

Dear Nancy,

RE: State Support of Public Libraries Proposed Model

On February 5, 2008, the Advisory Council of the Mideastern Michigan Library Cooperative met and discussed the State Support of Public Libraries Proposed Model (December 2007). MMLC serves an eight county area in mid Michigan and has sixteen public libraries of which seven are class VI libraries. We also have four academic libraries and ten school libraries as members.

After much discussion we came to some conclusions which we would like to share with you and the rest of the library community.

1. We agree that the time has come to examine how Michigan libraries are funded and handled at the state level. However we feel that this proposal does not accomplish the goals of simplifying the funding of services at a state level for our legislators and does not adequately take care of the needs of medium and small public libraries.
2. We believe that regional library (cooperatives) service is necessary. Regional libraries provide assistance in materials purchase/discounts, consultant services, and training, board and staff issues as well as a back-up to the Library of Michigan in library development. We agree that twelve is too many, and we should work for a smaller number of cooperatives. We also believe that there are cooperatives that should be looked at as models and would strongly urge that MMLC be one of those.
3. Regional libraries must receive a base level of funding to cover overhead. The vendor type cooperative is not a reasonable alternative. The notion that cooperatives can exist where libraries band together to form them defeats the goal of having uniformity and equity across the state.
4. The Class VI libraries in MMLC believe that the cooperative is necessary to assist the medium and small libraries. The success of these libraries in a region means a lesser burden on the large libraries and fewer requests for their resources.
5. The proposal has no mechanism for growth and no insurance that the growing cost of the core services will not infringe on the state money received by the public libraries.
6. The core services are too limited and do not allow for change related to future needs of library users. Professional support, consulting and advocacy are essential core services currently provided by our existing cooperatives that need to be incorporated in any new model of regional library service that we may consider.
7. As for the funding, we believe that state funds should go directly to the public libraries and the cooperatives (base funding). Public libraries should then be able to purchase the core services from the Library of Michigan or their designee. The idea of having state funding pay directly for the core services and, therefore, become part of the operations of LM will inhibit the public libraries' ability to advocate for those funds. Legislators view funding of state agencies in

a different light then they do funding that goes to agencies in their districts. And legislators take great pride in the success of their community (regional) libraries.

8. More planning needs to be done before we make such a major change in library service delivery in the state. We recommend having a study done by an outside party, or at the very least, have a new series of town hall meetings that have the cooperatives and other funding issues on the agenda.

In summary we applaud the idea of exploring a new and more efficient way of providing equitable service to our library users. We do not, however, believe that the current proposal will provide for that end. More study is required and a broader base is needed to develop a new plan.

In the hope of providing better service to Michigan's residents,

Mideastern Michigan Library Cooperative Advisory Council.

Genesee District Library, Class VI, pop: 329,382
Capital Area District Library, Class VI, pop: 240,165
Public Libraries of Saginaw, Class VI, pop: 132,705
Flint Public Library, Class VI, pop: 124,943
Bay County Library System, Class VI, pop: 109,935
Grace A. Dow Memorial Library, Class VI, pop: 75,939
Lapeer District Library, Class VI, pop: 62,378
Shiawassee District Library, Class V, pop: 28,742
Community District Library, Class IV, pop: 23,617
Holly Township Library, Class IV, pop: 22,397
Ruth Hughes Memorial District Library, Class III, pop: 11,260
Laingsburg Public Library, Class III, pop: 7,132
Almont District Library, Class II, pop: 6,041
Vernon District Library, Class II, pop: 4,980
Dryden Township Library, Class II, pop: 4,624
North Branch Township Library, Class I, 3,595
Baker College Library System, Flint, MI
Kettering University Library, Flint, MI
Mott Community College Library, Flint, MI
Genesee School District, Genesee, MI
Grand Blanc Community Schools, Grand Blanc, MI
Imlay City Community Schools, Imlay City, MI