

**WESTCHESTER LIBRARY SYSTEM (WLS)**  
**Central Library Study Committee**  
**June 8, 2017**

Committee Members Present: Dave Donelson, Chair; Susan Morduch, Sean Ryan, Edris Scherer

WLS Staff Present: Terry Kirchner, Executive Director; Elise Burke, Recording Secretary

Guests: New York State (NYS) Library Division of Library Development (DLD) participants via Conference Call: Carol Desch, Coordinator of Statewide Library Services & Director of Library Development; Barbara Lilley, Library Development Specialist & WLS Regional Consultant

Evania Thompson, Interim Director, Mount Vernon Public Library (MVPL) [present]

Mr. Donelson led the meeting through a series of questions [*in italics*] that were shared prior to the meeting. Below are the responses from DLD participants and discussion regarding each:

***1. What is your view of the purpose of the Central Library (CL)?***

The broad purposes of a CL include:

- Providing Free Direct Access to library service for all residents in a public library system's service area, especially for those who aren't served by a public library.
- Providing access to information for the public; CL usually has a substantial collection of non-fiction for research and reference purposes and foreign language materials. Collection can be print, electronic media or digital.
- Providing professional expertise to public and member library system staff. Since half of the libraries in NYS do not have a professional librarian as a director, this professional development aspect is very important.
- Central Library Development Aid & Central Library Book Aid flows to the System but purpose of the funds is for the central library program; it doesn't necessarily have to go to the Central Library itself.

***2. How do you see CL functions evolving in the near term? Long term?***

The CL function has evolved through the years in response to how people receive their data from a print to electronic environment. The framework in the law is very broad. Due to new technology, information can get out to public in ways unknown when the program was first created. Systems must evaluate most effective way of serving individual needs. This is varied from System to System.

Funding also drives changes. When too stagnant and does not keep pace with costs, it creates challenges to fill all needs; must think carefully of what to focus on.

***3. Have any library systems implemented innovative solutions/approaches to their CL operation that have improved the contribution of their CL to their member libraries? How so?***

The METRO region has. Due to attrition, DLD has had to streamline their activities with less staff members available. The CL Directors Association Liaison position is currently vacant; and an overall review of CLs

has not been done in a long time. WLS may want to reach out geographically to see what other Systems are doing. Central Library directors do not meet together on a regular basis but have NYLINE-C as a listserv, which could be used to contact CL Directors.

People used to go to the library for research, but online searching has changed that. Even colleges have done away with Reference Librarians for research. Libraries are filling roles never had before. To stay innovative, systems need to stay engaged with their member libraries and come up with ideas on how the System can support CL services that will meet the needs of their users. There is no one formula.

**4. How does DLD recommend that performance of a CL be measured? Is there a best of breed example?**

Mainly, libraries should meet the Minimum Standards set by NYS.

Each System's Plan of Service has a Central Library Plan of Service that should include evaluation activities, and how to measure and evaluate them in light of CL guidelines. In addition, performance could be measured against Plans from similar Systems; data from the NYS Annual Reports, other statistics and surveys. It is important to identify what the CL program is to accomplish and continue to measure progress regularly.

**5. What role does DLD play in CL selection? Use of funds?**

DLD would provide advice, if asked. The System designates the CL in their Plan of Service.

DLD does not tell a System how to use their CL funds as long as they meet the intent of the law, regulations, and guidelines. The law has expanded; books are not the only option. CL Book Aid does not have to be spent on physical volumes.

What role does the CL community play in the budgeting process? CL budgets should be in alignment with the System's Plan of Service and CL Plan of Service. If something is highly irregular, DLD will ask the System for clarification; but it is the System's responsibility to ensure that the CL is using funds appropriately. If there are changes to the budget, the System should inform their Regional Consultant with the appropriate information (e.g., new job descriptions, new software, etc.).

What role does MVPL Board of Trustees play in the approval of the CL budget?

Each system is required to have a CL Advisory Committee who makes recommendations to the System Board on how the budget should be spent and then the System Board approves the budget.

Some Systems expend CL funds at the system level and some Systems allocate grants to their member libraries and the central library expends the funds. How that gets carried out is decided by the System.

**6. Should we choose to do so, how can WLS change the designated CL For the system?**

If the WLS Board decides to make a change to the Central Library designation, an amendment to the CL Plan of Service would need to be submitted to DLD. This should include the rationale behind the revision (how the change developed) and the process followed to designate a new CL (what input was received from the member libraries and the CL and how they were involved).

System would lay out the process, follow it, and make the final decision. It is important that the CL selection process be transparent (informing all involved of what is going on); clear (understanding of what everyone wants in terms of services); and open to all for input to the decision.

The new CL chosen must be in full compliance with minimum library standards from Commissioner's Regulations §90.2 and pre-requisites for CL status from Commissioner's Regulations §90.4.

**7. *Is a brick and mortar CL required? If so, why?***

Under current regulations, the answer is yes. Free Direct Access to library services within the system service area is critical. If someone does not have access to a local library, traditionally their library service was provided by the CL. The public can now use computers to have access to library service sufficient for this program, and funds can all be spent on electronic resources for these purposes. However, ultimately, physical access would need to be provided should library service not be available.

The unserved areas in Westchester were discussed; and the WLS Free Direct Access Plan will be reviewed to ensure accessibility.

**8. *How does the status of MVPL registration affect its designation as CL? When can we expect the issue to be resolved?***

The registration for MVPL is still in progress. Ms. Lilley & Ms. Thompson met and completion of the registration process is expected within 5 months. The MVPL Board is fully committed to completing this and doing what is necessary to remain as the CL.

A few questions were raised should the registration process not be completed. Would MVPL not be able to receive CL funds from the System and would MVPL need to submit a variance for not completing their registration.

MVPL is currently under registration review; this does not mean that they do not have their registration. MVPL meets all criteria but currently does not have all documentation in place. They are actively working on it; but they are not out of compliance. If the 5-month goal is not met and DLD decides to pull MVPL's registration, it is at that point that MVPL cannot receive funds.

DLD's goal is to help the library come into compliance, and has been successful in helping libraries succeed, and be eligible to receive local public funds or State funds. Libraries have to be registered to get funding.

**9. *Under current MVPL status, what potential exists for another maintenance of effort problem to arise?***

Now that MVPL has put out their budget to a public vote, they have a more stable funding stream. Once a public vote is approved, the budget amount cannot be decreased, unless the library doesn't complete their registration.

WLS could pursue a Request for Proposal (RFP) should they want to explore changing the CL. Using a RFP might be good route to see which other libraries are able and interested in taking on this role.

Next Meetings: July 13 (7 PM) at the Mount Vernon Public Library; August 10 (6 PM) at WLS Headquarters; September 26 (6 PM) WLS Board Meeting Committee Report.

Meeting adjourned at 7:07 pm.