this process would need to be decided by the member libraries. The current framework is good; however, there could be a deeper investment from the overall library staff so that decisions are not just driven by the directors.

How is input gathered?

Information on CL services is gathered from PLDA monthly meetings as well as through surveys, other communications, and trends noted in local and national publications. Directors also share feedback from patrons, trade shows and professional conferences.

How does the system allocate CL funds?

Needs are expressed by the member libraries as to what would best help their communities, and the goals are directed toward CL services established by NYS for adult materials—Non-Fiction and Foreign Language. The money gets distributed in different ways. WLS has used a

Memorandum of Understanding for CL purchasing, such as the 2013-14 satellite collection program. The determination of items purchased was up to the member library within certain criteria (no express copies). These costs were then either reimbursed to the individual libraries or were paid directly for the libraries. This pilot project was a good idea in theory; however, not all libraries expended the money available.

The money that goes to MVPL for Central Book Aid is disbursed directly to MVPL, who pays the costs for these materials. MVPL makes the choice of what is purchased; however, in some years, specific needs are recommended (e.g. biographies). The CBA funds must be used for all the member libraries and not just MVPL's collection.

WLS reviews purchases from what has been added to the catalog appropriately marked for CL. CL spending is also part of the NYS Annual Reports for both MVPL and WLS; however, that reporting is done on a cash basis in different fiscal years and hard to compare. In addition, CL circulation is not reported separately in the Annual Reports.

Dr. Kirchner shared data with the CL Study Committee on cost and usage of CL materials. The PLDA e-Content/CL Advisory Committee also reviews this type of data on a 6-month and 12-month basis.

Could the measurement process be improved?

As digital usage increases and definitions of new technologies differ, it has been challenging to be consistent in reporting for comparative purposes. Part of this has to do with how the Integrated Library System (ILS) and outside vendors reporting systems track the information, which do not always coincide.

Much of what is currently gathered is anecdotal, and a more fact-based system of data gathering could be used. WLS could also use its website to post more CL-focused reports. Having more levels of staff involved in gathering information (not just directors) would also be helpful.

How do you see the role of the CL as a research resource?

Since 1959 and the creation of the CL program, the role today is going in a direction more toward digital materials that are easily accessed by the public at any library vs. only at the designated CL. However, there is still a need for physical materials. The system helps support the circulation transactions for both digital and physical items.

Research materials would not necessarily have to circulate based on the current requirements. The idea was raised of whether non-circulating research materials could be sent to other member libraries for in-house use by their patrons.

Research expertise is often directed by a library's collection strength (genealogy, local history) but should be something that can help support the function of all the member libraries.

Specifically, how do you see the role of CL's professional development in the long term?

In 2009, training was paid for by the CL funds to support staff salaries. There are different ways of interpreting the professional development role of CL.

One idea raised was to have the CL act as a technology incubator and testing site for all 38 members. WLS's Innovation Lab was set up for those purposes, but this could be a new opportunity for service that the CL could fill.

What new opportunity would you like to see the Central Library play within WLS? How do you envision that happening?

New ideas for professional development need to assess the best blend of face-to-face instruction vs. online tools. There could be an opportunity to have someone dedicated to the CL to train the trainers at the member library level to get patrons excited about new digital products and to support staff time to attend such activities. Any new ideas should be done on a trial basis. Perhaps there is a need to invest in less services but have a more reliable/trustworthy curation of products purchased.

Although the CL is not a specific library but an overall program, WLS can look into other ways to help MVPL. As a cooperative, what WLS is trying to accomplish through the CL must come from PLDA and how best to serve all 38 member libraries.

A clearer understanding of the CL mission and the link between the CL & PLDA needs to be made. Also, better measurement tools need to be identified for success.

WLS supported MVPL financially during their Maintenance of Effort and is willing to help to get their current registration review completed.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for September 14th as a working session to compile the committee's report for the WLS Board Meeting on September 26th. All committee members were asked to send Mr. Donelson a summary of their interviews with other Systems regarding their CL activities. Mr. Donelson thanked Dr. Kirchner for submitting the information requested regarding WLS's CL activities and those individuals from Mount Vernon who submitted emails. All items will be made part of the final committee report.

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM.