
Strategic Plan

2008 – 2011

Adopted May 2008



melsa

an alliance of metro public libraries

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the spring of 2008, the Metropolitan Library Service Agency (MELSA) embarked on a process to develop the 2008-2011 Strategic Plan. The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to guide MELSA over the next three years as it proactively pursues its mission. In addition, the MELSA Strategic Plan must be submitted to meet one of its funding requirements from the State Library Services agency of the Minnesota Department of Education.

The Metropolitan Library Service Agency (MELSA) is a regional library system comprised of the seven counties and city of Saint Paul library systems in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Formed in 1969 under a joint powers agreement and funded through the state of Minnesota, MELSA promotes cooperation among the eight member library systems by providing shared access to online databases, offering training programs, and facilitating the sharing of materials among members, among other activities. It is a governmental agency in accordance with the Minnesota Joint Powers Agreement, a federation between the cities and counties of the member libraries, and serves as one of twelve regional library systems in the state.

MELSA is the administrative agency for receiving and equitable sharing of state and federal grant appropriations made available through State Library Services agency of the Minnesota Department of Education. MELSA membership is made up of the following eight member library systems:

- Anoka County
- Carver County
- Dakota County
- Hennepin County
- Ramsey County
- Scott County
- Washington County
- City of St. Paul

It is governed by a Board of Trustees; one trustee is appointed by each party to the agreement. The Trustees receive professional advice from an Advisory Board composed of the Directors of the regular member libraries. There are also teams and interest groups made up of staff members from the libraries organized to consider specialized areas of library operations.

The MELSA Board of Trustees directed the Executive Director to establish a process, in cooperation of the Advisory Board, to create a new Strategic Plan. The process used the comprehensive efforts made in the previous plan to examine the current overall functioning of the organization as well as to determine future service focus areas.

In December 2007, the directors of the member libraries met with facilitator, Rick Ashton of the Urban Libraries Council, to determine the strategic efforts for the future of MELSA. During the next months, both the MELSA Board of Trustees and Advisory Board discussed priorities of future programs for the regional system. MELSA staff provided input in the revision of the 2008 – 2011 Plan.

MELSA STRATEGIC PLAN: 2008-2011

Vision Statement:

MELSA leads, dreams and delivers . . . to make great public libraries better.

Mission Statement:

MELSA connects its members to

- *Share resources and ideas*
- *Foster literacy*
- *Promote public library use*
- *Prepare for the future*

Values:

MELSA's Governing Board, its Advisory Board, and Staff embrace these values in working to deliver the Mission:

- *Commitment to Diverse Communities*
- *Commitment to Participation*
- *Cooperation*
- *Cost-effectiveness*
- *Extending Access*
- *Innovation*

The Vision, Mission, and Values for MELSA reflect the areas that MELSA will use to make progress to achieve the Key Success Areas (KSA). These areas were identified in the previous plan. A limited and specific number of goals, strategies and measures were updated for each KSA in this plan. The strategies reflect the growth and direction in which MELSA will potentially move during the next three years.

Core Services were also identified to closely align with the strategic framework of the plan. These core areas will continue to be the backbone of the services that MELSA provides.

Key Success Areas:

- ***Funding***
- ***Leadership***
- ***Forecasting (Research & Evaluation)***
- ***Marketing***
- ***Capacity Building***

MELSA Core Services

- 1) *Technology Services*
 - E-rate and RLTA
 - Information sharing
- 2) *Cooperative Services*
 - Delivery
 - Youth/Summer programs
 - Literacy efforts
- 3) *Marketing and Community Relations*
- 4) *Education and Development*
 - Training
 - Networking
- 5) *Funding and Financial Services*
 - Collaborative Purchasing/Shared Databases
 - Funding/Resource Development

Goal Statements and Strategies

FUNDING

Goal Statement: MELSA will maintain revenue and seek to increase funding opportunities while operating in a fiscally responsible environment.

Strategies & Measures

- MELSA will actively seek increased state funding for Regional Library Basic System Support to increase the base portion by \$100,000 for the metro system
- MELSA will actively seek increased state funding for Regional Library Telecommunications Aid to cover actual bandwidth costs for local libraries.
- Increase collaborative purchasing opportunities for member libraries, including the areas of databases, a metro-wide homework help program, enhanced catalog searching tools, and downloadable content.
- MELSA will seek funding opportunities to improve member libraries' services by researching and applying for grants, including at least two proposals each year.
- MELSA will explore enterprise opportunities to secure financial resources for the delivery of its services. MELSA will expand its relationships with potential corporate sponsorships for appropriate projects and programs.

LEADERSHIP

Goal Statement: MELSA will demonstrate leadership to foster literacy, promote the value of public libraries, and create innovative ways to improve library services.

Strategies & Measures:

- MELSA facilitates training and offers resources to member libraries' staff for the implementation of literacy-based programs. Literacy programs may include summer reading programs, information literacy programs, civic literacy and others.
- MELSA will sponsor a metro-wide public library conference on innovation beginning in 2009.
- An online reader's advisory service will be created, designed and/or purchased for MELSA library systems.
- MELSA will conduct advocacy training and provide advocacy resources to member libraries.
- MELSA will continue to provide opportunities for member libraries to learn about and share innovative best practices through increased use of electronic communications and through participation in teams, interest groups and task forces. The MELSA website will be re-designed to incorporate the ability for these shared-learning activities.

FORECASTING (Research & Evaluation)

Goal Statement: MELSA will collect, share and provide a forum to discuss and exchange data on emerging trends and issues important to member libraries in preparing for the future.

Strategies & Measures:

- Beginning in 2009, MELSA will identify and collect relevant an expanded set of statistical information desired by local libraries to assist in their analysis of current needs.
- MELSA will facilitate resources and information relevant needs and issues for member libraries through active participation in the statewide WebJunction project.
- MELSA will pursue service delivery models for technology that are cost effective and contribute to enhance and improve services to member libraries. Information resources for member libraries will include areas such as RFID, Open Source ILS software, and enhanced searching tools for local catalogs.
- MELSA will assist in the creation of benchmarks for local libraries technology needs.

MARKETING/COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Goal Statement: MELSA will promote the value and strategic use of public libraries.

Strategies & Measures:

- MELSA will revise its three-year marketing plan in 2009, including the identification of three target markets and messages for each year.
- MELSA will emphasize its collective size to increase leverage with potential partners/sponsors.
- Utilize the concepts identified in OCLC's membership study concerning the transformation significance of the public library in today's society.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Goal Statement: MELSA will address challenges and opportunities facing library leaders, including changes in demographics/diverse communities and changes in library work and workers.

Strategies & Measures:

- MELSA will implement strategies to strengthen the skills and expand the understanding of library directors, trustees, and administrative staff.
- An annual training program schedule will be developed each January. Teams and interest groups will be encouraged to identify areas of need, including database training, youth service development, and outreach.
- MELSA will develop an effective communications plan for internal audiences, including staff at member libraries, local library boards, and financial stakeholders.

BUDGET

With the significant increase in state funding in 2008, MELSA has had the opportunity to enhance its cooperative programs. The system must continue to advocate for the maintenance of state funding to continue the potential growth of this collaboration. During the implementation of this plan, MELSA needs to concentrate on the following budgetary issues: and principles:

- The Board of Trustees has maintained that a balanced budget remains to be a high priority.
- As stated in the financial goals of the plan, MELSA must strategically encourage increased funding through local, state, and federal appropriations. In addition, alternative funding streams, such as grants, should be found to strengthen MELSA's potential roles.

- The MELSA Finance Committee will review the distribution of funds in several areas during 2008 and 2009, including the general formula distribution, summer reading program allocations, Phase and RLTA (technology) dollars.
- Each year the Board of Trustees will review the Fund Balance of the agency and its contingency and cash flow reserves.

PERSONNEL

One of the strongest assets for MELSA is a dedicated staff. The goals of this plan will require flexibility and a willingness to learn new skills for existing staff members. Priorities for core service tasks will need to be weighed against the new strategic directions of the organization.

Position evaluations of the existing staff will be completed again in 2009 by the Dakota County Employee Relations department. The Board of Trustees will have the responsibility of determining any changes suggested by the study.

During the next three years, the Executive Director will continuously evaluate the needs of staffing within MELSA and report to the Advisory Board and Board of Trustees. As new cooperative programs are identified, the staff levels, especially in the clerical area, will need to be evaluated.