

Metropolitan Library Service Agency Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Friday, June 6, 2025
Virtual Meeting via Teams
10:00am-12:00pm

Advisory Board Members/Representatives Present:

Anoka:	Colleen Haubner	Ramsey:	Ray Lockman
Carver:	Jodi Edstrom	Saint Paul:	Joshua Schaffer
Dakota:	Margaret Stone	Scott:	Jen Schultz
Hennepin:	Scott Duimstra	Washington:	Drew Wylie

Staff Present: Abigail Dillon, Gina Goettl, Kathleen James, Sally Lederer, Mona Scott, and Sherry Wichitchu

I. Call to order

Chair Edstrom called the meeting to order at 10:02am.

II. Introductions and Welcome

III. Consent Agenda

- a) Approval of agenda
- b) Approval of May 9, 2025 meeting minutes

Motion to approve the agenda and minutes by Schultz. Second by Haubner.

Roll call vote:

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

Motion carried.

IV. Discussion/Action Items

- a) Statewide Read-In event

Stone has been talking with MLA and CRPLSA and other groups to have a statewide Read-In event. People would come together and read and raise awareness of libraries of all kinds and the value they hold to the community. It will be on a Saturday in September. Stone will send an email to find people who

are interested in coordinating this event. Time commitment would be less than 5 hours for committee members.

Duimstra entered the meeting at 10:09am.

b) SmARTpass report and visioning 30,000 free tickets

Lederer distributed some statistics from the smARTpass program. There are about 42,000 registered patrons in the metro area. On average, there are about 1,466 offers available per month. Lederer also distributed patron comments about the program, and the comments are overwhelmingly positive. Patrons get a chance to try new events or venues or go to performances they wouldn't normally be able to attend due to cost. There were concerns raised about demand and certain patrons going to a lot of events, and Lederer explained that patrons are limited to one set of free tickets per organization per year. The directors were supportive of continuing the program, and over the next year reevaluating the program to see how it could be expanded (for example, obtaining more arts partners, and focusing on getting tickets to patrons who could use them, such as fixed-income patrons and low-income patrons).

Motion to keep the program running at its current level by Duimstra. Second by Stone.

Roll call vote:

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

Motion carried.

c) Finance Committee update

The Finance Committee met yesterday. The Finance Committee wanted to hear from the Advisory Board about their thoughts on the smARTpass.

The Education budget did get finalized, and there is a cut to Legacy. They would like to hear from the directors about how a cut to Legacy would affect the libraries. The directors said that if there is a cut to Legacy, they will adjust and possibly do fewer programs or look for funding from other sources.

The LSAF 2 percent designation was also discussed at the meeting. They were unable to come to a consensus about the 2 percent and would like input from the Advisory Board.

Motion to recommend that the Governing Board allocate 1 percent to Ramsey as an additional year of easement. The additional 1 percent would be distributed to the systems according to the formula. Motion by Stone. Second by Hauber.

Roll call vote:

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

Motion carried.

Commissioner Brennan also brought up the possibility of distributing excess funds (\$1.2 million designated for the Collaborative Initiative funds) to the library. MELSA is the only system in the state that is allowed to distribute RLBSS funds to the libraries, and MELSA is required to use the money in ways they have outlined in their annual application (which includes the Collaborative Initiative Project). Any change in fund usage would need to be approved by State Library Services, and distributing funds to the libraries is unlikely to be approved by SLS, since it is not in the spirit of MELSA and the state statute it is required to adhere to. These funds are not allowed to supplant local library support or solve local library budget issues.

d) Collaborative Initiative Project

In April of 2025, the MELSA Advisory Board agreed that the collaborative initiative should leverage MELSA funds for purchases, programs, or 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 individual library systems
- Demonstrate tangible outcomes resulting from the increased state funding

There was also an agreement that when decisions are made about this project it will be passed by consensus.

After synthesizing all of the responses from the last meeting, Wichitchu condensed these into three main areas: Community Connections, Accessibility, and Literacy & Lifelong Learning. Do we want to have a phased project that can touch on each of these focus areas or concentrate on one specifically?

Stone proposed that during the first year we could focus on increasing general awareness. In subsequent years, we would use those new communication pathways to address other issues such as literacy/lifelong learning.

Schultz raised concerns about money being spent on marketing when libraries might be considering closing branches, not hiring staff, or decreasing open hours. Duimstra also brought up concerns about spending money on communications and would prefer to focus on the service side, such as literacy. Schaffer agreed,

and they would like to focus on adding support and capacity to their early reading program.

Wichitchu synthesized the directors' shared thoughts by suggesting incorporating a communications aspect on a smaller scale, with more funds focused on supporting literacy services at the member libraries. The directors were supportive of this approach, intending for most of the project's funds to go towards literacy/lifelong learning services, with some intention also put into developing community connections. A small portion of the funds will be used for communications to raise awareness.

Motion to recommend pursuing the community connections and literacy/lifelong learning buckets for the Collaborative Initiative by Schultz. Second by Haubner.

Schultz would like to narrow down the dollar amount in the future to indicate the amount that will be spent on both categories.

Roll call vote:

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

Motion carried.

e) Discussion: Communication Manager role, present vs. future needs

Our current Communication Manager is retiring at the end of July. This provides a timely opportunity to critically assess if this vital role, as it stands, is fully equipped to meet our strategic objectives and address emerging challenges.

Wichitchu would like to discuss what aspects of this role the directors find most valuable today and explore possibilities for expanded responsibilities, new skill sets, or different approaches, so that we can ensure MELSA is best positioned to serve our member libraries effectively, now and into the future.

Due to time constraints, Wichitchu would like the directors to email her or set up a meeting to discuss this Communication Manager role. Wichitchu will send out the job description from 2011 that is quite out of date.

f) Round table sharing - tabled

V. Reports

a) Teen Lit Con update

Teen Lit Con took place on April 26th at Two Rivers High School in Mendota Heights. Attendance was around 800, which is an estimate. Kathleen James would

like to develop another way to track attendees for next year. 12 buses brought about 277 attendees, there were 12 featured authors, and 16 different sessions.

b) Collection Development Team report

This report was distributed in the meeting packet. Dillon gave a quick overview of the May meeting with the OverDrive team.

c) Executive Director update

MELSA has been busy with the strategic planning RFP and the HR RFP.

CRPLSA has been working with the chosen firm to develop a survey to send to libraries across the state about state library standards. The survey will go out at the end of June/beginning of July.

Edstrom adjourned the meeting at 12:03pm.