

a) Digital Inclusion Survey – Presentation by Wilder Foundation

In 2021, the MELSA Advisory and Governing Boards approved use of ARPA funds administered by State Library Services “...to conduct a community survey, including a public report, to work toward greater digital inclusion and accessibility across the metro area.” This library-specific survey will provide information for the MELSA member library systems for their strategic planning efforts, and to assess the impact of technology/digital spending and identify unmet community needs.

Wilder Research, the organization selected to conduct the survey, will present the survey results today to directors and members of a library workgroup appointed to assist MELSA in the survey project. (Workgroup members have received summary and detail reports for their system and the region.)

Anna and Jennifer from Wilder presented the results of the survey. Results showed that 30 percent of the metro population with unreliable or no internet come to the library to use the internet. The survey also showed that residents with a reliable internet connection use library digital and tech services just as much as people without it. Wilder also asked people the reasons they use the library. Residents go online at the library to do education-related activities and other activities such as searching for jobs. 12 percent of residents used the library for remote work or distance learning in the last 6 months. Residents indicated that they are highly satisfied with the library’s existing technology services. Wilder also asked residents about additional technology services the library could offer, and they expressed an interest in charging ports, fax machines, scanners, and WiFi hotspots. Results also showed that a higher proportion of residents living in poverty need help with technology and computer skills.

Directors expressed an interest in using this information to advocate for free/reduced-price faxing (or to make fax machines available in the library if the system doesn’t have them now). Most faxes sent at libraries are related to benefits and other state/county/federal services. HCL shared that during the pandemic, they piloted kiosks in a few locations with printer/scanner/fax machine, and it has been very popular. They have also been piloting virtual teleconferencing rooms, mostly for court hearings.

Wilder will put together a press release for distribution.

b) OverDrive Shared Collection Fund Balance Assignment Use

In March 2022, the MELSA Board of Trustees approved the following fund balance use, pending review by the Advisory Board:

\$150,000: Assignment for additional content purchases for the shared collection. (Use of this assignment to be reviewed by Advisory Board prior to expenditure.)

With OverDrive holds currently sitting at 646,241 and many of the systems struggling to maintain balance between expanding the collection and filling holds, MELSA would like to put this additional \$150,000 balance towards fulfilling holds in the shared OverDrive collection. This will help ease the burden on the libraries as budgets are stretched to reach the end of the year.

Motion to approve expending the \$150,000 fund balance assignment on the shared OverDrive e-collection by Stone. Second by Grussing.

Stone would like the Collection Development team to discuss keeping up with the OverDrive holds and come up with a plan to be able to fund OverDrive at a more sustainable level. She also suggested that it would be helpful to explain to the Trustees the challenges of OverDrive (the pricing differences between e-resources versus print resources) and how popular OverDrive is with patrons. Genett would like to know how much each system spends on e-resources (and what proportion of the budget is used on e-resources).

All in favor signified by saying aye.

ACL - not present	HCL - aye	SCL – aye
CCL - aye	RCL - aye	WCL – aye
DCL - aye	SPL - aye	

Motion carried.

c) Program Reviews and MELSA CY23 Budget Considerations

Strategic Outcome IV. Initiative C: Implement a consistent cycle of program and service reviews to assess ongoing relevance and appropriateness for member libraries...

In keeping with the adoption of our Strategic Plan Outcome IV, we are taking a closer look at MELSA programs and services on a periodic basis to assure that we are being responsive to member library needs. For this meeting, we are proposing four such programs/services for discussion by the Advisory Board.

- i) smARTpass
- ii) Promotions Budget and Priorities

Program/Service Area 1 & 2: in this section, smARTpass and our Promotions budget commitments, fall under the work scope of Sally Lederer, MELSA Communications Manager. These two programmatic areas were mentioned by Trustees who sit on the

Finance Committee at their meeting in early September. Our task here is to consider the value we get from these programs, the actual costs of the program/service, and in the case of the Promotions budget, the priorities that the library directors have within that budget.

For the smARTpass piece, MELSA spends \$6,900 yearly on hosting and maintenance. There are around 34,000 registered users on the smARTpass website. smARTpass also has a separate budget within Legacy for actual programs (not related to website hosting/maintenance). Yang and Sporlein mentioned that their impression is that patrons who use smARTpass would have bought tickets anyway and this program should be viewed through a digital equity lens and methods should be explored to make this program more digitally equitable (not just available via a website). Gennet suggested looking at smARTpass from a service perspective versus promotions perspective. Lederer confirmed that the smARTpass does not fall under the Promotions Team. Gennet suggested that a task force be convened to re-evaluate smARTpass with representatives from each system.

For the promotions budget, we would like to examine the necessity of paid advertising, and the return on investment in these promotions efforts. The promotions budget is \$100,000 a year. MELSA promotions support e-resources provided through MELSA, metro-wide events/programs (Winter Reads, Summer Learning, Twin Cities Book Festival, Teen Lit Takeover, etc.), and general Twin Cities metro public library campaigns (i.e., “Connect With Your Library”). Promotions take the form of advertising and informational/promotional materials. Advertising can be through TV/radio, outdoor, social media, digital, and print. Lederer explained that online promotions data show that the ads are being viewed, however, it is harder to track the outcome (i.e., do people who view ads end up using library services or attending library programs?).

iii) E-resources and Budget Priorities

Included in the meeting packet is a spreadsheet that outlines the current annual cost of each e-resource, and dates for renewal. The MELSA liaison to this Team is Kathleen James. The framework here is not that we think that the e-resources budget is up for grabs, but there may be other priorities that you would rather have us than selected e-resource databases. Directors are interested in learning more about actual usage of each database. They would also like to examine the intent of each of the databases and determine where the priorities are and what kind of information is useful for patrons (i.e., if you were building a database list from scratch, what would you spend your money on?).

iv) OverDrive Content Demand and Potential Budget Responses

If we determine that we can find savings elsewhere, we may propose funneling additional budget into the OverDrive collection for CY23. We are looking for Advisory Board

feedback on whether funding Overdrive more vigorously to meet the huge demand is a better use of funds than some of our other categories. MELSA liaison to the Collection Development Team is Abby James Dillon. The question is, should MELSA prioritize the OverDrive collection in the future? Where do we draw the line on expenditures?

- d) Round Table Discussion of Library Director Roles - tabled

With turnover in many systems regionally and nationally, notwithstanding the overall labor market, how has the role changed? What is needed most in a Director now?

- e) Round Table Sharing

V. Reports

- a) Executive Director and MELSA Staff Updates - tabled
- b) Strategic Plan – current work and next steps – tabled

For the future, Friday mornings tend to be the best, but we should consider lengthening the meeting to 3 hours. MELSA will bring 2023 meeting dates to December meeting.

Johannah Genett adjourned the meeting at 11:14am.