June 13, 2016

Dear Winnefox Library System Board,

As the Chair of the Wisconsin Public Library System Redesign (PLSR) Project's Steering Committee, I am writing today to provide you with some information about the process.

Wisconsin's library system law, providing funding for coordinated regional library services, officially went into effect in 1971 when Senate Bill 47 was signed into law (1971 Act 152). The creation of public library systems fostered the establishment of a strong network of resource sharing and mutually beneficial interdependence. While changes in society, resources, and technologies over the past decades have created new demands and opportunities for systems, the law and services required of them as well as many of their practices are still relatively unchanged from the original law.

The library community—the systems, libraries, and the legislature—has recognized the need to update what is required of library systems as well as to redesign services in a manner that offers improved services and equity, and made the decision to undertake a process to do this work.

The PLSR process will consider how to best provide public library system services in Wisconsin. Its goal is to develop a plan for implementation of new models of service. The process is being led by the PLSR Steering Committee and managed by WiLS, who was selected as project manager through a nationally distributed Request for Proposal (RFP) process. Nine workgroups made up of over 100 service experts and stakeholders will use data, information and input gathered from the library community to design new models for delivering coordinated and shared services to be provided by systems, other agencies/organizations, and statewide collaborations.

Due to the complexity and magnitude of the potential change, the process will take time, and the workgroups will be developing their recommendations over the course of the next two years.

As system board members, it is important for you to know some key information about the process:

This is a community-based process: While DPI has oversight for this process and there is a Steering Committee that will be guiding the project, the new models for service will be developed by the workgroups comprised of experts and stakeholders from within the Wisconsin library community. In addition, the community as a whole will have the opportunity to provide feedback to the workgroups and Steering Committee along the way. It's critical that all of us work together on this process and that we invest the time to learn more, provide feedback when asked, and contribute toward new models of service.
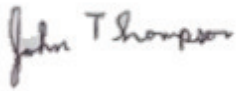
There are no preconceived outcomes: While this process builds on the work of many previous reports and investigations, it is starting with a blank slate. The workgroups will be determining the best models for services, based on their own expertise, data and information gathered, outside experts, and feedback from the community.

The process will consider services first and then design system administration to support these new models for service: We don't know what the system map will look like after this process. The geography of systems and they are administered will be dependent on the best way to provide services. Some services may be best provided statewide; others could benefit from smaller or larger geographic units. Until the workgroups develop the best possible models for service, the borders and size of systems will not be discussed.

The process relies on trust and transparency. The ultimate goal of this process is to provide the best possible public library system service in our state. In order to accomplish this goal, we need all systems and libraries to engage in this process and to participate. The project managers, Steering Committee, and workgroups are all committed to transparent and open processes. We need the same commitment from the community. If you have concerns or questions about the process, please share that information with us. We want to know your thoughts so that we can adapt the process and address concerns as they arise.

To learn more about the process, to ask questions or share your thoughts, please visit http://www.plsr.info or contact me (thompson@ifls.lib.wi.us) or the project managers (plsrprojects@wils.org).

Thank you so much for your time and your participation in this process,

John Thompson