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# AN EVALUATION OF THE POLK COUNTY LIBRARY FEDERATION

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Report to the Polk County Board of Supervisors  
Pursuant to Resolution 55-11

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County Administrator

March, 2012



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In Wisconsin, the role of providing public library services has been largely assigned to municipalities. This assignment is imperfect, however, due to gaps in jurisdictional coverage (not every local government is willing or able to support a library). These gaps can cause either limited services to those in areas without libraries, chiefly residents of towns, or if service is provided non-residents by municipal libraries, excess burden on their residents. Both circumstances violate a basic principle of public finance: that cost and benefit areas should overlap as much as possible so that those provided a service pay for that service.

The role assigned counties in the Wisconsin public library system had been to help resolve these complementary problems. State law provides a means of so doing through a county library service, “to serve the residents of the county who do not live in municipalities that have established libraries or to improve the library services of municipal libraries.”<sup>1</sup> In 1974, the Polk County Board of Supervisors established the Polk County Library Federation under this provision of State law to “equalize the library services in Polk County and to raise the quality of that service [sic].”<sup>2</sup> Given the demographics of Polk County a library service was likely the optimal approach to resolving the problems of unequal access to service and extra burden from non-residents.

Since the establishment of the library service the method of funding public libraries has greatly changed. Beginning in the late 1970s, public federated library systems were formed for generally the same purpose “to improve public library services, increase residents’ access to library materials and services, and reduce duplication.”<sup>3</sup> The State currently provides \$16.7 million in funding to these systems. Polk County became a member of a federated library system (Indianhead Federated Library System or IFLS) in 1978.

In 1997, the Wisconsin legislature adopted Act 150 providing for the direct funding of local libraries by those living outside of jurisdictions with libraries. In 2006 this funding requirement was expanded to neighboring counties. As a consequence, the disparities in public library services as well as difference in tax burden between municipalities with libraries and those without has been greatly reduced, if not in some cases eliminated. The latest change in library funding occurred in 2011, with the adoption of the State budget (Act 32). This legislation repealed a longstanding maintenance of effort requirement that had prevented any significant reduction in levy funding for libraries, effectively allowing local governments to set funding as they deem appropriate.

Counties are creatures of State law, in that they can undertake such functions only as permitted by that law. Further, State law rather intensely regulates libraries and, to some extent, has served to insulate libraries from actions by a county board. The librarian is the only non-elected department head who is not appointed by the county administrator and confirmed by a county board, whose qualifications are determined by a State agency, who is not evaluated by the county administrator, and whose salary is set by an independent panel, the library board. Until recently, the library budget could not be reduced by a county board, and funds appropriated to the library cannot be used for any other purpose – even if unneeded and unspent in a calendar year.

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State law and regulations governing the operations of county library services have not evolved along with changes to the financing of libraries, technology, or with changing county needs. Municipalities with libraries are allowed to “opt out” of a county library levy, meaning that the burden of the county library service levy is borne solely by those county residents who do not live in a municipality with a library. While that was appropriate when no mechanism for equalization of library funding burden existed, it is more difficult to justify after Act 150 and the rise of federated library systems. Second, a county library service is bound by state requirements that force inefficiency. A library service in a county with a population of over 6,000 is required to employ a librarian with a master’s degree in library science, significantly raising personnel costs; a library service library is required to be open a minimum of 20 hours per week regardless of use; libraries are required to have collections of a certain size and so on. All this serves to make small scale library services inefficient. Smaller counties with library services and stand-alone libraries (of which Polk is effectively the last) have been left with only two options: to abolish them or continue to inefficiently provide services.

An agency must be evaluated in the context of its mission, or reason for existence. The mission of the Polk County library service is identified by State law and the original enabling resolution adopted by the County Board: to improve the services of municipal libraries and to serve those who do not live in municipalities with libraries.

In Polk County, county-level library services are delivered through five separate programs: library outreach, books by mail, library operations, assistance to municipal libraries, and books to the jail. A basic evaluation of each program indicates that, first, the library outreach program does perhaps produce benefits about equal to the cost incurred county-wide, but not in the towns it is to serve and therefore is not in alignment with the library service mission. If retained, this program should be redesigned. The books by mail program - while clearly of benefit to participants and in keeping with the library mission - likely does not produce benefits that greatly exceed the overall cost. Polk County is now only one of three counties remaining in the State that offers such a program, with only one federated library system continuing to do so. Operation of the library itself is inefficient given the low level of use even despite the low cost due to its role as an adjunct to other library programs. Technical assistance to other libraries is of course of great value to those libraries, but the net effect on overall quality and equalization of service is difficult to assess. Further, these programs have also drifted from or are not in alignment with the mission of the library service.

*State law and regulations governing the operations of county library services have not evolved along with changes to the financing of libraries, technology, or with changing county needs. Smaller counties with library services have been left with only two options: to abolish them to continue to inefficiently provide services.*

As part of compliance with Act 150, a county must develop a plan for library service to county residents of municipalities which do not maintain a public library. The current plan for library service isn't – it is simply a loose listing of activities and description of law, only tangentially related to the mission of the library service. There are no measurable targets, no assessment of effectiveness or the incorporation of any kind of plan at all. The document is little more than a perfunctory submission as required by State law instead of the true plan for provision of services it should be. As this is a required document, and as an update is due this year, these shortcomings should be rectified regardless of the decisions made by the County Board on the library service. (The absence of performance data for the library service is not unusual among County departments, as administration has only begun instituting performance measurement requirements.)

*The central policy issue to be decided by the Polk County Board of Supervisors is simple: to what extent should taxpayers, specifically those outside of municipalities with libraries, fund library services beyond the statutorily required minimum level.*

The central policy issue to be decided by the Polk County Board of Supervisors is simple: to what extent should taxpayers, specifically those outside of municipalities with libraries, fund library services beyond the statutorily required minimum level. They are the only governing body that can do so. The answer to that question will shape the provision of services: if substantially less than the current funding level then the County has little choice but to close the County library service, although some services could continue to be provided by directly funding municipal libraries and independently contracting for other services. However, should the Polk County Board choose to retain the library service it is also very clear that redesigning library programs could improve results without increasing costs.

***This decision on library funding must be made in the context of severely limited resources. Under the current Wisconsin levy cap, almost no new levy revenues will be available for the foreseeable future. As there will be growth in costs for mandated programs that must be funded, non-mandated programs will need to meet higher and higher standards of effectiveness and importance to retain funding in this and future years.***

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## Recommendations

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Polk County has done more than is required in support of library services at the county level. That was and is a policy decision, and this analysis therefore makes no recommendation as to whether the County should continue to do so. The recommendations that follow call only for a reexamination of that decision and, depending on the result, subsequent steps that should be taken.

- The first recommendation is therefore that the Polk County Board review the provision of library services in the context of other County priorities and severely limited resources, with

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the knowledge that the levy is only on properties outside of municipalities with libraries. This discussion should involve other stakeholders and libraries to assess their capacities and needs.

- Following a decision on whether and to what extent Polk County will participate in the provision of library services, the appropriate means of so doing should be discussed. The current approach, through the library service, is one of two options.
- If the decision is to maintain the current funding level or more and retain a library service, then that service should be substantially redesigned. Despite the best efforts of highly qualified staff, the library has drifted from its initial mission: to raise the quality of services county-wide and to provide equal access to services. To that end:
  - The library plan for service should be rewritten so as to realign the County library service with its original mission and incorporate clear performance indicators.
  - The State Department of Public Instruction should be petitioned to obtain any possible waivers to allow the County more flexibility in the provision of library services. Changes in State law should also be sought as needed.
  - Library outreach services should be aligned with similar efforts by municipal libraries and targeted to rural areas of the County.
  - The books by mail program should be evaluated within the context of its cost (an estimated \$10 per book in levy) and strong consideration given to alternative delivery methods.
  - The books to the jail program should be funded through the general corrections levy, as its current funding makes it inconsistent with the mission of the library service.
  - Library services, i.e. operation of the library itself, should be scaled back substantially and, if possible, the library should be closed to the public or open for very limited hours.
  - Technical assistance to member libraries should be redesigned to directly fit with the mission of the library, to improve overall services.
- If levy funding is reduced below about \$150,000, or if for other reasons the decision is made to not retain the library service:
  - The Polk County Board should task the library board or a similar body with determining how available funds (if any) could best be distributed to meet overall county-level objectives, to equalize and improve library services, reporting back by mid-summer. The library plan for service should serve as a vehicle for this process.



- The County Board should consider whether to retain the books to the jail program funded through the corrections levy on a contract basis.
- The County Board should also consider whether to provide funding to libraries directly, through a higher than minimum levy under Act 150. A levy in an amount approximately equal to the current value of technical support could be appropriate.
- The County Board should separately task the library board with developing a plan for the transition of any remaining library services including the disposal of assets. The longer the time for such a transition the less disruptive any change. Available funds would likely allow any transition to be extended well into 2013.

Past discussions of the role (and existence) of the Polk County library service have suffered from a lack of time and information. This review is intended to address the latter in part, and ideally to stimulate an informed discussion that leads improved service provision. With respect to time constraints, it is important that the discussion also begin soon, by early summer, to allow for implementation of the final policy decision: to retain and redesign, to eliminate, or to replace the current library service.



## BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

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Access to public library services has long been considered a central component of the educational system in the United States and a key contributor to the quality of life in America. Following principles of fiscal decentralization, the task of providing these library services has typically been assigned to local government, largely to keep the responsibility for provision of these services closer to the people served and to allow for local preferences in level of service and accompanying cost. This is the case in Wisconsin: under this state's system for providing library services principal responsibility has been assigned to cities, villages and occasionally some towns (hereinafter "municipalities"), with counties generally assigned a secondary role. According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction,\* of the 385 independent public libraries that existed in Wisconsin in 2010, 365 are operated by municipalities solely or in partnership with another municipality. †

An inherent issue with a municipality-based library model is that those citizens living outside a city or village that supports a library may be disadvantaged in their access to library services. Conversely, if access is provided to non-residents by a municipal library then the citizens of that municipality may be effectively subsidizing library services for those same non-residents. Historically, the role of counties in the Wisconsin system (and more recently of the State itself) has been directed at this potential problem and options toward its resolution, if any, are the central policy decisions that must be made by county boards of supervisors. State law, in chapter 43 of Wisconsin Statutes, allows counties to participate in the provision of library services either directly, through financing or operating a county library system or a joint city/county library, or indirectly by providing assistance to municipal public libraries within a county. Note that, as Wisconsin is a Dillon Rule‡ state, counties may only undertake such actions as state law expressly permits.

The form of assistance varies by county across the state in accord with demographics, local preferences, and likely pre-existing circumstances in the provision of such services. The simplest method for a county government to provide assistance to municipal libraries is to create and directly fund a consolidated county library system as provided under section 43.57. By definition, these systems are designed to provide equal access to library services for all residents of the county and are accordingly funded by all residents of the county. As of 2010, eight of the 72 Wisconsin counties operated consolidated county library systems and with another three operating joint city-county libraries. Although the latter differ somewhat from a consolidated library system in their

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\* Unless otherwise noted, library financial and statistical data are from comprehensive reports compiled on the Department of Public Instruction website: <http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/dm-lib-stat.html>

† Another five are operated as tribal libraries, three as joint city/county libraries, three as county library services and eight as consolidated county libraries.

‡ After Federal Judge John Forrest Dillon, who ruled in 1872 that local governments as creatures of state government only have the authority expressly provided them under state law.

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municipal funding, these systems are formed in counties with a single, dominant municipality and where other municipalities appear to be too small to support their own systems.

Other counties, including Polk County, have opted to provide indirect assistance to municipal libraries within a county. Wisconsin Statutes allow for three approaches to providing this assistance: through a federated library system, a public library service, or direct funding through a higher levy on those residing outside of library service areas. A federated library system is formed under section 43.19 with the intention, according to the Wisconsin Department for Public Instruction, “to improve public library services, increase residents’ access to library materials and services, and reduce duplication.”<sup>4</sup> A federated library system may incorporate either a single county or a multi-county area and is generally state funded in lieu of any local taxes (it does not appear any federated library system received county levy funding in 2010). All 385 independent public libraries are members of a federated library system and, in 2011, will share \$16.7 million in state aid. Polk County public libraries are members of the Indianhead Federated Library System, or IFLS, which received \$1.25 million in State aid in 2011. There is a minimum population requirement (100,000) and a further stipulation that no more than one system may be established in a single county and on the total number that may be formed in the State.<sup>5</sup>

A public library service, a second form of indirect assistance to public libraries, is discussed in more detail in the next section. The third method, levy in excess of the amount required by state law, is discussed further in the section following on Act 150.

This evaluation is conducted pursuant to resolution 55-11, which directed the county administrator to review programs implemented by Polk County in reverse order of their assessed importance and effectiveness as determined by the County Board in a survey conducted earlier in 2011. Of all programs assessed, library programs finished near the bottom in this survey.

## COUNTY LIBRARY SERVICES

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A county library service is authorized by State statute as a means for a county to directly assist in the provision of library services at the municipal level. This model is an excellent one for the coordination of library services, linking municipal libraries together and providing a

### ***What is maintenance of effort?***

*As in many states, Wisconsin law provided that funding for a library may not be reduced below some specified amount, commonly called a maintenance of effort requirement. In Wisconsin (sec. 43.15 (2)(b)), county governments were prohibited from reducing funding for a library below a three-year average in order to remain a participant in a federated library system. Advocates of these requirements contend they are needed to protect funding for services deemed essential by taking them “off the table” in budget reduction discussions. Opponents of such requirements contend that they are an unfunded mandate and limit local discretion in responding to local priorities. The 2011 Wisconsin legislature repealed the State’s maintenance of effort requirements, allowing a local government to reduce or even eliminate library funding.*

common point of access for residents outside of municipalities with libraries. This is the model Polk County chose to assist municipal libraries within the county. County library services are organized under section 43.57(3), which reads:

COUNTY LIBRARY SERVICE. A county board may establish and maintain a county library service to serve the residents of the county who do not live in municipalities that have established libraries under s. 43.52 or 43.53 or to improve the library services of municipal libraries established under s. 43.52 or 43.53. The county library service may operate a library or library service program or may contract with library organizations within this state or in adjacent states for services.

Section 43.64 (1) further states:

The county board of a county expending money for public library service to its inhabitants may levy a tax to provide funds for such service and shall include any amount of tax under this subsection in the amount of taxes determined to be levied under s. 70.62 (1). [The latter citation includes the tax in the total county levy.]

Even though a county library service may operate a library, a county library service differs from a consolidated county library system in that the latter operates through a set of county libraries located in municipalities and is not limited to one single library as is a library service.

There is another important aspect affecting provision of library services by a county, one imperfectly designed to respond to the problem of subsidy of nonresidents, and that is a provision of statute that allows municipalities with libraries to opt out of a county levy for library services.<sup>6</sup> Although this in theory prevents double taxation for library services (i.e. paying for county and municipal library services), it also becomes problematic in the degree to which county library services provide assistance to municipal libraries. This is discussed in further detail below, in a section on public finance considerations.

The State also establishes a set of standards that regulate the operation of county library services and which, in smaller counties especially, adversely affect their finances. These standards include a minimum number of hours per week a library must be open, collection size, staffing, and so forth that are effectively imposed across libraries and that limit the flexibility of governing bodies in providing library services.

Management of a county library service is also a bit convoluted, as the statutes specifically state that the library board appoints (and presumably supervises) a librarian, but the public members of the library board are appointed by the county administrator with the confirmation of the county board in counties with an administrator form of government. The situation therefore arises wherein the county administrator is responsible for the board by virtue of this appointment power but is not responsible for the librarian:

Notwithstanding ss. 59.17 (2) (br) and 59.18 (2) (b), the library board shall supervise the administration of the public library and shall appoint a librarian, who shall appoint such other \*assistants and employees as the library board deems necessary, and prescribe their duties and compensation. [The latter reference is to the statute that requires the county administrator to appoint department heads].<sup>7</sup>



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A final regulatory issue concerns certification of a library and of librarians. Wisconsin Statutes sec. 43.09 requires that the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) issue “necessary standards for public librarians... based on education, professional training and experience.” The DPI has promulgated these rules, located in Chapter PI6 of the Administrative Code. Section PI 6.03(3) (a) states:

- (a) *Grade I*. 1. Administrators of municipal, joint and county public libraries with a municipal, joint municipal or county population of 6,000 or more and administrators of public library systems shall hold grade I certification.
2. Grade I certificates under this paragraph shall be granted for a 5-year period to applicants holding both a bachelor’s degree from a college or university approved by an accrediting association of more than statewide standing and a master’s degree from a library school program accredited by the American library association.

PI 6.03(1) (b) provides further that:

- (b) “County library” means a library created under s. 43.57, Stats.

Section 43.57 contains the enabling legislation for both county library services and consolidated county libraries, meaning that there is no distinction made for a library formed under a county library service: both require that the librarian hold a master’s degree in library science. In addition, all holders of library certification are required to attend 100 hours of continuing education over a five year period for purposes of renewal. There is a further requirement that every librarian must be available for library board-directed duties a minimum of 25 hours per week.

Libraries in Polk County municipalities are not bound by such stringent certification requirements. In municipalities under 3,000 in population, librarians are required to have only Grade III certificates, with education equivalent to an associate’s or two year degree (54 semester credits) and with 12 hours in library-related studies. The difference in these requirements explains, more than any other factor, the difference in salaries between municipal and county libraries.

Establishing the same general standards for a county library service in a smaller county as for a county library in a large county or a city library in a large city is problematic in its impact on related costs. By requiring that a county hire a highly qualified librarian with commensurately high salary, a county has limited flexibility in designing a library service to best meet the needs of residents. For example, should a county form a library service to implement a small books by mail program only, the cost of staffing – a librarian with a

### **How Act 150 works:**

*Counties are required to collect a property tax on all property in towns, villages and cities that do not support a public library. Every public library in a county determines their cost per item circulated by dividing their operating expenses by total circulation. Every library then determines how many items were circulated to county residents that do not live in a jurisdiction that supports a public library. This circulation to nonresidents is then multiplied by 70 percent of the cost per item circulated. This amount is the Act 150 reimbursement to each library. The amounts determined for each library are totaled to determine the entire county Act 150 levy. This amount is levied across all jurisdictions within a county that do not support a public library. Act 420 is a similar calculation, but one that crosses county borders to reimburse libraries for circulation to nonresidents who reside in a different county.*

master's degree – would far, far exceed the cost of operation of the program and effectively make it uneconomical. If the Polk County Board decides to retain a library service on a smaller scale, it may be beneficial to request a waiver from this and other State requirements as possible or a change in legislation if needed. It may also be worth exploring whether Polk County may, by virtue of closing the library to the public, become exempt from many or all of these restrictions.

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### ACT 150

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As mentioned, a principal shortcoming of a municipality-based library system is that it may limit service to non-residents of municipalities without a library, impose an extra burden on municipal taxpayers to pay for service to nonresidents or, often, both. In 1997, the Wisconsin legislature dealt directly with the issue of access to and payment for library services with the adoption of Act 150. Act 150 requires that counties levy a property tax on behalf of municipalities with libraries on all property located in jurisdictions that do not have a municipal library. This levy is in an amount roughly equal to 70 percent of the cost of circulation to non-residents. For example, if a library has one-half of its circulation to non-residents, the payment would equal 35 percent of the library's operating expenses (70% times 50%). If a library had 70 percent of its circulation to non-residents, the payment would equal 49 percent of the library's operating expenses (70% of 70%) and so on.

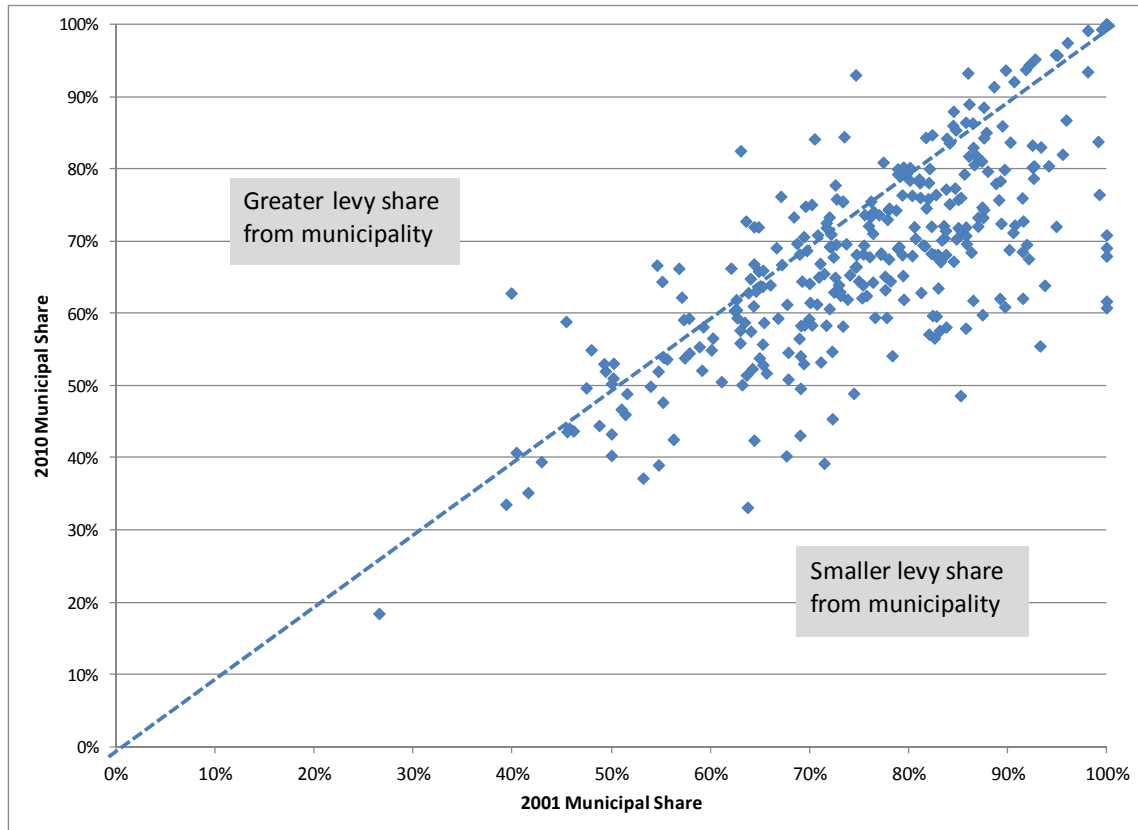
Act 150 payments are only an approximation of the marginal cost of providing library services to nonresidents.\* The total amount of this funding statewide is substantial: the required Act 150 levy for 2010 was approximately \$25 million. For Polk County, the annual Act 150 levy amount is approximately \$500,000. In April, 2006 the legislature expanded this levy to adjacent counties whose residents received services from a municipal library in an adjacent county and whose jurisdiction did not support a municipal library (Act 420); Polk County libraries receive another \$50,000 from adjacent counties. Statewide, the amount of Act 150 payments varies substantially by library, from zero to an amount equal to or greater than the municipal support for the library. Note that the Act 150 levy amount is a minimum: counties can, and it appears about one-half do, levy more than this amount for support of their municipal libraries. Both Act 420 and Act 150 are codified in Wisconsin Statutes section 43.12, County Payment for Library Services.

The levy for Act 150 is also imperfect in its approximation of the cost of providing services to residents of a particular town or other jurisdiction that does not maintain its own public library. The levy is apportioned based on equalized value, not actual circulation and, as such, those areas of the county with higher values will pay more of the Act 150 levy regardless of their use of library services.

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\* See the discussion on marginal cost calculations in the footnote on page 35.

**Figure 1**  
**Comparison of Municipal Share of Total Levy for Municipal Libraries**  
**2001 and 2010**



Source: Derived from DPI data

Available data appear to indicate that Act 150 and Act 420 have served to both increase funding for libraries and to in many cases replace municipal property tax levy, shifting some of the burden for operation to non-residents. Figure 1 shows the municipal share of total levy for each municipal library for which data were available in 2001 and in 2010; those points below the diagonal line indicate a drop in municipal share of the levy during that period: the further below the line, the greater the drop. Part of this is doubtlessly attributable to a more rapid growth in circulation outside of municipalities with libraries as well as Act 420, but some is also likely due to constraints on municipal finances. It is highly likely that this shift will accelerate in the present straitened times and with the repeal of the maintenance of effort requirement by the 2011 legislature.

In keeping with the responsibility assigned counties under Act 150, State law requires that a county develop a plan to address the following issues:



- Library services to county residents of municipalities which do not maintain a public library, including full access to all system member libraries and reimbursement for that access.
- The method and level of county library service funding, which must include reimbursement for public library service within the system to county residents of municipalities which do not maintain a public library.<sup>8</sup>

Note that, even though the maintenance of effort requirements were lifted by the 2011 legislature, State law still requires that the county board appropriate adequate funds to meet their obligations under this planning requirement in order for libraries within a county to participate in a federated library system. As this plan is only required to be filed with the county board, not approved by the county board, caution should be exercised in coordinating changes in funding with changes in plan. Comments on direction and adequacy of the Polk County plan are incorporated below.

The county library service statute predates Act 150 and is essentially aimed at the same objective: to improve the services of municipal libraries and to serve residents that live outside of municipalities with libraries. Perhaps as a consequence of the adoption of Act 150, the number of counties with a library service has declined from nine in 1997 to three as of 2012: Polk, Dane and Price (Dodge and Barron Counties both dropped their county library services in 2010, Pierce in 2011). Of the other county library services, Dane County maintains far and away the largest system, with an annual budget of over \$700,000 in 2010 (excluding Act 150 levy distributed to other libraries) and a staff of 7.5. The Price County library service is much smaller, with an annual budget of just \$25,000 and a staff of 0.63 (again excluding Act 150 levy) and due to its small size, if nothing else, appears to be more of an adjunct to the Park Falls municipal library than a stand-alone system. Other than Dane County, then, it is fair to state that Polk County now operates the only other significant county library service. The remainder of this analysis deals specifically with the Polk County library service.

## POLK COUNTY LIBRARY SERVICE

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Polk County's local governments have a long tradition of providing support for library services to residents. With 11 local libraries (including the County library service), the County ranks 6<sup>th</sup> highest among Wisconsin's 72 counties in number of libraries within a county. In terms of financial support, at \$35 per capita for operating cost the County ranks 33<sup>rd</sup> highest, remarkable given the low level of urbanization in the County. If only support within municipalities with libraries is included, the County ranks 7<sup>th</sup> overall according to data from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.\*

In support of library services, the Polk County Library Federation was established by the Polk County Board of Supervisors in 1974 and began operations in January, 1975 with a start-up budget of only \$15,000.<sup>9</sup> (Note that the name of the County library system is a bit misleading: it is not a federation, but a county library service established under section 43.57(3).) The stated purpose of the library was to "equalize the library services in Polk County and to raise the quality of that service." This is directly in keeping with section 43.57(3): "to serve the residents of the county who do not live in municipalities that have established libraries...or to improve the library service of municipal libraries".

At the time of its formation, instituting a county library service was likely the most appropriate method of approaching the complementary issues of service to rural residents and the burden on municipal libraries from providing services to non-residents in Polk County. Polk County is generally rural in nature but with a large number of small communities, most of which already had their own municipally-funded libraries. In counties dominated in population by a single municipality with other municipalities likely too small to support a library, a joint city-county library is an appropriate option (Rusk County – Ladysmith, Shawano County – Shawano, and Langlade County – Antigo). In counties with no municipality likely large enough to support a fully-functional library, a consolidated library system would be the most appropriate option (Adams and Florence Counties). Other counties have developed consolidated library systems for reasons of cooperation, efficiency, and so forth. Given the number of smaller municipal libraries in Polk County, a joint-city county library would not be appropriate, and the difficulty in implementing a single consolidated library system would have been significant as well given variations in local funding for libraries and other local preferences.

At issue is the degree to which this mission remains valid in light of changes to the system of library finance that have occurred since its founding and in addition whether there has been deviation from that initial mission. With respect to the former, the Polk County library and its mission predate three major changes that directly affect library services in the County and, especially, in provision of services to rural areas not served by municipal libraries. The first is the establishment and

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\* As discussed elsewhere, libraries provide far more than just books, and services are more available to residents within a municipality than those living further away. As a result, relative support for libraries in Polk County likely lies somewhere in between these two rankings.

expansion of the federated library systems in the late 1970s (IFLS was formed in 1978), the second was the adoption of Act 150 in 1997, and the third was the expansion of the library levy to adjacent counties adopted in 2006 (Act 420). As the mission of the Polk County library service has not greatly changed since its inception, this evaluation will be undertaken in that context. Whether this mission remains a priority of the County Board is a separate policy decision. As to deviation from that mission, that is discussed below in sections that evaluate each program in turn. Note, however, that this analysis is not a comment on the funding needs of municipal libraries; that is a separate issue beyond the scope of this analysis.

## FINANCIAL DATA AND ANALYSIS

As noted, Polk County has ten local libraries which, with the addition of the County library service, gives the County the rank of 6<sup>th</sup> highest in number of libraries among the State's 72 counties. All told, Polk County libraries spend approximately \$2 million per year, excluding the county library service, and have a combined circulation of over 600,000. Table 1 provides revenues and circulation by library for all municipal libraries in Polk County for 2010.

**Table 1**  
**Revenues of Polk County Libraries, 2010**

<i>Public Library Operating Revenue</i>					
<i>Library</i>	<i>Total Circulation</i>	<i>Municipal Appropriation</i>	<i>Act 150 and 420</i>	<i>Other revenues</i>	<i>Total Revenues</i>
Amery	127,858	\$198,873	\$159,560	\$80,528	\$438,961
Balsam Lake	36,325	\$69,543	\$28,304	\$92,565	\$190,412
Centuria	12,791	\$46,939	\$8,027	\$22,027	\$76,993
Clear Lake	56,032	\$56,393	\$43,271	\$26,610	\$126,274
Dresser	15,931	\$39,898	\$9,307	\$2,952	\$52,157
Frederic	77,090	\$84,542	\$60,656	\$106,778	\$251,976
Luck	48,436	\$57,995	\$36,033	\$8,111	\$102,139
Milltown	43,956	\$80,940	\$49,498	\$10,803	\$141,241
Osceola	101,383	\$96,800	\$59,863	\$26,656	\$183,319
St. Croix Falls	72,457	\$87,333	\$33,733	\$23,732	\$144,798
<b>Polk Total</b>	<b>612,402</b>	<b>\$819,256</b>	<b>\$488,252</b>	<b>\$400,762</b>	<b>\$1,951,417</b>

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

As can be seen, Act 150 and 420 revenues are significant for municipal libraries, accounting for about one-fourth of total revenues in the aggregate and over one-third of tax revenues. Note that there is also considerable variation from library to library, a level of variation also seen in the statewide data. Act 150 revenues are levied within Polk County and, in this table, Act 420 revenues are levied in other counties on behalf of Polk County libraries (e.g. Burnett, St. Croix, etc.).

POLK COUNTY LIBRARY SERVICE

Table 2 shows Act 150, Act 420, and the Polk County library service levy by township for 2012. Note that the Act 420 levies are those that are collected in Polk County and paid to libraries outside of Polk County, largely Barron and St. Croix Counties. Again, these data are for 2012 so they will not match the data in Table 1, which is for 2010.

**Table 2**  
**Act 150 and library service levy by town**

<i>Town</i>	<i>Library Service</i>	<i>Act 150</i>	<i>Act 420</i>	<i>Total Levy</i>
Alden	13,464.59	42,040.54	5,133.94	60,639.07
Apple River	6,510.03	20,326.31	2,482.22	29,318.56
Balsam Lake	12,105.05	37,795.67	4,615.56	54,516.28
Beaver	4,741.57	14,804.62	1,807.92	21,354.12
Black Brook	4,691.07	14,646.96	1,788.67	21,126.71
Bone Lake	5,001.32	15,615.64	1,906.96	22,523.92
Clam Falls	2,330.09	7,275.24	888.44	10,493.77
Clayton	3,446.34	10,760.51	1,314.06	15,520.91
Clear Lake	2,463.19	7,690.84	939.20	11,093.23
Eureka	6,139.87	19,170.54	2,341.08	27,651.48
Farmington	6,628.30	20,695.57	2,527.32	29,851.19
Garfield	8,770.91	27,385.46	3,344.28	39,500.65
Georgetown	14,683.25	45,845.57	5,598.60	66,127.42
Johnstown	5,134.90	16,032.71	1,957.90	23,125.51
Laketown	3,834.34	11,971.99	1,462.00	17,268.33
Lincoln	11,394.90	35,578.34	4,344.78	51,318.01
Lorain	1,264.09	3,946.88	481.99	5,692.96
Luck	3,363.43	10,501.65	1,282.45	15,147.52
McKinley	2,164.29	6,757.58	825.23	9,747.10
Milltown	9,952.04	31,073.31	3,794.63	44,819.99
Osceola	11,475.29	35,829.35	4,375.44	51,680.08
Saint Croix Falls	6,765.55	21,124.09	2,579.65	30,469.29
Sterling	2,864.50	8,943.83	1,092.21	12,900.53
West Sweden	2,616.62	8,169.88	997.70	11,784.19
<b>Village</b> of Clayton	1,055.19	3,294.61	402.33	4,752.13
<b>Total</b>	<b>152,860.71</b>	<b>477,277.71</b>	<b>58,284.57</b>	<b>688,422.99</b>

Source: Polk County Department of Administration

It is clear from this table that the levy for library support in the rural parts of the county is not insignificant. The total levy in Georgetown, for example, is \$66,000 – more than the amount levied in four municipalities that supported their own libraries. In four other towns the levy exceeded

\$50,000, more than the support provided by two municipalities for the operation of their own libraries.

Table 3, following, shows a history of the Polk County library service budget from 2007 to 2011. (Note that data have been adjusted for comparability to correct for an accounting reassignment in 2008 and 2009). Table 4 provides some usage statistics for the library service; Annex A contains details for all libraries in the County.

**Table 3**

**POLK COUNTY LIBRARY SERVICE BUDGET HISTORY**

	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>
<b>Revenues</b>					
General property tax	177,898.14	180,984.39	152,852.04	151,432.42	154,413.53
State aid – books by mail	5,058.00	5,058.00	-	-	-
Library donations and fines	865.00	2,400.67	6,097.63	1,706.16	2,118.27
Library donations from organizations	12,250.00	12,800.00	11,050.00	24,550.00	26,969.14
Other revenues			700.00		
<b>Total</b>	<b>196,071.14</b>	<b>201,243.06</b>	<b>170,699.67</b>	<b>177,688.58</b>	<b>183,500.94</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>					
Personnel	176,132.93	183,347.89	148,320.87	122,115.39	131,988.85
Contractual services	3,500.93	3,436.89	4,064.72	4,128.31	5,348.50
Supplies and expenses	50,818.97	51,794.75	54,143.93	44,713.76	31,619.96
Capital outlay	-	-	-	-	-
Grants, contributions, indemnities and other	-	-	-	-	260.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>230,452.83</b>	<b>238,579.53</b>	<b>206,529.52</b>	<b>170,957.46</b>	<b>169,217.31</b>
Use of carryover balance	(34,381.69)	(37,336.47)	(35,829.85)	6,731.12	14,283.63

Note: These data do not include revenues or expenditures from the Friends of the Polk County Library, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit

**Table 4**

**POLK COUNTY LIBRARY SERVICE USAGE STATISTICS**

Hours Open per Week Winter	40	Registered borrowers: resident	2,143
Hours Open per Week Summer	0	Nonresident	38
Annual Hours Open	2,080	Total registered borrowers	2,181
Square Footage of Library	4,632	Reference Transaction	3,276
Book and Serial Volumes in Print	27,405	Library Visits	3,172
Audio Materials	1,663	Users of Public Internet Computers	780
Video Materials	2,554	Children's Programs	3
Periodical Subscriptions	12	Attendance	16
Public Use Internet Connected	1	Young Adult Programs	1
Total Circulation	20,143	Attendance	21
Interlibrary loan, loaned to:	5,758	Other Programs	73
Received from:	3,028	Attendance	1,088
Electronic Audio Materials (downloadable)	3,006	Total Programs	77
Electronic Video Materials (downloadable)	151	Total Attendance	1,125

Circulation Data

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Table 5

## POLK COUNTY LIBRARY SERVICE CIRCULATION DATA

<i>Program</i>	<i>Circulation</i>
Home delivery and books by mail	2,764
Jail	6,652
Nursing homes	2,663
Library	1,119
Special orders	119
County library cards	3,093
Adult	3,072
Total	19,684

Source: Polk County library service

The library service budget has been constrained by a reduction in revenues, falling overall from about \$200,000 a year in 2007 and 2008 to \$184,000 in 2011. Some of this revenue reduction is due to a loss in State aid, but much is due to a cut in levy funding from about \$180,000 to \$154,000 over this same period. The library staff have done excellent work to help offset this loss through other funding sources, but overall the budget itself has suffered, especially in funding for personnel. Clerical staffing was a significant component of the budget in the earlier years, but appears now to be either done without or replaced by volunteers or temporary workers. Supplies and expenses are also close to a minimum, consisting as they do largely of postage for the books by mail program and purchase of books and materials. The latter expenditure has fallen from about \$18,000 in 2008 to about \$12,000 in 2011.

Paradoxically, the reduction in funding that occurred from 2008 onwards has likely reduced, rather than increased, the efficiency of the provision of library services. By severely restricting funding for lower-paid clerical assistance more of the responsibility for mundane tasks has fallen on volunteers where available or the (highly skilled) librarian where not. In 2008 clerical salaries accounted for 46 percent of total salary payments, but by 2011 that had fallen to 21 percent. As the assumption of clerical duties reduces the time the librarian has available to undertake more professional-level tasks, the overall efficiency of the library service has likely declined. If the County Board decides to retain the library service, consideration should be given to increasing funding for clerical staffing for this very reason.



## EVALUATION OF LIBRARY PROGRAMS

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As mentioned, the central policy issue for consideration by the County Board is whether, and the degree to which, Polk County taxpayers should support the provision of library services beyond the statutorily required level. They are the only governing body that can decide to do so. Beyond this basic central issue is a consideration of the effectiveness in providing these services, including alternative means of so doing. The overall evaluation is therefore an effectiveness evaluation: how well does the library service achieve the objectives set by the County Board.

The mission of a department or agency is effectively the reason for its existence, why it was created in the first place. A program, or a related set of activities directed at a common clientele, is how an agency works to accomplish its mission. The evaluation of an agency must therefore be in the context of how it is achieving its mission, factored into a program-by-program analysis, assessing the degree to which each program results in progress toward that mission.

The Polk County library service does not exist to simply provide library services in general. Creating of the library service was a policy decision; its specific mission is set in the resolution that established it and with consideration given to the State law that authorizes a library service. Following, then, the specific evaluation issues are:

- 1. To what extent does each program implemented by the library service “equalize the library services in Polk County” for “residents ... that do not live in municipalities that have established libraries.”**
- 2. To what extent does each program “raise the quality” of library services in Polk County by “improv [ing] the library services of municipal libraries.”**

Within that context (and provided each program does satisfactorily address these evaluation issues), it is appropriate to consider both cost-benefit (to what extent do the benefits of a program exceed the costs of the program, if at all) and cost-effectiveness (whether there are more efficient methods of providing service delivery than the current method given the same benefit level). The following analysis attempts to do so.

Note that it is not uncommon for a program to deviate from its initial objectives or for new programs to be developed as opportunities arise or as new needs develop. Provided that such changes are made with approval of the governing body and are generally consistent with the overall mission of the agency this is often a necessary and a welcome evolution. Note, however, that as a “Dillon Rule” government care must be taken to ensure that a program does not deviate excessively from that permitted by State law as, should that be the case, it may no longer be appropriate for it to be undertaken.

The mission of the library service as listed in the required plan for library services differs from that in the original enabling resolution and in fact from State law:

## EVALUATION OF LIBRARY PROGRAMS

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**The mission of the Polk County Library Federation is to support member libraries through continuing education, resource sharing, collection development, technology assistance, and library management consultation; to provide outreach services to special needs library customers, and to provide service and education to the Polk County government staff.**

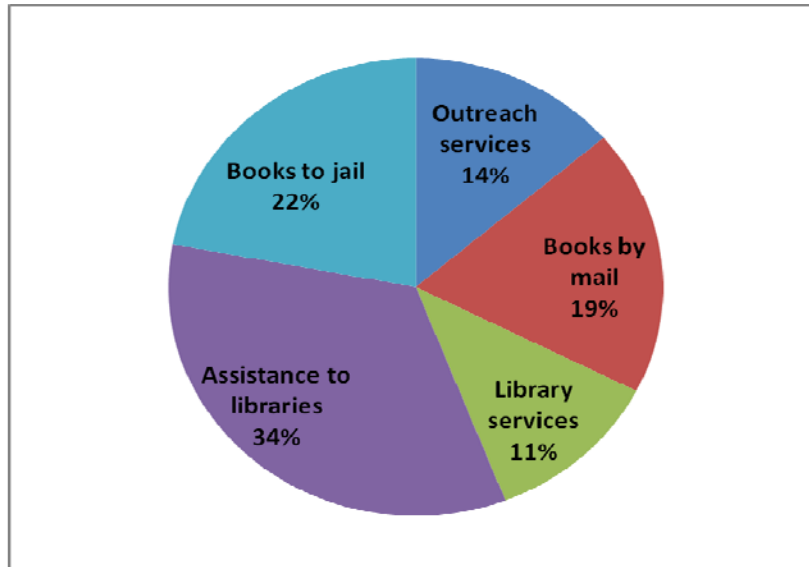
This mission will not be used in evaluation directly, as it is valid only in its compliance with State law and the original reason for the creation of the library service. A library service cannot exist to serve only government staff, and outreach services are valid only in that they serve those that do not live in municipalities or raise the quality of library services. The latter program is discussed in the evaluation below. Note that this disconnect – between library services now provided by the library and the original mission – is neither good or bad, but a deviation discussed above. The County Board could authorize these services in most cases, but would need to administer them outside of a county library service.

A final evaluation issue relates to funding and service delivery independent of the mission-related questions listed above based on principles of public finance. A program might meet its objectives but still be inappropriate if the benefits do not accrue to those who bear the cost. This is discussed separately in a section on public finance following the evaluation of the individual programs.

According to data provided by the library as well as discussions with staff, the library effectively provides services through five programs: (1) outreach programs, which provides library services to the homebound and nursing home residents, (2) books by mail, wherein library materials are sent to those unable to access library services through the U.S. Postal Service, (3) library services, or operation of the library including walk-ins, maintenance and so forth, (4) books to the jail, a jail program that provides reading material to inmates, and (5) technical assistance to member libraries.

Evaluation of a program usually requires the identification of the cost of that program, especially when tools such as cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis are applied. The process of identifying such costs is called program budgeting, where revenues and expenditures are assigned to a particular program. Table 4, following, presents a rudimentary program budget for the five library service programs and Figure 2 illustrates overall expenditure allocation. Note that as with any programmatic allocation there is not a perfect fit with all activities, but an effort has been made to provide a reasonable estimate. Further, the financial information provided is based on such an allocation and there is considerable integration in the figures provided as overhead, for example, is allocated across all programs. Therefore, although the books by mail program costs approximately \$36,000 according to library figures, eliminating such a program may not in and of itself result in that exact amount of savings as some overhead costs would still remain unless the entire library service were eliminated. Again, the evaluation is largely within the context of the questions listed above, the degree to which a program equalizes library services or improves the quality of services within the County and with associated cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses.

**Figure 2**  
**Library Expenditures by Program**



A caution at the outset: the following review of most of these library services provides an excellent example of the standing problem in cost benefit analysis, or the assessment of whose costs count and whose benefits count in the analysis. Many of the benefits from these services accrue to municipal libraries within the County, but almost all of the costs are borne by property owners outside of municipalities with libraries. As a consequence, a cost-benefit analysis from the perspective of current municipal libraries is almost meaningless as their costs are almost zero. Instead, the benefits must be assessed from the perspective of those who fund these services, those who live outside of these areas in the County's towns (and Village of Clayton). This issue – standing – will be discussed and reexamined in the context of each program.

For that same reason, studies of the economic impact of libraries, such as that recently conducted for the DPI in 2008<sup>10</sup> are not completely relevant. First, a fundamental issue with such studies is that they often do not consider opportunity costs or the economic effect of taxation to obtain the necessary capital. By failing to do so, any public expenditure has a positive economic benefit regardless of funding source or the existence of other, more effective or efficient expenditure options. Second and akin to the standing problem, the economic impact should also be considered from the perspective of those who pay for the service: in this case residents of towns (including non-resident property owners, of course).

Finally, any evaluation is hampered by a lack of meaningful performance measures and measurement information that provide insight into a program's effectiveness and efficiency. Polk County has begun the development of performance measures as part of reforms to the budget

EVALUATION OF LIBRARY PROGRAMS

**Table 4**  
**Program Budget, Polk County Library Service**

	<i>Outreach services</i>	<i>Books by mail</i>	<i>Library services</i>	<i>Assistance to libraries</i>	<i>Books to jail</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>Resources</b>						
General property tax	21,717	33,205	14,022	53,418	32,066	154,414
Grants	-	5,394	1,348	6,742	13,485	26,969
Fines	-	1,059	-	-	1,059	2,118
Volunteers	1,030	-	8,237	4,119	7,208	20,593
<b>Total resources</b>	<b>22,736</b>	<b>39,657</b>	<b>23,608</b>	<b>64,280</b>	<b>53,813</b>	<b>204,094</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>						
Salaries	23,384	19,183	9,036	56,235	26,691	134,530
Books and supplies	1,212	6,663	4,294	4,294	7,847	24,313
Postage	650	10,400	650	650	650	13,000
Volunteers	1,030	-	8,237	4,119	7,208	20,593
<b>Total expenditures</b>	<b>26,279</b>	<b>36,245</b>	<b>22,218</b>	<b>65,298</b>	<b>42,396</b>	<b>192,436</b>
<b>Percent of total</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>18.8%</b>	<b>11.6%</b>	<b>33.9%</b>	<b>22.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

process, but very limited information is available, too little on which to form any judgments. The discussion of program logic following does identify such indicators and, if the library service is retained, such performance information will be available going forward on this program (and eventually on all other County programs.)

## LIBRARY OUTREACH

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Most libraries provide outreach services to those unable to access library services by typical means: those who are limited in their ability to travel or otherwise make use of public libraries. The Polk County library service provides library outreach services through nursing home visits, special programming and materials, and assistance to the homebound. The total annually program cost for library outreach is estimated to be approximately \$26,000, of which approximately \$22,000 is funded through the levy. As programs must be evaluated based on their internal logic, each program has been analyzed and diagrammed. Figure 3, following, is a logframe\* setting out the basic logic behind library outreach services including performance indicators that could be used to assess effectiveness and efficiency in the future. The final column lists assumptions and risks, or what could prevent the program from achieving its goals.

The evaluation of library outreach services is difficult in that little or no independent assessment of similar programs elsewhere is readily available. It is clear that, through participation, beneficiaries demonstrate support of this program, but quantification of these benefits is problematic. According to library service data, circulation to nursing home residents in 2011 was about 2,700; if we assign even a small value to each transaction it is clear that it would produce a sizeable benefit to recipients. The library service also conducted 87 program sessions that same year, with almost 1,100 attendees. The DPI economic impact study referenced earlier attempted to measure such benefits;† if we use their data then the overall benefit is substantial. The DPI study calculated an economic benefit of general circulation of about \$7 per item distributed and an economic impact of program sessions of about \$6 per attendee. Using these estimates, then, the total economic impact of library outreach programs would be about \$26,000, or an amount about equal to the cost.

At issue, however, is that much of this program does not fit within the mission of the library service as mentioned above, and a review does not provide satisfactory answers to the evaluation questions. To the extent that those reached are residents of towns, the program does satisfy the first evaluation issue; to the extent that the provision of some services such as special materials improves the quality of library services it satisfies the second. If we use the above benefit data, which are likely not understated, but constrain them by benefit to those who fund them (i.e. town

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\* A logframe is short for a logical framework, a project evaluation tool first developed by the U.S. Government in the early 1970s and now a worldwide standard. This analysis extends that tool to the evaluation of program logic. Explanation of how to read a logframe is contained in Annex B.

† See endnote 10.

## EVALUATION OF LIBRARY PROGRAMS

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residents), this program clearly does not produce benefits in excess of costs. Further, as at present constructed, it is only loosely connected to the mission of the library service.

**Figure 3**

**Program Logic: Library outreach programs**

	<b>Narrative summary</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</b>	<b>Assumptions/Risk</b>
<b>Impact</b>	Quality of life for shut-ins is improved	Increased satisfaction with life	Survey of participants	
<b>Results</b>	Greater diversity in materials and information available and entertainment options	Hours of reading and listening/viewing library-supplied materials	Survey of program participants	No substantial change in living support programs or other external factors
<b>Outputs</b>	Increased reading, listening to tapes, and viewing of programs	Change in number of books and other participants	Library records	Participants' health remains stable, interesting material available
<b>Activities</b>	Provide books and programs for shut-ins and nursing home residents	Number of books and other materials or programs supplied	Library records	Sufficient interest and effort by participants

There are options that would assist with the redesign of this program to better address these evaluation issues. Both circulation and program sessions could be conducted through the respective municipal library, with the library service providing financial support and in-kind support through materials and staff participation, thus helping “raise the quality” of library services by assisting them with their own outreach services. It also appears that most of this circulation is confined to two municipalities, Amery and Luck; there are other institutions in the County and other libraries have outreach programs with which the library service could assist. Finally programming and events could be held outside of the nursing homes, perhaps coordinated with the congregate dining program implemented by the ADRC (formerly Aging Department) or other venues to better reach rural residents and again to help raise library service quality across the County.

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## BOOKS BY MAIL

Books by mail is an example of an outreach service used by many libraries nationwide to provide library materials to those unable to travel to a library or branch to obtain such materials and who are not served by a bookmobile or some alternative form of distribution. The U.S. Postal Service began offering a special subsidized mailing rate for library materials to rural areas since 1928 and,

according to accounts,<sup>11</sup> the first books-by-mail service began in the 1960s and spread nationwide. As the postal service is required both deliver and pick up mail at rural addresses, the system is very efficient in its distribution. However, it is also clear that the use of such programs has declined in recent years both nationally and in the State of Wisconsin.

National studies show that these programs serve primarily adult readers and chiefly provide popular reading materials for entertainment. As a consequence, the impact of these programs is likely best measured as a quality of life issue more than as an educational issue, and it is most appropriate to evaluate the program on that basis. Figure 4 displays the basic logic underlying this program.

The Polk County library service currently spends about \$36,000 on the books by mail program of which the levy support is approximately \$27,000. According to data supplied by the library service, circulation is about 2,700, meaning levy cost per book is approximately \$10 (the balance is fine and grant revenue). Postal costs are estimated to be just over \$10,000. The United States Postal Service charges \$2.35 for the first pound, an additional \$0.40 for each additional pound up to seven pounds, and then an additional \$0.38 for each pound up to 70 pounds.

**Figure 4**

**Program Logic: Books by mail**

	<b>Narrative summary</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</b>	<b>Assumptions/Risk</b>
<b>Impact</b>	Quality of life rural residents is improved	Increased satisfaction with life	Survey of program participants	
<b>Results</b>	Greater diversity in materials and information available and entertainment options	Hours of reading and listening/viewing library-supplied materials	Survey of program participants	No substantial change in health, economic conditions or other external factors
<b>Outputs</b>	Increased reading, listening to tapes, and viewing of programs	Change in number of books and other supplied for participants	Library records	Health remains stable, interest continues
<b>Activities</b>	Provision of books by mail	Number of books and other supplied	Library records	Sufficient interest and effort by participants

In part because of the increasingly limited use of these programs, there is little recent evaluation material readily available. The Maine State Library System does conduct such evaluations periodically; the last one published was in 2005.<sup>12</sup> This survey confirms the hypothesis that a principal – if not the principal – objective is recreational reading, with 63.0% of respondents strongly agreeing that this program provides them with recreational reading as compared to 31.4% strongly agreeing that books by mail contributes to their ongoing education. This survey also showed that 60.4% of recipients strongly agreed that books by mail improved their quality of life,

## EVALUATION OF LIBRARY PROGRAMS

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with another 39.2% agreeing with the statement. Only 9.6% disagreed with the statement that books by mail made them part of a “statewide community”, reaffirming the quality of life aspect of this program.

If we accept that participation in a books by mail program is prima facie evidence of support of the program in improving quality of life – despite the low transaction costs, a rational person would not participate in this program absent some positive utility – the appropriate evaluation tools are a cost benefit analysis (to what extent is the quality of life improved and at what cost), and cost effectiveness analysis (might this improvement in quality of life be attained at a lower cost).

Improvement in quality of life is of course very difficult to quantify, especially as this program is limited to rural residents. Clearly the benefit from the program is greater than the minimal transaction cost – ordering the book, repackaging and returning, etc. – but how much more? Ideally, one could impose a cost and determine decline in participation rate, from this deriving the value placed on this service. Although this would be an interesting experiment, there are no examples readily available and specific enough to allow for application in Polk County. Other cost benefit analyses consider only the savings to participants vis a vis use of traditional library services. Hu<sup>13</sup> calculated the savings (benefit) per book as \$11 based on the cash value of time, \$12 based on the avoidance of books purchased, \$22 based on what a user claims they are prepared to pay, and \$13 based on the avoidance of rental costs. As these costs are clearly a function of ability to pay, especially the “prepared to pay” measure and also a function of the extensiveness of any catalogue, these data are of limited applicability.<sup>14</sup> These are also very old data; adjusting for inflation would increase these figures substantially. However, there is evidence that these may not be substantially higher as a new industry – book rental through the mail – provides more recent evidence. One vendor, BookSwim, has a number of plans for book rental, with the lowest cost program three books at one time for \$23.95 per month. Were a person to read an average of three books per month, that would be a cost of \$8 per book; four books would be \$6 per month, and so forth. Participation in such a system does require a credit card, access to the internet, and so forth, which may be excessively high barriers for many current books by mail customers. Nonetheless, it is fair to assume from these data that the benefits of this service may exceed the cost, but not dramatically so.

There is also an indirect method of looking at costs and benefits, and that is to examine the recent actions of other governments, akin to a meta-analysis of other studies. By so doing, an insight can be gained into these governments’ decision making and (at least subjective) cost benefit analyses. The question is, then, which libraries have offered this service in the past and since discontinued it and which libraries if any have begun to offer this service in the past several years. These data are readily available from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

The results of this review are not encouraging. In 1991, 18 libraries and federated library systems offered this service. By 2000 that had fallen to 11 – eight individual libraries/county library systems and three federated library systems. In 2012, the total has dropped to five: the three county library services (Polk, Dane and Price Counties), the City of Walworth for city residents, and



the Northern Waters federated library system (Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Sawyer, Vilas, and Washburn Counties). IFLS, the federated library system of which Polk County is a member, did offer books by mail, but is discontinuing that service early in 2012. In total, then, books by mail are only available in 11 of Wisconsin's 72 counties, a substantial reduction from the 33 counties served in 2000. Thus, without looking at specific data it is possible to conclude that the governing bodies of most libraries or federated systems that offered this service a decade ago have concluded either that the benefits did not exceed the costs or that these programs were of lower priority given financial constraints even if the benefits did exceed the cost. It also appears from Polk County 2010 and 2011 data that utilization of the program is declining, although additional years' data are needed to confirm this.

A cost-effectiveness analysis considers alternative methods of providing an output (delivery of books in this case) to determine that which has the lowest cost with output held constant. Options that have replaced books by mail elsewhere are books delivered by volunteers and fee for service, or charging costs on a per book basis. Some public libraries do charge a fee for book delivery; there are also commercial enterprises that provide books for a flat monthly fee.

It would be extremely difficult in such an analysis to match the convenience and flexibility of books by mail with other delivery mechanisms. An advantage of the USPS book rate and delivery is that books may be picked up at rural free delivery addresses (RFD) as well as delivered without incurring a separate charge. More densely populated areas have found alternative delivery services that are more efficient<sup>15</sup> but which would not be available in rural areas. As a consequence, a cost-effectiveness comparison holding output constant would likely conclude that the current system using the USPS is a more efficient than any other alternative delivery mechanism in a rural area such as Polk County.

It would be possible, however, for municipal libraries to take on books by mail for town residents in their area and receive some reimbursement under Act 150 as these would qualify as non-resident circulation. The reimbursement isn't equal to the cost of such circulation - \$1.25 to \$2.00 for most libraries under the current Act 150 levy level - but providing additional County support through a library plan for service could perhaps increase this funding should the decision be made to retain this program.

If output is a variable, i.e. reducing the frequency of book delivery, other delivery mechanisms would be possible. Perhaps the most common option is to use organized groups of volunteers to provide library materials to those unable to travel; that is the method used by a number of public libraries throughout the State (including several in the area). A similar approach is for someone unable to travel to a library to have a neighbor or friend collect books and deliver on their behalf. Technology has also recently offered an alternative delivery mechanism, e-books, which could eliminate the need to physically transfer materials at all; many libraries now offer the loan of e-books as well as conventional printed material.

### BOOKS TO THE JAIL

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Books to the jail is another example of an outreach service, providing reading materials to those who are incarcerated. Similar programs exist throughout the nation: the largest, the Seattle-based “Books to Prisoners” nonprofit sends approximately 1,000 books per month to inmates across the country.<sup>16</sup> Another similar nonprofit in Philadelphia lists almost 30 such programs across the country<sup>17</sup> including one in Wisconsin.<sup>18</sup> In Dane County, the library service coordinates with the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin to administer a volunteer-based program to provide reading materials to jail inmates.<sup>19</sup>

The Polk County library service has administered a recreational reading program for inmates of the Polk County jail for a number of years, perhaps since the formation of the library service. This program is distinct from traditional jail literacy programs in its provision of recreational reading materials and in its goals and objectives, as described in Figure 5, following. An estimated budget for this program is \$42,000 of which the levy support is approximately \$26,000.

Evaluation of the “books to the jail” program as administered by the library service is problematic, as it is difficult to see how this program fits with the mission of that library service or, indeed, with State law (Dane County operates their program through a nonprofit). The commonly stated purpose of “books to the jail” or jail literacy program is to reduce recidivism under the theory that a higher level of education will allow greater opportunity for employment and less economically inspired crime. It is a stretch to see how this program provides services to those who do not live in municipalities served by a library under the original meaning of the statute or improves the service of municipal libraries. The apparent deviation from the original mission may have been authorized by a past County Board; if not, it is appropriate that this be considered in light of the effectiveness of the program and options for its administration. If the deviation is not permissible under State law, then options for its administration become the salient issue if effectiveness standards are met. Thus, this part of the evaluation considers only the effectiveness of the program and delivery options; whether the program should continue at all is a policy decision that should be made by the County Board along with the issue of who should administer it.

As noted, one purpose of this program is to reduce recidivism. There are a number of studies that confirm this effect, albeit all at the state or federal prison level. Only one study has been conducted at the county level, and that concluded with ambiguous results.<sup>20</sup> Most proponents of correctional literacy services cite the Three State Recidivism Study, published in 2001, that focused on 3200 individuals who were released from prison in three states: Maryland, Minnesota and Ohio. This study considered re-arrest, re-conviction, and re-incarceration rates among those who had participated in educational programs while incarcerated and those who had not. The findings most commonly cited is that participation in such programs reduced the likelihood of re-arrest by 13%; reduced the likelihood of re-conviction by 21%; and reduced the likelihood of re-incarceration by 29%.

A significant problem in such studies is what is known as selection bias. There is no (easy) possibility of randomly assigning inmates to literacy programs; as a consequence, desire to participate in such programs may be the underlying causal factor instead of actual participation. In other words, the study could be distinguishing between those who have the desire to improve themselves to avoid re-incarceration instead of the effect of such participation on future avoidance of re-incarceration. Although the authors of this particular study are well aware of such potential issues, and take great pains to attempt to control for this selection bias including surveys which measure motivation, until studies using true randomized samples are developed (if possible), some skepticism is warranted.

**Figure 5**

**Program logic : Books for the jail**

	Narrative summary	Performance Indicators	Monitoring & Evaluation	Assumptions/Risk
Impact	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Quality of life is improved through reduced crime</li> <li>2. Lower costs and lower taxes</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Change in recidivism rate for former participants</li> <li>2. Cost of jail operations</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Random sample of former program participants</li> <li>2. County records</li> </ol>	
Results	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased employment for program participants</li> <li>2. Reduced jail staffing needs and lower injury rate</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employment rate for program participants</li> <li>2. Staffing/inmate ratio and work comp claims</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Survey of program participants</li> <li>2. Jail records</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stable economy with ongoing employment opportunity</li> <li>2. No change in regulatory framework</li> </ol>
Outputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased literacy and knowledge for program participants</li> <li>2. Inmates who spend time reading instead of disruptive activities</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Literacy level for program participants</li> <li>2. Time spent reading</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Longitudinal study and test, for example</li> <li>2. Observation by jail staff</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adequate employment opportunity for former inmates</li> <li>2. No other major disruptions</li> </ol>
Activities	Provision of books for inmates	Number of books supplied	Library records	Sufficient interest and effort by participants

Nonetheless, it is more likely that such literacy programs reduce recidivism than not. However, these studied evaluate fairly intensive literacy programs that are likely beyond the capacity of the Polk County library service to provide. Still at issue, and unresolved, is the extent to which the Polk County programs reduce recidivism, if at all. Studies are of comprehensive literacy programs, which the Polk County

## EVALUATION OF LIBRARY PROGRAMS

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library service does not offer, but rather generally book pickup and delivery. It would therefore be premature to conclude that the Polk County program reduces recidivism, but also equally premature to conclude it does not. The only information available relating to the success of this program is a (nonscientific) selection of letters from current or former inmates in support of this program and attesting to its value.

A second justification for this program, one apparently unexplored in the literature, is the effect of such a program in peacefully occupying inmates and therefore reducing the rate of conflict or other behavioral problems stemming from incarceration. No data have ever been collected on this benefit, but conversation with those who operate the jail indicate that it is real, tangible, and significant not only in avoidance of injury to inmates and staff but in savings in staffing levels, allowing the County to stay closer to required minimum levels. Given the potential costs involved and observable benefit, it is likely that this justification far outstrips the literacy/recidivism justification and may be adequate in concluding that the benefits from the program do exceed the cost to the County.

A cost-benefit analysis for this program based on recidivism is difficult to develop given the tenuous link between literacy and recidivism in the best of cases, and the standing issue (whose costs count/whose benefits count) further complicate this issue. If a county literacy program prevents incarceration at a state-level facility, than the program produces a cost at the county level but the benefit accrues at the state level. Thus, although savings from prevention of even one re-offense would likely exceed the cost of the program, the county may see only the cost and none of the benefits.

The second set of benefits – lower correctional staffing and potential savings from avoiding injury, etc. – does directly accrue to the County and is easily monetized. If the books to the jail program results in avoiding one workers' compensation claim or reduces staffing need by one shift per year, savings would easily exceed the \$42,000 cost. Some indicators on utilization show that this program is effective. Total jail circulation in 2011 was nearly 6,700, and jail staff report that about one-half of all inmates participate.

A cost-effectiveness analysis, as noted, considers alternative means of achieving the same output (or ideally result) at lower cost. With respect to the educational features of this program, State law does not mandate any form of education for those over age 18.<sup>21</sup> According to the Correctional Education Association – Wisconsin, as of February 2008 59 of Wisconsin's 72 counties offered jail literacy and education programs. The most common model for service delivery is through the area technical college, followed by the local school district (for those under age 18), followed by a nonprofit service. Only one other county appears to fund such services and they through the Sheriff's department (Marinette).

A number of counties do provide extensive volunteer-based programs. Ozaukee County, for example, has a highly organized system that has been in existence for 20 years and with an annual budget of \$70,000, largely focused on literacy and education.<sup>22</sup> However, the apparent success of a volunteer-based program is more of an aberration than a model: in small counties, volunteer programs often

are not successful due to a low number of volunteers, difficulty in coordination, and competing demands for funding. At a minimum, a staff person would need to be tasked with oversight and coordination for such a program to succeed or a contractual arrangement established with an outside agency. For example, the Arrowhead Library System, with a \$2,000 grant from Rock County, supplies paperback books to the Rock County jail. This figure, however, is a tremendous bargain; there is no reason to suspect that this program could be implemented on a contract basis in Polk County for much less than the current \$35,000 cost (excluding volunteer time). Further, as the Arrowhead Library System is in Rock County, there may be other forms of subsidy incorporated in this figure.

In general, it is likely that the benefits from this program outweigh the costs, if only in savings from jail staffing. However, there are enough issues raised concerning financing and compliance with the mission of the library and State law to give pause should the County Board determine that this program continue. From a public finance and perhaps legal perspective (see discussion below), it is preferable that this program be funded through county-wide levy. Administration could remain unchanged, i.e. the library service could contract with corrections to administer this program. Options for administration through a volunteer-based program could also be explored, perhaps through the current literacy volunteer organization, Northern Waters Literacy ([www.northernwatersliteracy.org](http://www.northernwatersliteracy.org)), or through creation of a new organization. Finally, it may be optimal to contract with another library service to maintain a catalogue, that perhaps located in the jail itself wholly or in part.

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## LIBRARY SERVICES

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Wisconsin statutes permit a county library service to operate a library, which Polk County does, a 4,600 square foot facility located at 400 Polk County Plaza, Balsam Lake. The library serves principally as a repository for materials used in other programs and office space for library staff and volunteers, but the library also offers traditional library services including check-out of books and materials, reference services, a computer with internet access, some activities for children and others, and so forth.

The library itself meets standards as set by the DPI and the requirements of the federated library system of which it is a member. These requirements do significantly add to the cost of operation and include a requirement that the library must be open to the public a certain number of hours a year (25 hours per week), have a certified librarian, purchase a minimum amount of materials each year, and so on. Figure 6, below, illustrates the program logic for library services.

According to data supplied by DPI, the library service library is the fourth largest in the County in square footage. It is also the second largest library in the County in collection, with over 27,000 books. By circulation, however, the library is much smaller, ranking ninth among the County's libraries with a total circulation of just over 20,000, ahead of only the smaller libraries in Centuria and Dresser. Almost all of this circulation is through the other library programs – books by mail books to the jail, nursing homes, and so forth – with only about 1,100 books checked out of the

## EVALUATION OF LIBRARY PROGRAMS

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library itself. By way of comparison, the smallest library in the county, Centuria, reports a circulation of 12,800.

Other data indicate that the library does not approach the level of usage of other libraries in the County. The library ranks last in public use of computers, in number of computers, and in library visits (with two libraries not reporting). Reference use is high, likely due to the role of the librarian in providing assistance to other libraries and the use of the library by County staff. Annex A provides details on the operations of all of the libraries in Polk County as collected by the DPI. In

**Figure 6**

**Program logic: Library services**

	Narrative summary	Performance Indicators	Monitoring & Evaluation	Assumptions/Risk
Impact	Quality of life is improved for citizens through better education and access to information	Increased satisfaction with library services	Survey of citizens	
Results	Increased library usage and increased appreciation of library services	Number of library card holders and unduplicated participants	Library records	Adequate funding continues for libraries
Outputs	Access to materials and reference services	Circulation and participation in events	Library records	No new competing source of library-related materials
Activities	Reference services and materials collections	Maintenance of book collection, reference assistance, checkout and check in	Library records	Adequate funds and staff

general, however, operation of the library is an adjunct only to the operation of the library service, in part in a form made necessary by State mandate but not a core function of the library service. All told, the broad economic impact using DPI methodology is likely positive given the relatively small cost of operations, approximately \$22,000 per year, of which \$12,000 is funded through the levy.

All this does miss the point. Although State law permits a county library service to operate a library, this is not a blanket authorization to undertake whatever library activities that library service wishes. Operation of a library must still comply with the overall mission as set by State law and the County Board, to raise the level of services throughout the County and to equalize library services to those outside of municipalities with libraries. It is difficult to see how the current library addresses either goal other than tangentially, as residents of townships use services only indirectly through

the library. If there is to be a significant redesign of the library service, operation of a public library should be reevaluated and the library should perhaps be closed to the public.

## TECHNICAL SUPPORT

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The last major program implemented by the library is technical support for member libraries, one again directly in keeping with State law and with the original mission of the library service. This is the most diverse of the library programs, encompassing everything from computer support to specialized rotation materials such as large-print books. This program is the largest in terms of total cost and levy support at \$65,000 and \$53,000 respectively. Most of the costs incurred are for salaries, reflecting the technical assistance aspect of this program and the level of expertise available through the library service librarian.

Note, in part, that this program is a justification for the level of expertise required in a librarian (a master's degree in library science). As a major component of a county library service is provision of technical support, having staff with adequate expertise to provide that support is essential. This, however, could be handled through a contractual arrangement, and the requirement overall as noted severely limits the flexibility of a county in providing library services, especially a smaller county. As mentioned, for that reason this is the area most likely to be affected by the reduction in funding for clerical staff: to the extent that the time of the librarian is absorbed undertaking tasks that could otherwise be assigned to a lower skilled (and lower paid) clerical worker, less time is available for providing expertise to other libraries within the County. Figure 6 describes the logic for this program.

The effectiveness of this program is very difficult to measure in that the outputs (and subsequent results) are derived indirectly, through actions of other libraries. If the program is successful, then, the results will accrue to the implementing library, not the County library service. A traditional cost-benefit analysis is extremely difficult to conduct for that same reason, as benefit cannot be measured in usual terms such as circulation or attendance at events. Assessment must therefore be subjective, based on the impressions of librarians who participate in this program.

In reviewing this program, it is clear that declining resources have limited the ability of the library service to assist municipal libraries in Polk County. County levy support has declined from a peak of \$278,000 in 2006 to \$154,000 in 2011; although some of this revenue loss has been offset by an increase in donations – to the credit of the library service staff – overall the budget for the library has declined substantially in the last three to four years. The effect on clerical staff has been noted; expenditures for library materials – a good indicator of level of reinvestment – has fallen from \$25,000 in 2007 to \$12,000 in 2010.

From discussions, there is great variation in the type of and demand for services from municipal libraries. Most libraries are financially strained, with limited staffing and difficulty in taking on much beyond required activities, smaller libraries especially so. The technology specialist and provision of computer classes is highly regarded, as is the grant writing assistance offered by the library service (the latter helping facilitate the former). The provision of rotational material is



## EVALUATION OF LIBRARY PROGRAMS

considered of lesser value, especially given the MORE<sup>23</sup> system and its capacity as well as traditional interlibrary loans. Management of Act 150 and Act 420 funds, while valuable, is not excessively time consuming and could be dealt with elsewhere in the County without difficulty.

**Figure 6**

**Program logic: Library technical support**

	Narrative summary	Performance Indicators	Monitoring & Evaluation	Assumptions/Risk
Impact	Quality of life is improved for citizens through better education and access to information	Increased satisfaction with library services	Survey of citizens	
Results	Increased library usage and increased appreciation of library services	Number of library card holders and unduplicated participants	Library records	Adequate funding continues for libraries
Outputs	1. Improved library organization and access to materials 2. Greater awareness of library value	Circulation and participation in events	Library records	No new competing source of library-related materials
Activities	1. Provide technical support for member libraries 2. Conduct specialized classes	1. Hours of support provided 2. Hours of classes held	Library records	1. Adequate funds and staff to implement recommendations 2. Adequate citizen interest

Smaller libraries do rely on the library service more extensively and would likely experience the most problems should it not be continued. These libraries have very few resources, and need whatever support they can receive from the library service, everything from backup staffing to simple technical support. Their issues should be addressed in any long-term plan. Similarly, a real value of the library service would be in enhancing cooperation between libraries; the role of the director could be more in cross-communication, perhaps even facilitating specialization among libraries and resource sharing where possible. Although this could perhaps be accomplished through a volunteer association, having a full-time person in charge is of benefit.

Finally, technology has made one potential function of the library service, to serve as a specialized resource center, of less marginal value. The internet has opened up a limitless source of information, and it is now quite simple for even the uninitiated to access databases and catalogues



without specialized knowledge or to access other library resources instantly. Although trained librarians do have valuable and exceptional skills in this area and libraries access to information not generally available, many research request that in the past were a long, difficult task can now occur almost instantly.

While technical assistance to libraries is directly in keeping with the mission of the library service, it could be done more effectively and efficiently. A more efficient means of so doing would be to simply increase the Act 150 levy beyond the statutory minimum. This would allow individual libraries to decide how best to allocate resources – including purchasing the type of technical expertise provided at present by the library service – and to avoid the inefficiencies of the current library service forced upon it by State regulation and operations (open to the public, maintenance of a collection and so forth). Table 5, following, shows increased revenues to Polk County libraries from an Act 150 levy higher than the minimum (70%).

**Table 5**  
**Increased Act 150 Revenues from a Higher Reimbursement Level**

<b>Library</b>	<b>Act 150 Revenues</b>	<b>Increase from Higher Reimbursement Amount</b>					
		<b>75%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Amery	148,399.85	10,599.99	21,199.98	31,799.97	42,399.96	52,999.95	63,599.94
Balsam Lake	28,451.60	2,032.26	4,064.51	6,096.77	8,129.03	10,161.29	12,193.54
Centuria	9,612.44	686.60	1,373.21	2,059.81	2,746.41	3,433.02	4,119.62
Clear Lake	27,313.62	1,950.97	3,901.95	5,852.92	7,803.89	9,754.87	11,705.84
Dresser	11,144.95	796.07	1,592.14	2,388.20	3,184.27	3,980.34	4,776.41
Frederic	41,654.17	2,975.30	5,950.60	8,925.89	11,901.19	14,876.49	17,851.79
Luck	43,550.85	3,110.78	6,221.55	9,332.33	12,443.10	15,553.88	18,664.65
Milltown	45,343.07	3,238.79	6,477.58	9,716.37	12,955.16	16,193.96	19,432.75
Osceola	61,679.02	4,405.64	8,811.29	13,216.93	17,622.58	22,028.22	26,433.86
St. Croix Falls	42,101.21	3,007.23	6,014.46	9,021.69	12,028.92	15,036.15	18,043.38
Polk Total	459,250.79	32,804.38	65,608.06	98,411.73	131,215.41	164,019.09	196,822.77

Source: Polk County Administration

In other words, the current Act 150 levy equals 70 percent of circulation costs to non-residents. Increasing that amount to 75 percent would result in an increase in funding for the Amery library of

## EVALUATION OF LIBRARY PROGRAMS

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\$10,599.99 and an increase in taxes, county-wide, of \$32,804.38. (Note that these tables do not include Turtle Lake, which is partially located in Polk County and thus receives Act 150 funding).

The County currently levies about \$53,000 in support of technical assistance to libraries within the County. It would therefore perhaps be appropriate to consider providing these funds directly to these libraries.

One drawback of increasing funding through Act 150 is that these dollars would appear in library budgets, where the current library service assistance does not, and could provide opportunity to reduce municipal levy support, substituting county tax dollars (levied in towns) for municipal tax dollars (see Figure 1). Although that would perhaps provide a better balance in funding, the net effect would be a loss in assistance; it may be possible to work with municipal governments to ensure that this funding is adequate to replace the assistance now provided by the library service.

## PUBLIC FINANCE CONSIDERATIONS

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A common justification for a government policy is market failure, an inability of the free market to encompass all costs (e.g. a polluting factory), prevent a monopoly, or obtain payment for a public good. From a public finance perspective, the initial rationale for a county's participation in a library service was to allow for the provision of a public good to those who live outside of a municipality that can afford its own library. State law requires only that "Every public library shall be free for the use of the inhabitants of the municipality by which it is established and maintained, subject to such reasonable regulations as the library board prescribes in order to render its use most beneficial to the greatest number."<sup>24</sup> The federated library systems do result in a broader coverage, but libraries are allowed to refuse to honor cards from other libraries. Section 43.17 (11) (b) states:

A public library in a public library system may refuse to honor valid borrowers' cards of a public library in an adjacent public library system if, in the most recent year in which the public library honored such cards, the total amount of the reimbursement received by the public library from that adjacent public library system, and from counties and municipalities that are located in that adjacent public library system, is less than the adjusted cost incurred for that year by the public library in honoring the cards.

As of 2010, 28 libraries did deny access under this section.

Should a library offer services to non-residents, however, then a market failure occurs: those who receive services do not pay for that service (a positive externality or the "free rider" problem, in public finance terms). Akin to the "taxation without representation" problem, this is instead a representation without taxation, or the provision of benefits to those who do not pay for those benefits. Ideally, citizens can determine whether they receive adequate value for the taxes they pay and, if not, make their concerns known to their elected officials. This was generally not the case prior to the adoption of Act 150 in 1997, as noted; a county library service was directly targeted at the twin problems of service to rural residents and the burden on municipal libraries and their taxpayers from rural residents. Act 150 was directed at that problem, but also altered the landscape with regard to county library services, especially in combination with the retention of that statute that historically has allowed a municipality with a library to "opt out" of a county library levy. The adoption of Act 150 therefore created an innate conflict between those who pay for a service and those who benefit from that service with respect to county library services, a conflict which, it appears, has not been adequately addressed.

The current levy for the Polk County library system applies only in those towns that do not have a public library, meaning that beyond Act 150 there is an additional levy in each town to support the county library system. This is neither good nor bad on its face: if the services principally benefit those who pay the tax, the principle is not violated. Similarly, if Act 150 levy is not adequate to compensate municipal libraries for services provided non-residents it may be appropriate for a county to require additional support for these municipal libraries, either directly through a higher Act 150 levy or indirectly through a county library service.

## PUBLIC FINANCE CONSIDERATIONS

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A related issue is board composition. Wisconsin statutes section 43.57 (4) (c) provides that “Boards appointed under pars. (a) [consolidated county library] and (b) [county library service] shall include at least one school district administrator of a school district located in whole or in part in the county, or that school district administrator's designee, and one or 2 county board supervisors. Boards appointed under par. (b) shall include, in addition, representatives of existing library boards under s. 43.54 and persons residing in municipalities not served by libraries.”

It is interesting that the legislature did not make a greater distinction in committee composition between consolidated county libraries and county library services, as they are two very different entities. The former encompasses all residents within a county in a library service area, hence it is appropriate that the policy-making body be as inclusive as possible. The latter is of course funded only outside of the municipalities with libraries. This could lead to a situation (heretofore avoided by Polk County) of a majority of members representing areas with libraries effectively disenfranchising those who reside in areas without library services.

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## SPECIFIC ISSUES WITH RESPECT TO FINANCE AND SERVICE AREA

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Each of the above programs was evaluated for effectiveness and efficiency. It was also appropriate to evaluate each for the appropriateness of its financing mechanism. Support to member libraries is of value to all County residents, not just those in towns. Prior to Act 150, it could be argued that this funding was partial compensation for the burden placed on municipalities by providing library services to non-residents. To the extent that Act 150 and State funding is not adequate to compensate for that cost there may be a valid justification for these expenditures and for their financing only by those who do not reside in a municipality with a library.

It would require a far more detailed analysis of library costs than is possible here to determine the extent to which Act 150 revenues do compensate municipal libraries for the cost of services provided non-residents. There are two major issues that should be resolved: first, the degree to which it is appropriate to allocate total library costs based on circulation and, second, the degree to which increases in circulation to non-residents are similar to basic costs of circulation (or, in economics, the relationship between the average cost of circulation and the marginal cost). If the former is not the case, it may not be appropriate to simply allocate costs according to circulation, as Act 150 implicitly does. Libraries offer services above and beyond circulation of materials: libraries host events, provide reference materials and information, internet access, and so forth. It may well be that these activities tend to be more available to residents in close proximity, i.e. municipal residents. Further, the library building itself is often a quasi community center which may receive

heavier use from municipal residents. Initial analysis appears to confirm that circulation is the primary explanatory variable in determining operating costs, but not the sole explanatory variable.\*

Second, even if circulation is the primary determinant of cost, then additional circulation on a per-unit basis does appear to cost less than average cost of circulation. For Wisconsin public libraries, if we control for library size by dividing operating expense by circulation – cost per item circulated – and look at the relationship of this to population, add an adjustment for computer use and activities, the relationship is statistically significant indicating that there are economies of scale and that cost per item declines with items circulated.† Retroactively applying this factor to Polk County libraries would indicate that Act 150 reimbursements are below the increase in marginal costs since Act 150 took effect, but a one-to-one reallocation would have been excessive.‡

The financing of books to the jail only by township residents is more problematic, as this should be considered to be of benefit to all County residents. The argument that Act 150 funding is inadequate to compensate for the cost of services provided non-residents tends to break down when faced with a service that it is unlikely municipal libraries would provide. This program may not be permissible under the statutes governing library service levy, but may be permissible under the statutes governing local correctional systems. In any case, it would be more appropriate to finance these expenditures from the general County levy as that would result in a better balance between finance and service areas.

Other programs do probably benefit residents outside of municipalities with libraries. However, and as noted, data on outreach indicate that this program largely is aimed at nursing homes and not all homes across the County; it may well be that the realignment of this program as discussed earlier could serve to also realign expenditures with revenues.

Much of the above evaluation has been concerned with aligning benefits with costs, but there is another option that should be mentioned, and that is to alter the collection of revenues. One, according to the DPI, an individual library board may elect to have county funding for shared

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\* Although the correlation between operating expenditures and circulation is strong, it is not as strong as one would expect ( $R^2$  of 77%) given the omitted variable of library size (both costs and circulation increase with the level of library service). Part of this is doubtlessly economies of scale, but much is likely also due to the variety of services provided by library systems. If we include number of annual events as an independent variable, for example, the correlation improves ( $R^2$  of 83%) and that variable is significant ( $p < .01$ ) with a value of 2575, indicating that all else being equal, a library spends about \$2,600 for each event it holds.

† The relationship is not terribly strong ( $R^2$  of 16%), however. The coefficient for log of circulation is -0.134 ( $p < .01$ ), indicating that the cost per item of circulation falls by 0.13 cents for every percent that circulation increases.

‡ Before Act 150, about 30-40% of the circulation within Polk County was to those living outside of municipalities with library services. In 2010, this had increased to 57% (adjusted for those in other counties in municipalities with library services). Applying the coefficient above, this would indicate that the Act 150 reimbursement rate should have been about 90 percent to fully compensate for increased circulation.

## PUBLIC FINANCE CONSIDERATIONS

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services credited against the Act 150 levy, meaning residents in areas without a library need not pay for general benefits to libraries provided through a county library service, all or in part. This would resolve the issue of misalignment of funding. Similarly, municipal libraries could perhaps purchase services from the County library service, and this revenue offset the levy to support that service to that same effect.<sup>25</sup>

It is unlikely that most libraries would or even could agree to reduce their revenues to offset part or all of the costs of the library service, however. Although the service does provide significant benefits to County libraries, few will likely have room within their budget to absorb even a small cost, meaning that the effect of a significant reduction in the County library service funding will be simply a reduction in services.

Another option to better align taxation with representation could be for the County to use its authority under section 43.60 to appoint additional members to municipal library boards. This section states:

### **43.60 County appointments to municipal and joint public library boards.**

**(3) (a)** A county chairperson, with the approval of the county board, may appoint from among the residents of the county additional members to the library board of a public library of a municipality located in whole or in part in the county, for a term of 3 years from the May 1 following the appointment, and thereafter for a term of 3 years, as follows:

**1.** If the annual sum appropriated by the county to the public library is equal to at least one-sixth, but less than one-third, of the annual sum appropriated to the public library by any municipality in which the public library is located during the preceding fiscal year, one additional member.

**2.** If the annual sum appropriated by the county to the public library is equal to at least one-third, but less than one-half, of the annual sum appropriated to the public library by any municipality in which the public library is located, 2 additional members.

**3.** If the annual sum appropriated by the county to the public library is equal to at least one-half, but less than two-thirds, of the annual sum appropriated to the public library by any municipality in which the public library is located, 3 additional members.

**4.** If the annual sum appropriated by the county to the public library is equal to at least two-thirds, but less than the annual sum appropriated to the public library by any municipality in which the public library is located, 4 additional members.

**5.** If the annual sum appropriated by the county to the public library is equal to at least the annual sum appropriated to the public library by any municipality in which the public library is located, 5 additional members.

**(b)** For a joint public library of 2 or more municipalities, the "annual sum appropriated to the public library by any municipality in which the public library is located" under par. (a) is the total sum appropriated by all of the municipalities participating in the joint library.

**(c)** A county chairperson may appoint a county supervisor to serve as a member of a library board of a public library of a municipality under par. (a), but no more than one county supervisor so appointed may serve on the library board at the same time.

**(4)** If an additional member appointed to a library board under sub. (3) (a) loses the status upon which the appointment was based, he or she ceases to be a member of the library board effective on the following May 1.

Every library in Polk County would qualify for such additional membership, with Centuria and Dresser eligible for one additional member; Balsam Lake, Clear Lake, Frederic and St. Croix Falls eligible for two additional members; Luck, Milltown and Osceola three additional members; and Amery four additional members based on 2010 data. As municipal library boards have between five and seven members, that is a substantial increase in membership and likely of significant value in representing the interests of rural residents. Such membership expansion would be of value, and should be considered along with other aspects of the library service to Polk County residents as part of the library plan development.



## COUNTY LIBRARY SERVICE REDUCTIONS

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As noted, a number of counties have closed their county library services in recent years. In the past, there has been a misunderstanding of the process, as State law referencing a county public library system has been confused with a public library service. With the abolition of the maintenance of effort requirement, a county board can vote to close a library service at any time (note, however, that there are restrictions on the use of funds) and without a public hearing.

A simple action without any preparation would not be an optimal approach, as the closure of a library service will impact service delivery within a county, an impact that should be reflected in the required county library plan for service. Adoption of that plan does require public hearings. In addition, as the Polk County library service is a member of a public library system (IFLS), the abolition of the library service must also be accompanied by a withdrawal from that library system with accompanying requirements. The current library service participates in the MORE system under IFLS; withdrawal from that service requires a two year notice (on paper).

There are many, many more issues that need to be resolved if the library service is eliminated. A library service's collection needs to be distributed (Pierce County allowed any resident to take any book after the initial distribution was made) and provisions made for the disposal of other assets. In some cases demand may shift to municipal libraries, in which case they will need to make appropriate preparations. All of this argues for a slow, cautious approach in closing a library service and doing so with considerable public involvement. The development of a plan for library service as required by State law provides an excellent forum for such discussions (section following).

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### SPECIFIC ISSUES FOR POLK COUNTY

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In Polk County, the library service operates a library with associated books and materials as well as provides for the delivery of other library services through the programs discussed above. None of these programs are amenable to a sharp cutoff without effective disruption of services and potentially incurring unnecessary costs, meaning that it would be reasonable to develop a transition plan preparatory to cessation of services directly provided by the County, especially where these services may be provided by another agency.

Should some or more of the current library services be retained, any delivery mechanism to do so will take time to develop. Should, for example, responsibility for the books to the jail program be shifted to corrections, the need for staffing would have to be determined as would care of any reading materials including purchase, repair and storage. If volunteers are selected to provide any service, they will need to be organized and trained. Further, any reasonable allocation of assets will also require time.

Added to this need for caution in implementation is the statutory dedication of library funds under section 43.64(1) and assignment of control to the library board under 43.58(1) that does not allow funds to be lapsed back to the appropriating authority, meaning that any fund balances are under the complete control of the library board.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, any fund balance available at the time a decision is made to close a library service remains under the control of the library board and amenable to financing a transition plan.

The Polk County library service at present has approximately \$50,000 in fund balance (end of 2011, preliminary). Under the current budget, if revenue targets are met, that should increase by about \$12,000, bringing the total to \$62,000. That balance could be used to fund a transition plan, especially if some of this activity begins in 2012 and results in savings this year. A decision to phase out the library service, if funds are carefully shepherded, could allow for a year or more of transition.

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### PLAN FOR LIBRARY SERVICES

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As noted above, Act 150 requires that every county develop a plan for providing library services to county residents of municipalities which do not maintain a public library including reimbursement to municipal libraries. The current Polk County plan for library services was originally adopted in response to that Act in 1999 and updated seven times since then, with the last update for the period 2010 through 2012 adopted in June, 2010.

The current document is not a plan for library services nor, probably, was the original plan. Rather, it is simply a listing of activities only superficially related to the mission of the library service and a few statistical tables including Act 150 distribution. There is no identification of strategic issues, no assessment of opportunities, no recognition of changes to the environment, no goals and objectives – in short, nothing that would make this document of value. Nothing links this document to the agency's mission, and nothing would allow it to be of use in measuring performance. (Note that the library service is not being singled out for criticism; Polk County has only recently begun to develop a performance measurement program and structure, meaning that most departments are at this same beginning point).

The planning process could be of significant value in better aligning the library service with its mission and reconciling the public finance issues discussed above. The statute is specific in its requirement: this is to be a plan for providing services to those in towns. These taxpayers fund the library service, and the plan could demonstrate how their money is spent to improve that service. Recognition of the role of technology change, of evolution in libraries, of effectiveness in current service delivery – in other words, elements of a solid strategic plan – could work to significantly improve library services to those who pay for them and explain the quality of services provided and measures of success in so doing.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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In general, it is clear that Polk County has done far more than is required by law to support library services for residents. In part this has been a reflection of the rural nature of Polk County, with no dominant municipality, with a number of smaller municipalities willing to support libraries, and with a large share of the population living outside of these municipalities. At the time the library service was founded, these factors doubtlessly influenced the decision to support member libraries and provide better services to those outside of municipalities with libraries. This was the library service's initial and ongoing mission, one that has generally been pursued to this date. In part, as well, this has been a reflection of past commitment to literacy and to library programs. Among all 72 counties, Polk County ranks 6<sup>th</sup> highest in the State in circulation to those outside of municipalities with libraries; this is doubtlessly a reflection of both that commitment and of the County's demographics.

At issue, initially, is the degree to which the environment has changed and consequently lessened the need for the library service or perhaps warrants a major redesign of those services. The adoption of Act 150 in 1997 and its extension a few years ago to adjacent counties have provided libraries considerable compensation for services provided non-residents; the federated library systems also allow for support to libraries unavailable in the mid 1970s, when the Polk County library service was formed. (Note that this is not a comment on the need for funding for municipal libraries; that discussion is beyond the scope of this analysis.)

At issue also is the degree to which the library service has drifted from its initial mission (and that permitted under State law). The law is quite clear as to what programs a library service can implement: those that raise the quality of services across the county and those that help provide services to those outside of municipalities with libraries. Many current library programs address neither. Thus, it is fair to say that the environment – financial, technological, and economic/demographic – has changed and that the library mission has drifted, but not in complementary directions. A thorough overhaul of library services is therefore warranted.

The disconnect between funding source and recipients is troublesome from a public finance standpoint. Much of this results from the structure of state law, predating Act 150, which allows municipalities with libraries to opt out of the county library levy even though a stated purpose of that levy is to assist municipalities with libraries. Prior to Act 150 that would serve as some form of

*The current plan for library service is not a plan at all: it is instead an inventory of activities only loosely connected with the mission of the library service... provid[ing] clear evidence that the library service needs to regain focus.*

compensation as discussed above and, to the extent that Act 150 as amended does not compensate for circulation costs for non-residents such subsidy could still be justified. However, although library staff have attempted to include as representative a group of citizens as possible on the library board, and that library board has done well to be inclusive, it would be worthwhile to engage town boards and residents more in the allocative decisions.

The required plan for library services could serve as a means for such engagement, but the current plan for library service is not a plan at all: it is instead an inventory of activities only loosely connected with the mission of the library service. This document provides clear evidence that the library service needs to regain focus. Should the library service be retained, this planning process should would provide opportunity for a broad based discussion on restructuring to meet the agency's mission. Should the library service be abolished, this plan could become a blueprint for transition. This plan also should provide clear and measureable targets, performance measures, strategic issues and goals so as to be a useful document for future evaluations.

In 2011, the legislature (Act 32) eliminated the maintenance of effort requirements for libraries and, in so doing, increased the authority of elected boards in determining whether and to what degree to support local libraries. The initial decision to be made by the County Board and the central question is the degree to which the County should participate in the provision of library services through levy funds above the required minimum and with the special consideration of how this tax burden is spread, to residents of communities outside of municipalities with libraries. Clearly all programs are of benefit, but the issue is how these programs benefit those who fund them.

The decision whether to continue to provide each of the services at present provided by the library is of course a policy decision to be made by the County Board. Unfortunately, because of the State's regulatory and legal framework, financing of county library services has almost become an "all or nothing" proposition. Absent the umbrella authorization provided by the library service statute, the County certainly could not operate a library, offer a books by mail program, conduct library outreach programs, or provide in-kind assistance to other libraries within the County. The sole activity the County could undertake is providing recreational reading to jail inmates and that through the corrections budget.

Despite the complexity of the various programs and mix of programs, the actual decision structure is actually quite simple. The County Board will need to decide, first of all, whether to continue to levy above the required amount for support of library services. It would be appropriate to consult extensively with other stakeholders in making that decision, specifically the towns on whose behalf the levy is made and the libraries through which these services are delivered. Further, this decision should be made early enough in the year – by mid-June – to allow for a reasonable planning process to occur in any transition or, if the library service is retained, to redesign that service.

Note that this decision on library funding must be made in the context of severely limited resources. Under the current Wisconsin levy cap, almost no new levy revenues will be available for the foreseeable future; the levy is effectively and permanently limited to growth from new construction, probably only a fraction of one percent. In 2012, the new levy available was only about \$60,000

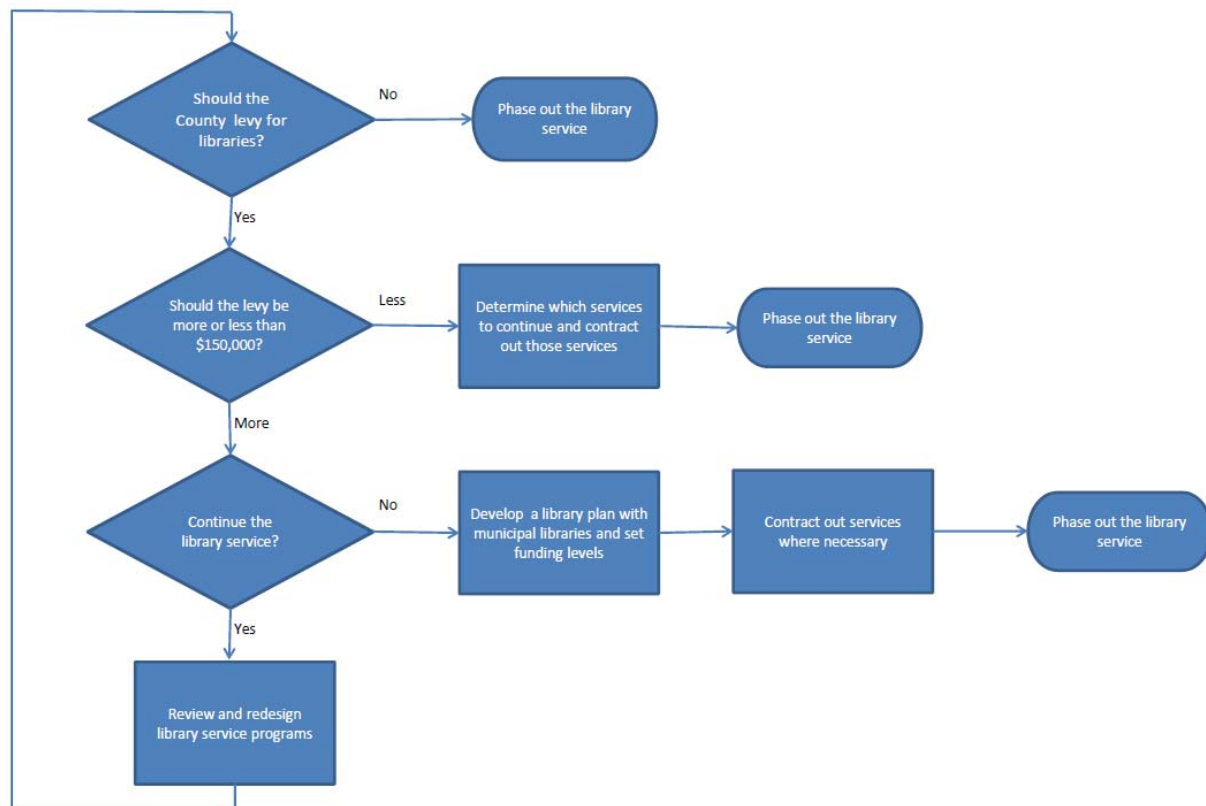
## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(although the County Board chose not to levy that amount). As there will be growth in costs for mandated programs that must be funded, non-mandated programs will need to meet higher and higher standards of effectiveness and importance to retain funding in this and future years. The question for the County Board is therefore not just to fund library services, but rather whether the library programs meet high enough standards so as to justify jettisoning other programs or making other cuts so as to be able to retain them.

If the decision is to continue to provide additional support to libraries, then the next question would be whether the levy should be of an adequate amount to continue support of the library service, roughly \$150,000 - \$160,000 annually. If that answer is yes, then the final major issue becomes whether to continue the library service or provide funds directly and through a contract for services such as the books to the jail program. Figure 7 sets out the basic decision structure.

Figure 7

### Decision Structure for Provision of Library Services by Polk County



In any case, other than an abolition of all library funding, consideration will need to be given to which library programs should continue and how they should be modified. The mission of the library service is to raise the quality of library services in the County and to equalize services across

the County. To accomplish this, the library service implements five separate programs: library outreach, books by mail, library services (the physical County library), books to the jail, and technical assistance to member libraries. Despite the best efforts of highly qualified staff, most have been affected by reductions in resources, and all would benefit from redesign. Library outreach services could be spread more equally across the County, and should be better integrated with (or perhaps supplanted by) those outreach efforts provided by current libraries.

The books by mail program is of course of considerable value to participants, but it is questionable whether the benefits exceed the costs, which are somewhat high: according to information provided by the library, these costs may be around \$10 per book. These costs are doubtlessly why many libraries have dropped this program: only three counties provide such services. Further, changing technology is beginning to render such services more obsolete with e-books and internet-based book rental companies. If still deemed of value, municipal libraries should be engaged in the determination of how the program could be best administered. Finally, there are alternative methods of providing recreational reading through volunteer programs, although these cannot match the convenience of mail delivery.

Library services are the most troublesome, in that it is difficult to see how this program does much to achieve either part of the mission in improving library quality or equalizing services across the County. Granted that this program is in part an adjunct to the other programs – the library is a repository for books by mail, books to the jail, offices for staff, and so on – its services are duplicative of other libraries and likely not cost effective in that they result in the librarian undertaking clerical duties or use of resources (volunteer or paid staff) that could better be used elsewhere.

The books to the jail program does appear to be effective, perhaps in reducing recidivism but definitely in savings in jail staffing costs and the cost of disruption. This program likely warrants continuation in some form, although there are options to do so independent of the library service. Should that be the case, however, the program should be funded through a County-wide levy, as benefits accrue to all County residents, not just those in towns, and it is only loosely in keeping with the library service's mission.

The final program is the technical assistance to County libraries which, although of value, is also inefficiently provided due to demands on the librarian's time and the varying nature of needs among the County's municipal libraries. Two activities were singled out as very valuable, the computer assistance and training and the assistance with grant writing. Provisions to retain both should be considered, but it may be far more efficient if, as permitted by State law, the funds provided for this program were distributed to libraries directly. The former service has been provided through grant funding, and the latter is not anywhere near a full-time position. The County currently levies about \$53,000 to provide technical assistance. It may be appropriate to consider providing these funds to libraries directly if the desire is to continue to assist them.

Should the County Board continue to wish to continue a library service, the first recommendation is therefore that a waiver be sought from State regulations as possible and, as necessary, a change in State law be proposed to allow far more flexibility in the County's provision of these services. This



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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change should allow the County to operate a “library” that need not be open to the public, to allow the County to hire a manager that does not hold a Master of Library Science degree, exemption from annual expenditure requirements, and all similar regulations. This would allow maximum flexibility in service provision and increase efficiency.

Second, given the financing structure mandated by State law, with supporting taxes only in jurisdictions that do not have a municipal library, the County Board should oversee a redesign of the County library service. The opportunity to do so is with the next biennial plan due later this year, and the library board should be assigned that activity with the County Board setting the overall parameters on funding amount. Given the financing source, the focus of the County library service should be far more clearly on services to those in towns and overall demonstrable and severable improvement of services, not simple duplication of those provided by municipal libraries. Levy for assistance to member libraries should more closely track the utilization of those services so that citizens can make a valid determination of the degree to which they receive adequate value for the taxes they pay – they need to be able to see what their dollars buy.

If the library service is retained, then this repurposing should be based upon a comprehensive review of library services incorporating representatives from towns, who pay the cost, and municipal libraries, who implement the programs. Simply because the County has implemented the same programs for 37 years should not be reason to do so indefinitely given how the environment has changed and is changing. The required plan for library service provides the opportunity to do so, one that should not be missed.

The Polk County library service was formed in 1974 in recognition of the role the County could play in assisting municipal libraries in providing high-quality library services, especially considering the County’s rural nature. At the time, this was an optimal approach, and over the years has obviously served to improve library services – and the quality of life – in Polk County. A role may still exist, but evolution in both the nature of library services through technology and of library financing has caused much of what the library service does to become duplicative or simply inefficient. State mandates force much of this inefficiency, but reductions in resources have also contributed. Further, the library service has lost focus: many of the programs implemented are only marginally related to its mission, if at all. If retained, programs should be redesigned to align with this mission or dropped if that is not possible.

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## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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There is much of value in the library services provided, especially books to the jail and some of the help provided member libraries, but all can be done far more efficiently and funded differently. The plan for library services presents an opportunity to do so – independent of the decision to retain a library service. The current mix of programs should be reviewed, determination made as to whether they should continue and, if so, refocused and incorporated in a plan for continued provision of high-quality library services to all residents of Polk County. Given the current financial environment, it is more important than ever that this be done, and soon.

## ANNEX A: 2010 LIBRARY SERVICE DATA

### 2010 Public Library Service Data

	<i>Amery Public Library</i>	<i>Balsam Lake Public Library</i>	<i>Polk County Library</i>	<i>Centuria Public Library</i>	<i>Clear Lake Public Library</i>	<i>Dresser Public Library</i>	<i>Frederic Public Library</i>	<i>Luck Public Library</i>	<i>Milltown Public Library</i>	<i>Osceola Public Library</i>	<i>St. Croix Falls Public Library</i>
Municipal Population	2,895	1,068	0	948	1,137	874	1,241	1,230	916	2,728	2,199
Additional Service Population	7,818	2,170	0	364	2,190	563	3,313	3,114	2,476	5,487	3,289
Total Service Population	10,713	3,238	0	1,312	3,327	1,437	4,554	4,344	3,392	8,215	5,488
Hours Open per Week Winter	44	40	40	26	37	31	43	41	47	44	47
Hours Open per Week Summer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	0
Annual Hours Open	2,288	2,080	2,080	1,352	1,924	1,612	2,236	2,132	2,444	2,240	2,444
Square Footage of Library	22,000	1,600	4,632	1,426	4,144	1,274	6,183	3,592	3,120	3,140	7,500
Book and Serial Volumes in Print	88,100	10,848	27,405	8,756	13,536	13,395	14,949	12,487	12,613	19,944	14,355
Audio Materials	5,827	415	1,663	464	1,695	468	1,601	689	1,152	1,303	782
Video Materials	6,176	1,433	2,554	1,638	2,737	670	1,970	1,932	2,154	2,581	1,194
Periodical Subscriptions	92	78	12	21	65	25	81	38	56	49	45
Public Use Computers	10	5	1	4	6	3	7	8	7	5	14
Public Use Internet Connected	8	4	1	4	6	3	7	7	7	5	14
Children's Books	41,254	10,212	1,973	2,741	18,707	7,574	19,788	13,186	11,533	37,667	22,673
Total Books	127,858	36,325	20,143	12,791	56,032	15,931	77,090	48,436	43,956	101,383	72,457

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

	<i>Amery Public Library</i>	<i>Balsam Lake Public Library</i>	<i>Polk County Library</i>	<i>Centuria Public Library</i>	<i>Clear Lake Public Library</i>	<i>Dresser Public Library</i>	<i>Frederic Public Library</i>	<i>Luck Public Library</i>	<i>Milltown Public Library</i>	<i>Osceola Public Library</i>	<i>St. Croix Falls Public Library</i>
Resident Registered Borrowers	2,156	896	2,143	643	598	551	842	793	855	1,832	1,463
Nonresident Registered Borrowers	5,879	895	38	172	1,013	138	1,930	1,256	1,212	3,518	2,070
Total Borrowers	8,035	1,791	2,181	815	1,611	689	2,772	2,049	2,067	5,350	3,533
Reference Transactions	5,010	-	3,276	520	936	-	1,456	12,601	208	-	2,132
Library Visits	51,090	-	3,172	5,700	20,644	5,797	46,883	25,912	4,992	-	37,633
Users of Public Internet Computers	8,405	4,353	780	2,803	4,877	989	9,121	7,154	7,969	5,029	11,689
Children's Programs	59	62	3	1	132	6	84	90	62	85	55
Attendance	2,704	813	16	75	1,858	37	2,556	838	502	2,961	1,721
Young Adult Programs	64	0	1	0	24	0	34	12	0	3	7
Attendance	1,184	0	21	0	352	0	268	22	0	80	42
Other Programs	40	37	73	7	16	5	34	66	151	28	9
Attendance	324	190	1,088	72	91	27	461	639	726	2,026	736
Total Programs	163	99	77	8	172	11	152	168	213	116	71
Total Attendance	4,212	1,003	1,125	147	2,301	64	3,285	1,499	1,228	5,067	2,499
Total Staff	5.00	1.20	1.60	0.98	1.88	1.16	2.68	1.63	2.58	4.00	2.50
Municipal Appropriation	198,873	69,543	0	46,939	56,393	39,898	84,542	57,995	80,940	96,800	87,333
County Appropriation	159,560	28,304	646,884	8,027	24,837	9,307	37,588	32,728	48,379	59,863	33,733
Other County Payments-Adjacent Counties	0	0	0	0	18,434	0	23,068	3,305	1,119	0	0
State Funds	0	13	46	0	0	35	42	48	18	347	38
Federal Funds	0	0	0	0	263	0	0	0	0	280	267
All Other Income	\$80,528	\$92,552	\$38,543	\$22,027	\$26,347	\$2,917	\$106,736	\$8,063	\$10,785	\$26,029	\$23,427
Total Income	438,961	190,412	685,473	76,993	126,274	52,157	251,976	102,139	141,241	183,319	144,798
Salaries & Wages	133,870	36,674	91,806	27,335	43,088	28,820	71,146	47,126	52,085	100,252	74,552
Employee Benefits	58,119	5,501	30,309	6,433	32,345	4,420	21,720	9,183	24,033	27,128	27,404

	<i>Amery Public Library</i>	<i>Balsam Lake Public Library</i>	<i>Polk County Library</i>	<i>Centuria Public Library</i>	<i>Clear Lake Public Library</i>	<i>Dresser Public Library</i>	<i>Frederic Public Library</i>	<i>Luck Public Library</i>	<i>Milltown Public Library</i>	<i>Osceola Public Library</i>	<i>St. Croix Falls Public Library</i>
Print Materials	44,016	11,329	9,765	7,372	10,249	6,574	11,476	10,020	10,215	7,600	6,077
Electronic format	0	0	0	0	0	24	0	100	0	0	0
Audiovisual Materials	16,386	754	2,608	2,651	4,903	682	5,308	4,000	4,865	2,723	1,750
All Other Materials	0	2,202	475	0	0	49	0	500	0	0	963
Library Materials Total	60,402	14,285	12,848	10,023	15,152	7,329	16,784	14,620	15,080	10,323	8,790
Contracted Services	0	0	495,452	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Operating Expenditures	113,584	15,365	35,994	7,095	15,047	7,006	36,546	31,210	30,152	34,428	30,076
Total Operating Expenditures	365,975	71,825	666,409	50,886	105,632	47,575	146,196	102,139	121,350	172,131	140,822
Exempt from County Library Tax 1=Yes 0=No	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Resident Support Per Capita	\$ 68.70	\$ 65.12	-	\$ 49.51	\$ 49.60	\$ 45.65	\$ 68.12	\$ 47.15	\$ 88.36	\$ 35.48	\$ 39.71
Total Nonresident Circulation	81,902	24,211	844	5,538	37,656	6,295	51,802	34,065	28,935	64,598	48,662
Circulation to those with a library	2,570	3,157	0	1,602	1,405	715	2,365	1,505	4,467	6,055	5,111
Circulation to those without a library	74,074	20,559	0	3,452	20,744	5,332	31,385	29,500	23,461	51,984	31,163
Total	76,644	23,716	0	5,054	22,149	6,047	33,750	31,005	27,928	58,039	36,274
Circulation to those with a library	1,349	223	305	391	1,290	61	242	325	101	1,260	261
Circulation to those without a library	2,690	223	293	47	14,190	118	107	146	11	2,824	306
Total	4,039	446	598	438	15,480	179	349	471	112	4,084	567

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

	<i>Amery Public Library</i>	<i>Balsam Lake Public Library</i>	<i>Polk County Library</i>	<i>Centuria Public Library</i>	<i>Clear Lake Public Library</i>	<i>Dresser Public Library</i>	<i>Frederic Public Library</i>	<i>Luck Public Library</i>	<i>Milltown Public Library</i>	<i>Osceola Public Library</i>	<i>St. Croix Falls Public Library</i>
Circulation to those with a library	58	28	119	0	0	0	318	232	19	22	703
Circulation to those without a library	26	0	107	0	17	1	16,291	2,133	463	24	1,617
Total	84	28	226	0	17	1	16,609	2,365	482	46	2,320
All Other State Residents	353	0	0	0	10	0	706	150	7	29	89
Users from Out of State	782	21	20	1	0	68	388	74	406	2,400	9,412

## ANNEX B: READING A LOGICAL FRAMEWORK (LOGFRAME)

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A logical framework, or logframe, is a means of illustrating program logic in a simple table. It is similar to the logic model endorsed by UW Extension, the Kellogg Foundation, and others in its factoring a program into activities, outputs, results, and impact, but differs in its incorporation of performance indicators, sources, assumptions and risk. Although designed by the U.S. Government in the early 1970s as a project evaluation tool (a project differing from a program in a finite beginning and ending date and limited resources) its use is here extended to program evaluation due to its efficiency in illustrating logic.

The following is a logframe presented earlier in this document, for library outreach services.

	<b>Narrative summary</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</b>	<b>Assumptions/Risk</b>
<b>Impact</b>	Quality of life for shut-ins is improved	Increased satisfaction with life	Survey of participants	
<b>Results</b>	Greater diversity in materials and information available and entertainment options	Hours of reading and listening/viewing library-supplied materials	Survey of program participants	No substantial change in living support programs or other external factors
<b>Outputs</b>	Increased reading, listening to tapes, and viewing of programs	Change in number of books and other participants	Library records	Participants' health remains stable, interesting material available
<b>Activities</b>	Provide books and programs for shut-ins and nursing home residents	Number of books and other materials or programs supplied	Library records	Sufficient interest and effort by participants

The top row, impact, is the reason for the existence of the program, why a policy-making body established that program. The second row, results, gives the near-term effect of the program to its recipients. Outputs are what the program provides, and activities are what the program does to provide them.

Each level is accompanied by a performance measure in the third column, e.g. the number of books supplied, to enable review of effectiveness, and the source of the data in the fourth column to confirm the performance measure is also included in the table. The final column, assumptions and risk, are considered to be those factors outside of the control of the agency implementing a program that could affect the achievement of the desired output, result or impact.

To interpret the program logic in a logframe, it should be read from the bottom up using an “*IF – AND – THEN*” structure that incorporates the narrative summary and the assumptions and risk, as follows in the example of the library outreach program and as illustrated below:

	Narrative summary	Performance Indicators	Monitoring & Evaluation	Assumptions/Risk
Impact				X
Results				
Outputs	<b>THEN</b>			
Activities	<b>IF</b>			<b>AND</b>

*IF* books and programs are provided to shut-ins and nursing home residents *AND* there is sufficient interest and effort by participants *THEN* there will be increased reading, listening to tapes, and viewing of programs.

The next row up is then read as follows:

*IF* there is increased reading, listening to tapes, and viewing of programs *AND* Participants health remains stable and interesting material is available *THEN* there will be greater diversity in materials and information available and entertainment options.

The next row up is then read as follows.

*IF* there is greater diversity in materials and information available and entertainment options *AND* no substantial change in living support programs or other programs *THEN* the quality of life for shut-ins is improved.

Thus, beginning with the activities, the supply of books and programs, working through the program logic, the impact of improved quality of life should be realized if all assumptions are met.



## COMMENTS FROM THE POLK COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD

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April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012

To the Polk County Board of Trustees:

I want to begin by thanking Polk County Administrator Dana Frey for his in-depth research and hard work in his review of the Polk County Library. His analysis was exhaustively researched and thought out and has given the Polk County Library Board a great deal to think and work through about as we prepare to review the Polk County Strategic Plan this summer. After reviewing Mr. Frey's report we as a board felt it was our duty to offer our input on the report and communicate our willingness to work with the Polk County Board of Trustees and Mr. Frey in reshaping the Polk County Library in order to maintain its vital services while creating equitably funded, vibrant organization going forward.

The funding models and statutes dedicated to libraries in Wisconsin are unique and a source of confusion and misinformation at the local, county and state levels to all but those most intimately and regularly involved with them. As the director of a municipal library I devote two to three hours of instruction on the statutes and structure of public libraries to any incoming board member to address the steep learning curve.

A budgetary accounting change we at the county library board worked hard to bring about was to separate the reimbursement paid to municipal libraries (as articulated very well in Mr. Frey's sidebar in his explanation of Act 150 and Act 420.) According to Mr. Frey's figures this reimbursement in 2012 is \$535,562.28 and it is critical to note that under Wisconsin Law that no matter the fate of the Polk County Library this reimbursement **MUST BE PAID BY STATE LAW** and is not a part of the county levy. It is also important to note that the county currently reimburses municipal libraries at the minimum rate of 70% meaning that municipal libraries in Polk County lose money as it stands now. Whether the full difference of 30% of the disparity between the cost of circulating materials to rural patrons and the 70% the county pays or a more conservative estimate of 20% to 25% is debatable. It is also important to note that the budget figure included does not address revenue from the Friends of the Polk County Library as well as our director's skilled grant writing ability that has been used by not just the library but other Polk County government agencies to find grants and connect with foundations.

Lastly, we want to communicate to the board that this summer we will be charged with updating the Polk County Library Strategic Services Plan. This process is an opportunity for the Polk County Library Board and other county citizens to review how the County Library works and what goals it should be pursuing and what the Library's priorities should be going forward. This will be the optimal time to incorporate portions of Mr. Frey's document into our service model through the

strategic plan it is an opportunity to refocus the county library to best meet the needs of the people of Polk County.

We look forward to working with you to create a stronger, more equitable County Library going forward.

Sincerely,

Nate Deprey

Director

Osceola Public Library

President

Polk County Library Board

## REFERENCES

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- <sup>1</sup> Wisconsin Statutes sec. 43.57(3)
- <sup>2</sup> 1974 Official Proceedings of the Polk County Board of Supervisors, p .137 (Resolution 66).
- <sup>3</sup> Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction at [http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2011\\_01.pdf](http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2011_01.pdf)
- <sup>4</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> Wisconsin Statutes sec. 43.15(3)(b)
- <sup>6</sup> Wisconsin Statutes sec. 43.64(2)(b)
- <sup>7</sup> Wisconsin Statutes sec. 43.58(4)
- <sup>8</sup> DPI, FAQ for libraries at <http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/coplan.html>
- <sup>9</sup> 1974 Official Proceedings of the Polk County Board of Supervisors, p .137 (Resolution 66).
- <sup>10</sup> North Star Economics, Inc., *The Economic Contribution of Wisconsin Public Libraries to the Economy of Wisconsin*, 2008, located at <http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/econimpact.html>
- <sup>11</sup> Boyce, Judith I. and Boyce, Bert R., "Library outreach programs in rural areas - Rural Libraries and Information Services", *Library Trends*, Summer, 1995 Vol. 26
- <sup>12</sup> Five year LSTA plan located at <http://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/lsta/index.shtml>
- <sup>13</sup> Hu, T., *A Benefit-Cost Analysis of Alternative Library Delivery Systems*, Greenwich Press, Westport, CT, 1975.
- <sup>14</sup> Whitehall, T., "Value in library and information management: a review", *Library Management*, Vol. 16 No. 4, 1995, pp. 3-11.
- <sup>15</sup> Myers, J., "Home delivery at the Orange County Library System: an exemplar from the USA", *Interlending and Document Supply*, Vol. 37 No. 2, 2009, pp. 84-86
- <sup>16</sup> <http://www.bookstoprisoners.net/AboutBTP.htm>
- <sup>17</sup> <http://booksthroughbars.org/pbp/>
- <sup>18</sup> <http://www.rainbowbookstore.coop/b2p>

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<sup>19</sup> <http://slisweb.lis.wisc.edu/~jail/>

<sup>20</sup> Sacramento County Probation Department. *JurisLIT Final Report*. Sacramento, CA: Author, 1994

<sup>21</sup> Wisconsin Statutes sec. 302.365 (1)(a)(3)

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.ozaukeejailliteracy.org/>

<sup>23</sup> Short for My Online Resource – an internet-based library resource sharing system implemented by IFLS

<sup>24</sup> Wisconsin Statutes sec. 43.52(2)

<sup>25</sup> DPI, FAQ for libraries at <http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/coplan.html>

<sup>26</sup> Also see the August 26, 2006, opinion from the Attorney General's office to Donald Siegler on this topic