

**MELSA Responses to RFI Questions & Requests for Clarification**  
**RFI: E-Book, E-Audiobook & E-Magazine Services | Issued: July 31, 2020**

1. We just had a brief question regarding Attachments B4, C4, D4: Tennessean Notice

“After MELSA has completed its selection or evaluation process, information that is not trade secret data will become public, as provided by Minn. Stat. § 13.591, subd. 3.”

In Attachments B1, C1, D1: Vendor Qualifications Inventory, items 18, 18, and 19, you request us to “Outline any major upgrades planned or anticipated in the next five years.” How can we guarantee that the information we provide for this item will be kept confidential and acknowledged as a trade secret? Would it be possible to provide this information in a separate document after MELSA has signed a Non-disclosure Agreement?

Response:

MELSA’s RFI review process is dependent on sharing the responses with designated staff from our member library systems. MELSA cannot sign a Non-disclosure Agreement that would encompass these individuals. Should sections of an RFI response be designated as Confidential or Trade Secret it is MELSA’s practice to seek determination by its attorney on what portions of the response cannot be shared.

2. What is the total print circulation at your individual member libraries and as a whole for MELSA?

Response:

System	2019 Print Circulation
Anoka County Library	1,547,184.
Carver County Library	978,970
Dakota County Library	3,628,557
Hennepin County Library	5,998,751
Ramsey County Library	2,990,451
Saint Paul Public Library	1,323,972
Scott County Library	817,827
Washington County Library	1,472,858
MELSA Regional Total	18,758,570

3. One of the evaluation criteria is “*whether the vendor’s requests for deviation from the form of the contract are not in the best interest of MELSA*” – we didn’t see a form of contract included in the bid documents. Can you please clarify/provide if needed? If provided, should we submit proposed red-line edits?

Response:

MELSA generally begins with the vendor contract and may add other information and language required for governmental entities. Current criteria require that parties come to agreeable terms.

4. Is a print version required of the RFI response required? Will you accept the electronic version via email?

Response:

As outlined in the RFI document, our preferred method of response is still a print copy and an electronic copy on thumb drive. Given the condensed timeline and remote work limitations we will forego a print version and accept electronic responses via email. Please use the subject line: MELSA RFI Response: E-BOOK, E-AUDIOBOOK, E-MAGAZINE SERVICES. Emails should be sent to [kathleen@melsa.org](mailto:kathleen@melsa.org). The email responses will not be opened until after the deadline 1:00 p.m. CST on Tuesday, September 1, 2020. It is the vendor’s responsibility to confirm receipt of the emailed response. Please review the RFI document for complete response requirement.

5. Does the Agency anticipate awards to a single vendor or multiple vendors for eBook format?

Response:

MELSA anticipates an award to a single vendor for a regional eBook service.

6. Does MELSA seek a solution that offers both magazines and eBook content on a single platform or will the MELSA solution utilize multiple vendors and multiple platforms?

Response:

MELSA remains open to either outcome.

7. Please provide annual budget information for eBook format.

Response:

The current MELSA budget includes \$749,155 combined for eBook and eAudiobook content and platform fees. The MELSA 2021 budget is scheduled to be approved in November 2020 and may reflect changes based on funds available and needs of member library systems.

8. Please provide MELSA expenditures for eBook format over the last year.

Response:

MELSA's 2019 expenditures for eBooks were \$306,659 which includes the eBook portion of required platform fees for the current vendor.

9. Please describe the current service arrangement for eBook format.

- Please identify the eBook vendors providing this format today.

Response:

The regional, MELSA Funded, eBook vendor is Bibliotheca for cloudLibrary service.

- Do current eBook vendors support a single collection utilized by all member libraries or are there separate collections for member library systems or for individual libraries?

Response:

With our current vendor all MELSA purchased content is shared. System purchased content is shared with other systems owing the same item.

- Are eBook service/content invoices the responsibility of MELSA or are member library systems invoiced individually?

Response:

It is a combination. MELSA is invoiced for service and a regional cloudshare collection. Member systems are invoiced individually for additional local collection content.

- Are eBook platform/administrative services the responsibility of MELSA or do member library systems manage their own services individually?

Response:

Management of platform and administrative services are the responsibility of both MELSA and member library systems.

- Are eBook titles selected by MELSA staff or do member library systems select content individually?

Response:

MELSA staff provides direction on monthly vendor selected additions for the regional cloudshare collection. Member systems select content when utilizing local funds.

10. What is the anticipated start date for new eBook service under this RFI?

Response:

Though potentially subject to change, we are currently looking at April 1, 2021 to launch new eAudiobook service.

11. Does the Agency anticipate awards to a single vendor or multiple vendors for eAudioBook format?

Response:

MELSA anticipates an award to a single vendor for regional eAudiobook service.

12. Does MELSA seek a solution that offers both magazines and eAudioBook content on a single platform or will the MELSA solution utilize multiple vendors and multiple platforms?

Response:

MELSA remains open to either outcome.

13. Please provide annual budget information for eAudioBook format.

Response:

The current MELSA budget includes \$749,155 combined for eBook and eAudiobook content and platform fees. The MELSA 2021 budget is scheduled to be approved in November 2020 and may reflect changes based on funds available and needs of member library systems.

14. Please provide MELSA expenditures for eAudioBook format over the last year.

Response:

MELSA's 2019 expenditures for eAudiobooks were \$402,796 which included the eAudiobook portion of required platform fees and collection for the two current vendors.

15. Please describe the current service arrangement for eAudioBook format.

- Please identify the vendors providing eAudioBook format today.

Response:

MELSA provides eAudiobook services to member library systems through Recorded Books Digital and Bibliotheca.

- Do current vendors support a single eAudioBook collection utilized by all member libraries or are there separate eAudioBook collections for member library systems or for individual libraries?

Response:

A shared regional collection is supported by both vendors. Both also support system collections.

- Are eAudioBook service/content invoices the responsibility of MELSA or are member library systems invoiced individually?

Response:

It is a combination. MELSA is invoiced for access to the simultaneous use adult core collection through Recorded Books Digital. MELSA is invoiced for shared eBook/eAudiobook platform fees and a regional access cloudshare collection through Bibliotheca cloudLibrary. Member systems are invoiced individually for additional locally funded collection content.

- Are eAudioBook platform/administrative services the responsibility of MELSA or do member library systems manage their own services individually?

Response:

Platform and administrative services are the responsibility of both MELSA and member library systems.

- Are eAudioBook titles selected by MELSA staff or do member library systems select content individually?

Response:

RBD core collection is preselected by the vendor. MELSA staff provides direction on monthly vendor selected additions for the regional cloudshare collection. Member systems select content when utilizing local funds.

16. What is the anticipated start date for new eAudioBook service under this RFI?

Response:

Though potentially subject to change, we are currently looking at April 1, 2021 to launch new eBook service.

17. Does the Agency anticipate awards to a single vendor or multiple vendors for E-Magazine format?

Response:

MELSA anticipates an award to a single vendor for a regional eMagazine service.

18. Does MELSA seek a solution that offers both magazines and eBook/EAudioBook content on a single platform or will the MELSA solution utilize multiple vendors and multiple platforms?

Response:

MELSA remains open to either outcome.

19. Please provide annual budget information for E-Magazine format.

Response:

The current MELSA budget includes \$179,130 for eMagazine content and platform fees. The MELSA 2021 budget is scheduled to be approved in November 2020 and may reflect changes based on funds available and needs of member library systems.

20. Please provide MELSA expenditures for E-Magazine format over the last year.

Response:

MELSA's 2020 expenditures for eMagazines were \$179,130 which includes a required platform fee for our current vendor as well as subscription fee for the regional collection.

21. Please describe the current service arrangement for E-Magazine format.

- Please identify the vendors providing E-Magazine format today.

Response:

Recorded Books Digital is the regional eMagazine vendor.

- Do current vendors support a single E-Magazine collection utilized by all member libraries or are there separate E-Magazine collections for member library systems or for individual libraries?

Response:

The current vendor does not support a single shared collection. There are separate collections for member library systems.

- Are E-Magazine service/content invoices the responsibility of MELSA or are member library systems invoiced individually?

Invoices for platform fees and MELSA purchased are MELSA's responsibility. Member systems are responsible for collection added with local funds.

- Are E-Magazine platform/administrative services the responsibility of MELSA or do member library systems manage their own services individually?

Response:

Platform and administrative services are the responsibility of both MELSA and member library systems.

- Are E-Magazine titles selected by MELSA staff or do member library systems select content individually?

Response:

The MELSA funded content is selected by a committee of member system representatives. Member library systems do add content selected locally when using system funding.

22. Is newspaper content included in the definition of e-Magazines? Is it acceptable for a vendor to include newspaper content with a bid submission for the e-magazine section?

Response:

Newspaper content has not been included in the definition of eMagazines. Yes, it is acceptable for the vendor to include newspaper content with a bid submission for the eMagazine section.

23. What is the anticipated start date for new E-Magazine service under this RFI?

Response:

Though potentially subject to change, we are currently looking at February 1, 2021 to launch new eMagazine service.

24. What are the main reasons MELSA is specifically needing to review its services prior to your usual 3 year cycle?

Response:

The recent changes with Recorded Books Digital and Overdrive has afforded MELSA the opportunity to review our regional resources for e-books, e-audiobooks and e-magazines before the end of the typical 3-year cycle. We look forward to reviewing these products side-by-side for the first time to curate the best virtual materials collections for our member library systems.

25. If based on your review of a proposal and a potential awarding of a contract, when would you be targeting a starting or effective date?

Response:

Though potentially subject to change, we are currently looking at April 1, 2021 to launch eBook and eAudiobook services and February 1, 2021 for eMagazine service.

26. Is each member library set up with their own accounts for your current digital services under this RFI e-books / audiobooks/ magazines? Or is there a MELSA logon and catalog available to all patrons served by MELSA?

Response:

Each of the eight member library systems is set up with their own accounts for digital services.

27. Does MELSA pay directly to purchase content and is it available to all member libraries? Or does MELSA only provide funding for content to each member library and the individual library staff are selecting titles?

Response:

Under current practice, some content is purchased by MELSA directly, while other content is purchased by member library systems with local, not MELSA, funding and system staff selecting titles.

28. Is MELSA paying for any fees for Cloud or RBDigital that does not go to content purchase?

Response:

MELSA pays platform fees for RBDigital magazines, cloudLibrary eBook and eAudiobook services.

29. MELSA currently appears to be leveraging CLOUD for eBook and audio book content, RB Digital for audiobook content and magazines.

Response:

That is correct.

30. To better understand how digital content is used by MELSA and your member libraries and assist us completing our RFI please provide the following:

CLOUD (audiobooks / e-books):

- How long have you been offering CLOUD and how many e-books and audiobooks are available to MELSA member libraries on the Cloud platform today?

Response:

MELSA has been offering CLOUD for seven years. MELSA owned titles include 14,165 unique titles and 101,981 copies.

- Are all titles currently in the catalog perpetual, metered, subscription or transactional offerings? Please explain MELSA staff role or library staff role?

Response:

MELSA content currently includes perpetual, metered, and subscription offerings. Transactional titles have been used for programmatic purposes in the past. MELSA staff reviews orders developed by Bibliotheca Collection Development staff for regional purchases. Member library staff provides general direction to bibliotheca staff through MELSA staff. Member library staff also purchases local content.

- Is all current content purchased on Cloud one copy / one user? Or does some content provide simultaneous access?

Response:

MELSA currently has access to the simultaneous use collection: Indie Author Project Select collection on bibliotheca. There are 330 titles in this collection. All other items are one copy/one user.

- How many registered patrons by member libraries leveraged Cloud content for the past 12 months?

Response:

E-book & Audio	ACL	CCL	DCL	HCL	RCL	SPL	SCL	WCL	Totals
Cloud	11,819	3297	21583	25243	17276	8844	2000	5471	16315

- How many unique titles circulated by member libraries on Cloud in the past 12 months?

Response:

In 2019 MELSA content had 9,128 unique titles.

- How many overall circulations by member libraries on Cloud in the past 12 months?

Response:

MELSA content circulation was 295,709 in 2019. MELSA does not have access to member library numbers and this question has been referred to member library systems. Due to current staffing levels we will require additional time to get this information. The post on MELSA.org will be updated as quickly as possible, it will also be sent directly to vendors that have identified as interested in this process.

31. Does MELSA or do the member libraries determine how many e-books and audiobooks can be checked out on the platform?

Response:

Limits would set by member library circulation policy.

32. RBDigital (audiobooks):

- How long have you been offering RBDigital and how many audiobooks are available to MELSA member libraries on the RbDigital platform today?

Response:

Service began in 2009. MELSA subscribes to the adult core collect that currently has over 6329 unique titles.

- Are all titles currently in the catalog perpetual, metered, subscription or transactional offerings? Please explain MELSA staff role or library staff role?

Response:

MELSA content is a subscription, simultaneous use adult core collection. MELSA staff has no involvement in selection of this collection. Member library staff selects content purchased with local funds.

- Is all current content purchased on RBDigital one copy / one user? Or does some content provide simultaneous access?

Response:

The MELSA subscription collection is simultaneous use. Member library systems have invested in both at times using local funding.

- How many registered patrons by member libraries leveraged RBDigital content for the past 12 months?

Response:

Audiobooks	ACL	CCL	DCL	HCL	RCL	SPL	SCL	WCL	Totals
Recorded Bks	3691	1388	1585	13399	4465	2425	200	2377	29530*

\* User numbers are not provided exactly as stated in the question. The numbers provided are our best estimates based on user statistics reported.

- How many unique titles circulated by member libraries on RBDigital in the past 12 months?

Response:

63 in the MELSA collection.

- How many overall circulations by member libraries on RBDigital in the past 12 months?

Response:

The 2019 circulation total was 434,077.

- Does MELSA or do the member libraries determine how many audiobooks can be checked out on the platform?

Response:

Limits would set by member library circulation policy.

### 33. Recorded Books Digital Magazines:

- How long have you been offering RBDigital and how many magazines are available to MELSA member libraries on the RbDigital platform today?

Response:

MELSA started offering magazines through RBDigital in 2013. MELSA purchases eight annual subscriptions (one for each member library system) to 63 titles for member library systems. There is an additional 3000+ titles available to member library systems at no additional charge. Member library systems also purchase subscriptions with local funds.

- Are all titles currently in the catalog perpetual, metered, subscription or transactional offerings? Please explain MELSA staff role or library staff role in selection?

Titles are acquired by annual subscription. Back issues are retained if subscription is cancelled. Once checked out users can hold onto an issue until it is returned. MELSA staff and member library system



committee make regional selections annually. Member library staff selects titles purchased with local funding.

- Is all current content purchased on RBDigital Magazines simultaneous access to the patrons?

Response:

All but one title (which has limited number of simultaneous users) allow unlimited simultaneous use.

- How many registered patrons by member libraries leveraged RBDigital content for the past 12 months?

Response:

Magazines	ACL	CCL	DCL	HCL	RCL	SPL	SCL	WCL	Totals
Recorded Bks	686	484	1516	2726	3149	1191	470	1724	11946*

\* User numbers are not provided exactly as stated in the question. The numbers provided are our best estimates based on user statistics reported.

- How many unique titles circulated by member libraries on RBDigital in the past 12 months?

Response:

MELSA subscribes to 63 unique titles. Systems may subscribe to additional titles or make all, or some, of the 3000+ free titles available to their users.

- How many overall circulations by member libraries on RBDigital in the past 12 months?

Response:

2019 total number of checkouts was 358,488.

- Does MELSA or do the member libraries determine how many magazines can be checked out on the platform?

Response:

MELSA subscribes to one title (1 subscription per member library system) that has a limited number of simultaneous users set by the vendor. All others are unlimited simultaneous use.

34. Do MELSA members, with their current e-book and audiobook and magazine platforms, have the ability to add additional content to the overall MELSA collection? Please let us know how that impacts other member libraries, if at all?

Response:

All platforms allow member library systems to purchase addition content for local collections. Only in the cloudLibrary is there a shared collection. All MELSA content is available to all systems. Content purchased by systems is available regionwide if the items are in the MELSA collection. Content in system collections, that are not in the MELSA collection, are shared only with other systems that also own at least one copy. Everyone benefits from a more robust shared collection.

35. Is MELSA looking, as part of this RFI, supplementing further existing platforms or interested in consolidating audio-book and/or eBook collections or open to consolidating existing collections on platforms?

Response:

MELSA is not looking to supplement existing platforms. MELSA remains open to all possible options to provide our member libraries with digital services that best meets their needs.