Metropolitan Library Service Agency
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Friday, May 9, 2025
Sun Ray Library, St. Paul, MN
10:00am-12:00pm

Advisory Board Members/Representatives Present:

Anoka: Colleen Haubner   Ramsey: Pang Yang
Carver: Patrick Jones (virtual) Saint Paul: Maureen Hartman
Dakota: Margaret Stone   Scott: Jake Grussing
Hennepin: Scott Duimstra   Washington: Jacquie Kramer

Staff Present: Gina Goettl, Kathleen James, Mona Scott, and Sherry Wichitchu

I. Call to order

Chair Stone called the meeting to order at 10:05am.

II. Introductions and Welcome

III. Consent Agenda

a)   Approval of agenda

Motion to approve the agenda by Kramer. Second by Yang.

All in favor signified by saying aye.

ACL - aye   HCL - aye   SCL – aye
CCL - aye   RCL - aye   WCL – aye
DCL - aye   SPL - aye
Motion carried.

b)   Approval of meeting minutes (March 7 and April 4, 2025)

Motion to approve the meeting minutes by Haubner. Second by Duimstra.

All in favor signified by saying aye.

ACL - aye   HCL - aye   SCL – aye
CCL - aye   RCL - aye   WCL – aye
DCL - aye   SPL - aye
Motion carried.

IV. Discussion/Action Items

a)   Discussion of PLA Program Proposals

Hartmann would like to know if anyone had submitted a proposal for PLA. SPPL and HCL submitted a joint proposal.
HCL put in a few proposals about opioid response, their Let's Read initiative, one about the history of the Minneapolis Central Library and its design regarding social justice, and one about future library design.
WCL put in a proposal about their manga collection, the READ act, and their peer tutoring program.

b)   DEED Digital Opportunity Grant

At our April meeting, the Office of Broadband (DEED) provided CRPLSA with updates regarding the Federal Digital Equity Act. DEED is offering Digital Opportunity Grants as non-competitive Capacity Grants focused on digital opportunity initiatives. Each Regional Library System will receive a base allocation of $50,000, with a potential 20% increase contingent on full federal funding. This is a one-time grant intended for new initiatives, not existing programs. Suggested areas for funding include upgrading or expanding public technology and access points, increasing staff capacity to address technology needs, and supporting staff technology training. Initial program plans are due to DEED by June 1st, with award notifications expected after September 1st. Recognizing that the $50,000 grant amount is consistent across all systems regardless of size, MELSA staff have explored potential uses for these funds. Initial discussions with the Technology Team regarding previous tech training suggestions did not yield a universally applicable project. Exploring the possibility of developing new training programs for Jobs and Small Business also proved challenging due to the short turnaround time.

Consequently, MELSA staff have concluded that sub-granting these funds to member libraries may be the most effective approach to address diverse local needs. We have developed three potential allocation formulas for your consideration in the meeting packet.

Motion to go with the $3000 base plus population option by Haubner. Second by Hartman.

All in favor signified by saying aye.

ACL - aye	HCL - aye	SCL – aye
CCL - aye	RCL - aye	WCL – aye
DCL - aye	SPL - aye	

Motion carried.

We will put this item on the next Advisory Board meeting, to discuss reporting requirements and to discuss specific plans for spending this money.

c)   Discussion on AI

MLA's Public Libraries Division Day looked at AI in libraries, including the keynote presentation from Minitex, "Artificial Intelligence in Public Libraries."
The MELSA Collection Development Team decided last fall to refrain from purchasing e-material content written or narrated by AI, after a patron found accidently purchased AI material in the catalog.

Last fall, the Jobs & Small Business (JSB) Team reached an agreement as a cautionary approach to generative AI, given that MELSA itself didn't have specific policies in this area. There was also a lot of uncertainty around generative AI at their individual systems, which factored into their decision. MELSA still doesn't have an official AI policy, though we have had internal conversations about how it impacts the work we do. It's important to note that MELSA does and has funded generative AI-related classes using JSB funds. For instance, the St. Paul Public Library's series last summer was successfully reimbursed through MELSA's JSB funding. The agreement that the JSB Team came to specifically addresses MELSA contracting with vendors for these types of programs on behalf of the libraries. Libraries are still welcome to contract with vendors directly and then request reimbursement through the standard JSB process.
WCL has an AI policy that went into effect. There is a preference for human creative content in their collection development policy. Kramer will share the WCL policy.
RCL is in the process of coming up with a policy.
Scott County has a general policy that covers AI, including that employees must review the content generated to edit and ensure that confidential information is not included. It is a one-page document, and it is likely that a more specific policy will be drafted.
HCL has a very strict policy. They have monitoring software to show employees who have used software or tools that have not been approved by the county.
Carver County some language about AI in their acceptable use policy, but not very specific. DCL has been told to not use AI while they figure out a policy.
Hartman mentioned that she has concerns about the teams (Collection Development and JSB) making policy decisions without coming to the Advisory Board.
Wichitchu suggested that a discussion take place at the MELSA staff level about all the teams and address AI issues within each team. This item will be added to a future Advisory Board meeting.

d)   Legislative Updates and Advocacy

Two court cases have made their way to prevent the dismantling of IMLS. The current priority is advocating for next year's federal funding of IMLS. Current-year funding for IMLS has been reinstated in some states (including Minnesota) at the 50 percent level.
There is a bill to remove hot-spot funding for libraries, and it looks like it will

pass.

The state budget is in process and is due May 19th. The RLBSS funding has an inflationary increase, and it looks like it will happen for the next two years, but the inflationary increase might be removed after that for FY28-29, with the inflationary increase being reinstated in FY30.

e)   Collaborative Initiative Project

Due to past uncertainty about RLBSS funding, especially the volatility of the equalization component of the RLBSS formula, MELSA has assigned a portion of the fund balance as an "RLBSS stabilization fund" to cushion the library systems against funding decreases that began in 2016. When the legislature passed the RLBSS increase in 2023, this risk was reduced and the MELSA Board of Trustees approved reassignment of some of these funds in March 2024 to increase a prior collaborative spending assignment that originated during the planning process for the 2022-2025 strategic plan. Discussions to identify an impactful collaborative initiative were tabled in 2024 until a new executive director was hired.

Beginning in January 2025, the MELSA Advisory Board has had several discussions about joint purchases and projects that would offer benefit to all systems and meet shared patron needs. Suggestions have included a regional purchase of a discovery tool/catalog, an electronic resource, furniture and equipment that expands accessibility options and improves youth spaces, additional training for library staff, and an increase to the Equity portion of the LSAF. Opportunities for broadening community partnerships, aligning with state legislative priorities such as broadband access, and addressing the response to opioid use at libraries were also briefly discussed. For this meeting, Wichitchu would like to confirm what the outlined project goals should be and do a prioritization exercise.

The group agreed that collaborative initiative should leverage MELSA for purchases, programs of services that: address shared patron needs across our library systems, benefit from regional purchasing power or collaborative efforts, align with the strategic plans of both MELSA and the regional library systems, and demonstrate tangible outcomes resulting from the increased state funding.

WCL expressed support for marketing/awareness and patron engagement. They are also interested in enhancing physical spaces through a disability lens through things like accessibility audits. Literacy efforts beyond early literacy are also important. They are also interested in a shared discovery layer.

SPPL is interested in the literacy element and supporting this initiative. Advocacy and storytelling (telling the stories of the library's impact) is another priority. Digital inclusion is also important.

HCL is focused on literacy and lifelong learning. This includes homework help for students and their Let's Read early literacy program. They would like to set up a similar program to cover adults to help them attain their goals.

CCL is focused on accessibility audits, early literacy efforts, and increasing awareness around getting library cards and using library services.

RCL is prioritizing culturally specific marketing related to early literacy. Digital literacy is another priority. Safety audits is another area they are interested in exploring.

ACL's priorities are accessibility (physical spaces, interactions with patrons), literacy (multigenerational), and connecting/engaging/awareness through marketing and outreach.

DCL is focused on increasing awareness and also accessibility (resource sharing, accessibility of collection), and possibly literacy/lifelong learning.

For next month's meeting, this discussion will look at four areas that were a common theme. The group agreed that when they decide, they would like the decision to be by consensus.

V. Reports & Communications

a) Teen Lit Con update

b) E-collection Task Force update

The task force drafted a team charter. It is a challenge to agree on the job of the Collection Development team. They are asking this group what they think about the direction the team should take. Reducing the holds ratio does not seem financially feasible. Due to time restrictions, this item will be discussed in more depth at the next Advisory Board meeting.

c) Collection Development Team report

The Collection Development team had a great conversation with the Task Force regarding the charter the Task Force had put together. Much of the discussion centered around these two points:

• What is the unifying goal of the collection? We are coming at this with disparate needs, policies, and staff. So what can we center on when we come to decisions?

• What changes can the team make on its own, and what changes need to be brought to the Advisory Board?

The team decided to try the new Simultaneous Use package called All Access Romance.

d) Executive Director update

At the last Finance Committee meeting, the question of how much it would cost to meet the demand for e-materials was raised. This was determined to not be feasible, as it would cost a minimum of $406,097.60 to get the holds ratio down to 10:1 for one week only.

State Library Services negotiated a donation from Brodart of picture books to the

state, and SLS will be mailing these to 100 different libraries across the state.
State Library Standards: CRPLSA has chosen a firm to assist them with the state library standards project.
MELSA has chosen our current vendor to continue fulfilling our delivery service needs after a Request for Information process.
MELSA's Personnel Committee has selected a firm after a Request for Proposals process to provide MELSA with a comprehensive evaluation of its current HR policies, procedures, and infrastructure.

Stone adjourned the meeting at 12:16pm.