

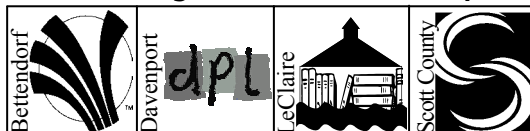


Weighing the Options: Libraries in Scott County

Prepared by Consensus for *Libraries Together in Scott County*
January 2006

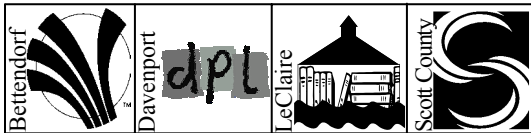
The last in a series of six reports

Libraries Together in Scott County



www.librariestogether.org

Libraries Together in Scott County



www.librariestogether.org

Libraries Together is made possible by the support of the Scott County Regional Development Authority, the Riverboat Development Authority, and the State Library of Iowa using federal funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Library Services and Technology Act, along with the Friends of the Bettendorf Public Library and each of the four public libraries.

Copyright 2005 Consensus

This report may be used in whole or in part so long as credit is given.

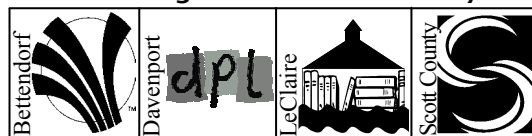
For more information:

Consensus, PO Box 10252, Kansas City, MO 64171

Phone: 816.531.4507

www.kcconsensus.org

Libraries Together in Scott County



www.librariestogether.org

To the Scott County community:

The four public libraries of Scott County are proud to present the final report of the Libraries Together Study. It represents a year of thought and discussion between directors, Trustees, staff, and the public that will affect the future of all four libraries.

We want to thank our funders, Scott County Regional Authority, the State Library of Iowa using federal funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Library Services and Technology Act, Riverboat Development Authority, Friends of the Bettendorf Public Library and each of the participating libraries. Their generosity and interest in libraries made the study feasible.

We also want to thank all the citizens of Scott County who filled out surveys, participated in focus groups and gave their input. After all, the libraries are for you and your opinions are the most important.

For the directors of the four libraries, this year has been stimulating and productive. However, our work has just begun. We will be meeting in strategic planning sessions in January 2006 to discuss the conclusions of the study and begin to formulate a plan to implement options from the study. That plan will then need to be approved by the individual Boards of Trustees before library staff start down the road to a future where all four libraries are working together under a comprehensive plan to improve library service.

We look forward to making library service in Scott County the best it can be for each citizen.

Sincerely,

Faye Clow, Bettendorf Public Library
Pam Collins, Scott County Library System
Kim Kietzman, LeClaire Community Library
LaWanda Roudebush, Davenport Public Library

Davenport Public Library

LaWanda Roudebush, Director
321 Main Street
Davenport, IA 52801
(563) 326-7837

Bettendorf Public Library

Faye Clow, Director
2950 Learning Campus Dr.
Bettendorf, IA 52722
(563) 344-4183

LeClaire Community Library

Kim Kietzman, Director
323 Wisconsin/PO Box 815
LeClaire, IA 52753
(563) 289-4242 (option 4)

Scott County Library System

Pam Collins, Director
200 N 6th Ave.
Eldridge, IA 52748
(563) 285-4794

Consensus

"We put the *public* in public policy"

PO Box 10252
Kansas City, MO 64171
816.531.4507
kccconsensus.org
kcforums.org

To the directors and trustees of public libraries in Scott County:

Thank you for the opportunity to complete this study of the four public libraries in Scott County. Our report, which contains options for action and the likely stakeholder response, marks the end of the first phase of *Libraries Together*. What happens next is up to you, your public officials and your citizens. We are confident that you will make wise choices with the best interests of your community at heart.

After completing our research and talking to hundreds of local leaders and citizens, as well as library leaders at the state and regional level, we believe that the State of Iowa has before it an historic opportunity to strengthen library services for all Iowans. Governor Tom Vilsack's call for shared services at the regional level would indicate the willingness to help Iowa libraries make that possible.

We believe that state government and library leaders should develop a vision for Iowa libraries of the future and then work together to achieve that vision. If leaders decide to promote shared services, the logical first steps would be to: 1. allow county libraries to use a property tax rather than a per-capita tax; 2. include a workable funding formula in the state law for multi-jurisdictional libraries; and 3. provide adequate state funding so that the state library can provide cost-saving services like automation, databases and van delivery to Iowa's libraries. These changes at the state level will allow Iowa libraries, many of which are very small, to begin to move towards wider units of service and economies of scale.

We also believe it is important for Iowa libraries to consider how they can translate public support for reciprocal borrowing into adequate state funding for Open Access, which reimburses libraries for lending to non-residents.

For the four public libraries in Scott County, we believe the best first step is to increase collaboration. That option received strong public support and would build upon efforts already under way. Along with directors and the state librarian, we support using 28E agreements to provide a more formal structure for collaboration.

While neither the libraries nor the public are ready to form a unified library tomorrow, we urge libraries to keep that option on the table. If state funding to municipalities is cut further, a unified library with taxing authority would be the best and maybe only way to preserve this vital community resource. In addition, we heard no concerns about a unified library that could not be addressed by skillful trustee and staff leadership.

Again, thank you for the chance to serve the Scott County community.

Sincerely,

The Consensus team

Jennifer Wilding, Tom Hennen, Mary Jo Draper and Martha Kropf

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Executive summary | 6 |
| Introduction | 9 |
| Are these findings directly applicable to other Iowa libraries? | 9 |
| What is the responsibility of state government? | 10 |
| What are the key facts about our libraries? | 12 |
| Iowa has many more very small public libraries | 12 |
| Iowa libraries receive much less state funding | 13 |
| Just three Iowa counties have access to Illinois consortia | 15 |
| Libraries in Scott County serve distinct populations | 16 |
| Libraries in Scott County vary in quality | 19 |
| Taxpayers pay different amounts for library services | 20 |
| Library users travel from library to library | 21 |
| Reciprocal borrowing is highly valued & underfunded | 22 |
| Weighing options for libraries | 24 |
| The forecast for collaboration | 27 |
| The Scenario | 27 |
| The context | 28 |
| Opportunities | 29 |
| Perspectives | 30 |
| Benefits and disadvantages | 35 |
| Potential action steps | 36 |
| The forecast for one unified library | 39 |
| The Scenario | 39 |
| The context | 40 |
| Perspectives | 42 |
| Benefits and disadvantages | 47 |
| Potential action steps | 48 |
| The forecast for more independence | 49 |
| The Scenario | 49 |
| The context | 51 |
| Perspectives | 51 |
| Benefits and disadvantages | 55 |
| Potential action steps | 55 |
| Appendix A: The Consensus team | 56 |

Executive Summary

This 10-month study of the four libraries in Scott County, Iowa offers three options for the future: they could collaborate more; they could unify; or the libraries could become more independent.

The state's push to share services was the impetus for the study. The library directors engaged Consensus, a Kansas City-based firm, to conduct research and gather input from key stakeholders – library staff, trustees, elected officials and the public. This study offers options for future library service and details the most likely community response to each option.

While there are a number of possible changes to library governance and service delivery, the report identifies three distinct options and details stakeholder response to each. The three options include:

1. The libraries could collaborate more.

The libraries already work together in several areas and are recognized as leaders in collaboration in the state of Iowa. Most of the groups of stakeholders agree that collaboration is the best option. They say the goal of collaboration is to increase the quality of service rather than to reduce costs. While some people in Scott County see collaboration as a step toward a unified library, others think the libraries should find ways to work together without unifying into one. There is a strong feeling among library staff and trustees that collaboration should be voluntary rather than mandated.

2. The libraries could unify into one library.

The supporters of a unified library system believe all citizens of Scott County should have the same quality of library services at the same tax rate. A unified system could be supported by a library tax approved directly by the voters. This would be an advantage because the municipal libraries currently compete with other city services for funding. Many say if libraries were being started from scratch, a unified system would be the way to go. However, they say with the current system the way it is, a unified system is politically impossible. For one thing, it would require a change in state law. Additionally, some stakeholders fear a unified system would take away the individual character and unique services of the separate libraries.

3. The libraries could operate more independently.

Many people in Scott County see a great difference between urban and rural libraries in the county, and they value the unique character of each individual library. Yet almost across the board, they view the libraries becoming more independent as a “step backward.” They

value reciprocal borrowing and they are not willing to give it up. Library patrons in Scott County use libraries other than the ones to which they pay taxes, and they are willing to let anyone use their library services as well. Moving toward independence might mean non-resident borrowers would be asked to pay for services. There is very little support for this option.

Other findings

This report also discusses some issues affecting the delivery of library services in Scott County. Among its key findings:

Collaboration among the libraries in Scott County is unusually strong because they have a history of collaboration through membership in an Illinois-based consortium and because of the efforts of the four current library directors. While some have suggested the collaboration currently in place and plans for working together in the future could be a statewide model, the libraries of Scott County have some unique characteristics that make them distinct from other parts of the state.

The libraries have benefited from belonging to a regional consortium of Illinois libraries. Scott County libraries belong to the Prairie Area Library System [PALS], which includes 26 counties (23 in Illinois and three in Iowa) and 390 member libraries of a variety of types. PALS provides its members with daily van delivery, continuing education, communications, and committee activity. Through PALS, libraries also contract for access to Quad-LINC, an automated circulation system. Quad-LINC is one of three automated circulation systems within PALS; the three are expected to merge in 2006 or 2007.

The State of Iowa wants libraries (and other local governmental services) to find ways to collaborate, but is not doing as much as it could to help them do so. The Consensus team has suggested that the state work with library leaders and citizens to create a vision for libraries in the state and to implement reforms that will make that vision achievable. It may be necessary to change state laws and funding practices, especially because the state of Iowa provides much less state funding than the national average. The national average for the state contribution to its libraries' per-capita operating income in 2002 was \$3.61; Iowa state government's contribution of \$.76 ranked 30th in the nation. Of all state libraries, only one – Texas – spent less per capita than the State Library of Iowa in FY 2002.

Libraries in Scott County vary in quality. The HAPLR Index, which combines input and output measures into a system that ranks libraries based on a weighted score, ranks Bettendorf in the 97th percentile and Davenport and the Scott County Library System in the 47th percentile. A *Libraries Together* survey of Scott County residents found that the libraries received different “grades” from users. Bettendorf was granted an “A” grade by 71 percent

of its users. The Scott County Eldridge library received an “A” from 62 percent. LeClaire got an “A” from 59 percent. Davenport’s main library received an “A” from 42 percent, with many people citing parking problems.

Taxpayers pay different amounts for library services. The amount paid per person ranges from \$27 to \$69, while the tax rate based on an average property varies from \$28 to \$111. If a countywide property tax were adopted, Davenport and LeClaire taxpayers would pay less while Bettendorf and other Scott County communities would pay more.

Residents consider reciprocal borrowing a sacred cow. Scott County libraries have reciprocal borrowing agreements, which give patrons the ability to borrow materials for free from any of the four libraries. Many citizens erroneously believe that libraries everywhere allow this practice. While librarians generally agree that reciprocal borrowing costs libraries about \$4 per borrowed item, library patrons are skeptical that it really costs libraries money to get them the materials they request. They highly value reciprocal borrowing and are not willing to give it up, and there is little support for charging patrons what it costs.

The state program, Open Access, originally funded reciprocal borrowing at \$.80 per item. It currently reimburses at about \$.30 per item. According to figures from the state library, Open Access funding in 1999 was \$995,000; in 2005, it was \$1,078,622, an increase of 8 percent. During the same time, the number of transactions increased 49 percent, from 2,417,101 to 3,595,408.

The average cost to an Iowa library for each transaction is between \$1 and \$2, according to an analysis by the state library, although library directors believe the real cost is higher. In Scott County, the cost per circulation—total circulation divided by operating costs—ranges from \$3.30 to \$5.25.

Scott County residents regularly use libraries they do not pay taxes to support. Of Bettendorf cardholders, almost one-quarter had visited the Davenport Main Library in the last year. Almost half of Davenport card holders and around three-fourths of LeClaire cardholders had visited the Bettendorf library within the last year. Of cardholders in the Scott County Library System, almost half had visited Bettendorf and a little more than 40 percent had visited the Davenport Main Library.

Many Scott County stakeholders believe library services should be free to anyone who wants to use them, no matter whether they pay taxes to the library. However, most members of the public do not know how library tax rates are set and how much they pay for services compared to people in other library service areas.

Introduction

This report marks the end of the first phase of a process that began about two years ago, when four library directors began meeting to talk about shared concerns. The directors identified a trend – the push at the state and local level for shared government services – that they believed would eventually affect their libraries. They could have waited until they were forced to make changes, but that was not the course they chose. They decided to be proactive.

The directors – Faye Clow, Pam Collins, Kim Kietzman and LaWanda Roudebush – got agreement from their boards of trustees to move forward. They agreed to commission a study of options. The study should include all the possibilities, with nothing off the table, and it should provide a clear sense of what the public and stakeholders would support.

Over the course of ten months, a team from Consensus, a nonprofit firm based in Kansas City, conducted research and met with trustees, staff, the public, elected and government officials, and others. It produced a series of interim reports on the current situation, internal efficiency, collaboration, unification, and public attitudes as reflected in meetings and surveys. This final report brings all of those elements together in an analysis of three options for action: be independent, collaborate more, or unify.

“As far as community building, it’s a meeting place, a hotbed for expression of ideas. Libraries really do build community in a lot of different ways.”

Member, Library Friends

This report signals the end of this phase of *Libraries Together* and the beginning of the next. The boards of trustees of the four libraries will review this report and determine the course of action that they will pursue together.

Are the findings of this study directly applicable to other Iowa libraries?

Libraries Together has been mentioned as a potential statewide model for considering how Iowa libraries are structured and funded. We believe it has that potential. It is important to note, however, that the libraries in Scott County have some characteristics that set them apart from other Iowa libraries.

Scott County contains one of just two county libraries operating in the state. Its libraries serve a much larger population than most Iowa libraries. Whereas 62 percent of Iowa libraries serve a population of less than 2,500 persons, just one of the four in Scott County serves a population of about that size. While 80 percent or more of Iowa library

directors have no previous experience working in a library, all four local directors have their master's degree in library science.

The libraries in Scott County also have access to the Illinois-based consortium called the Prairie Area Library System [PALS]. Only libraries in Scott, Clinton and Muscatine counties have access to PALS. Along with providing services like van delivery and automation at a significantly lower cost, PALS has been a catalyst for collaboration by bringing together library directors and staff on governing boards and committees. The importance of PALS to the health of local libraries cannot be overstated.

In addition, the governments in Scott County have a history of working together, both formally and informally, and the Blue Ribbon Committee, made up of elected officials and citizens, has spent about two years looking at new opportunities to provide shared services.

These factors, along with the leadership and commitment of the four directors, all contributed to the fact that the libraries in Scott County were the first in Iowa to undertake such a study.

Each county's libraries are different. While the model used in *Libraries Together* could be applied anywhere, it would be important for library directors to consider their unique context. If it is unusual for them to work together, if their towns and cities have no history of collaboration, they will want to lay some groundwork before taking on a study like this. Of all the steps, building relationships and trust among library directors is the most important. A close second is building agreement among trustees and local political leaders that a study is worthwhile and that all options will be considered.

"I think libraries are a sign of a good healthy community...It's such a great resource to all kinds of people and economic brackets, and a sign of people's values if we're willing to put money into libraries."

Resident of Scott County

What is the responsibility of state government?

A major catalyst for *Libraries Together* was a push by the governor of Iowa to encourage a regional approach to providing all government services, including libraries. The Consensus team believes that if the governor and state legislature are truly serious about encouraging regionalism, they have an important role to play in making it possible. By calling for change, the governor has, in effect, committed to supporting reforms at the state level that will make change possible.

The Consensus team found a significant amount of distrust of state government among people from a variety of walks of life while conducting this study. That, combined with the minimal amount of funding and services that the state provides to libraries, suggests that state government is not in a position to mandate change. For libraries to be willing to make changes at the state's request, state government will need to prove itself a trustworthy and cooperative partner.

We believe that an appropriate next step would be for state leaders to work with

library and citizen leaders to create a vision for libraries in the state of Iowa and to implement reforms that will make the vision achievable. By creating a framework for study and by agreeing to work together to implement the results, state and local leaders can smooth the way for progress. Reforms are likely to be uncoordinated, contentious and ineffective until the key players are on the same page.

One necessary change will be to state laws that govern libraries. Iowa's laws currently work against the kind of regionalism that the state says it want to promote. State law allows municipal, county and multi-jurisdictional libraries, but the funding mechanisms for county and multi-jurisdictional libraries are dysfunctional. In effect, a library in Iowa is forced to use the municipal option or enter into the arduous task of trying to change state law.

Another needed change is to state funding practices. While we recognize that the recent recession caused budget cuts around the country, the reality is that Iowa government encouraged statewide reciprocal borrowing through its Open Access program, but that funding has not nearly kept up with the public's demand for materials, increasing 8 percent from 1999-2005, while the number of transactions increase 49 percent. The current \$.30 per circulation falls far short of the \$1 to \$2 that a state library analysis has found that it costs. If the state wants to encourage libraries to collaborate further, it may face a certain amount of distrust of incentives it puts in place.

"We know state cuts are coming. I worry we will consolidate and save and trim, create lower budgets, then the state will even more off of our budget."

Library Staff Member

In addition, the level of state funding for the state library and library service areas is inadequate to allow them to provide the kinds of shared services that have a major impact on cost and quality of service. Any push for libraries to collaborate, particularly the very small municipal libraries that make up the vast majority of Iowa libraries, must include funding for services like shared databases, automation and van delivery in order to be meaningful.

And, if libraries find ways to reduce costs by achieving economies of scale, it is fair to expect that they would not see those cost savings disappear during the next round of state budget cuts. In FY 2003, according to the Iowa Index, state taxes and fees were 6.1 percent of income, the lowest in about 33 years. They had declined from about 8 percent of income since FY 1994. As state tax revenues have declined, however, local taxes have begun edging up, from a little under 4 percent of income in 1996 to a little more than 4 percent in FY 2002.

Any cost savings should be used to improve the quality of service. The overriding concern for Scott County citizens was increasing or maintaining quality, rather than lowering cost. The same is likely to be true for other Iowans, as well.

What are the key facts about our libraries?

The previous *Libraries Together* reports provided detailed information on a range of topics, from the history and current situation of local libraries, to how they can be more efficient, to ways that other libraries have collaborated or unified. Those reports will be a resource to local libraries as they move forward. But not everybody needs to know everything, and too much information can be as unproductive as too little. The factual information in this final report reflects our judgment about what must be known in order to make wise decisions about local libraries. Most data appeared in previous reports, along with their sources.

At the state level...

Iowa has many more very small public libraries than the national average

Libraries in America operate within a decentralized structure and most are very small, which is especially true for Iowa libraries. In 2002, there were 9,137 public libraries in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The largest 11 percent, those with a service area of 50,000 or more, served 72 percent of the population. The vast majority – 81 percent – of public libraries had just one single direct-service outlet that provided service directly to the public.

Most single-outlet libraries are municipal libraries, which typically operate within the boundaries of one city or town. Nationwide, about 54 percent of libraries are municipal libraries, but in Iowa, 98.9 percent are municipal; less than one percent are county systems.

In 2002, Iowa had 538 libraries serving almost three million residents, which meant the state had one library for every 5,433 Iowans. Iowa far exceeds the national average for the number of libraries with very small service areas. Nationally, 29.2 percent of libraries served populations of 2,499 persons or less in 2002, but in Iowa, 62.5 percent of libraries did.

Iowa had significantly more libraries than all but three states in 2002: Illinois, New York, and Texas. By 2004, the number of Iowa public libraries had grown to 543.

Until recently, Iowa state law allowed for only two types of public libraries, municipal and county libraries. In 2001, Iowa law was changed to make it possible to form multi-jurisdictional libraries. That the option hasn't yet been used may be the result of unclear wording on how financial resources would be divided.

Many library directors consider having many very small libraries less efficient than fewer libraries serving larger populations, and a study by Tom Hennen provided some confirmation of this belief. It requires more time to be spent on administration, budgeting,

technical services, acquisitions, and the political end of things. And very small libraries cannot achieve economies of scale without superstructures like consortia or federations, or substantial assistance from the state or library service areas.

Iowa libraries receive much less state funding than the national average

Local sources, such as the property tax, provide the great majority of funding for public libraries nationwide. That figure is even higher in Iowa, where local funds must compensate for a below-average state contribution. Figures for LeClaire are not included because it was not in operation in 2002.

Percentage distribution of operating income of public libraries by source of income, FY 2002.

| | Federal | State | Local | Other |
|-----------------|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| National avg. | 0.6% | 11.7% | 79.1% | 8.7% |
| Iowa avg. | 0.6% | 2.9% | 88.1% | 8.5% |
| Bettendorf | 0% | 2.5% | 91.9% | 5.6% |
| Davenport | 0% | 1.9% | 95.8% | 2.3% |
| Scott County LS | 0% | 2.0% | 96.5% | 1.5% |

The average total per capita operating income for U.S. public libraries in FY 2002 was \$30.97. At an average of \$26.40, Iowa ranked 29th in the nation for total per capita operating income. (Its neighbor, Illinois, ranked 2nd with \$51.28.)

The national average for the state contribution to per capita operating income in 2002 was \$3.61. Iowa state government’s contribution of \$.76 ranked 30th in the nation. (Illinois, with \$3.36, ranked 10th.) In FY 2004, Iowa had moved up to a rank of 28th in the nation with a per capita expenditure for direct financial assistance to libraries of \$.78. Be-

Total per capita operating income of public libraries, by source of income, FY 2002.

| | Total | Federal | State | Local | Other |
|----------------------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| National avg. | \$30.97 | \$.17 | \$3.61 | \$24.49 | \$2.69 |
| Iowa avg. | \$26.40 | \$.15 | \$.76 | \$23.25 | \$2.24 |
| Bettendorf | \$65.26 | \$0.00 | \$1.62 | \$59.95 | \$3.68 |
| Davenport§ | \$28.69 | \$0.00 | \$0.55 | \$27.47 | \$0.67 |
| LeClaire, 2004-2005* | \$36.99 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$36.99 | N/A |
| Scott County LS+ | \$25.41 | \$0.00 | \$0.51 | \$24.52 | \$0.38 |

§With the tax increase passed recently, the 2005 income per capita for Davenport is \$35.35.

*All of LeClaire’s operating income in 2004-2005 comes from local sources. It receives no state or federal funding. According to its director, any donations – the “other” category – are channeled into the library’s capital campaign account and used to reduce the library’s debt to the City of LeClaire.

+The FY 2005-2006 per capita rate was \$29.95.

tween 1999 and 2004, according to data provided by the state library, state funds provided to libraries increased by 70 percent, from \$1,351,790 to \$2,598,432.

Iowa’s state library has not fared so well. State libraries have the potential to encourage collaboration and increase efficiency statewide by providing economies of scale, particularly for the purchase of technology and databases. From July 2001-June 2003, the Iowa state library’s budget was cut by 32 percent, or \$533,800, and cut again by 2.5 percent in FY 2004, according to annual reports and news releases.

Of all state libraries, only one – Texas, at \$1.65 – spent less per capita than the State Library of Iowa in FY 2002. By FY 2004, six state libraries spent less per capita than Iowa—California, Colorado, Indiana, Oregon, Texas and West Virginia—with Iowa tied with Arizona for a rank of 45th.

Total income of state library agencies, by source of income and state: FY 2002

| State | Total | Federal | State | Other |
|----------------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| | In thousands of dollars | | | |
| 50 states & DC | \$1,153,413 | \$150,045 | \$971,135 | \$32,233 |
| Iowa | \$4,958 | \$1,782 | \$4,175 | \$0 |
| Illinois | \$75,381 | 5,151 | 64,210 | \$6,019 |

Percentage distribution of income of state library agencies: FY 2002

| State | Federal % | State % | Other % |
|----------------------|-----------|---------|---------|
| Avg., 50 states & DC | 13.0 | 84.2 | 2.8 |
| Iowa | 36.0 | 64.0 | 0.0 |
| Illinois | 6.8 | 85.2 | 8.0 |

Total expenditures per capita of state library agencies, FY 2002

| State | Total expenditure per capita |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Avg., 50 states & DC | \$3.99 |
| Iowa | \$1.67 |
| Illinois | \$5.72 |

Just three Iowa counties have access to cost-cutting consortia based in Illinois

The libraries in Scott County benefit from consortia based in Illinois. Scott County is one of only three Iowa counties – the others are Clinton and Muscatine – to be included in the Illinois consortia, which provide shared circulation systems and automation platforms that dramatically reduce their cost.

Like Iowa, Illinois has created regional library systems. Unlike Iowa, however, Illinois has funded them at a level that allows them to provide the kind of shared services that reduce costs, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and encourage collaboration. While the state’s funding has remained flat for several years, which helped push mergers of library systems, it is still substantially higher than state funding for Iowa’s library service areas. Iowa’s LSAs have barely enough funding to provide the basic, one-on-one training needed by directors of the very small libraries that make up the vast majority of Iowa’s libraries. They lack the funds to provide shared automation and databases, which could be provided much more cost-effectively over a wide area of service.

Scott County libraries belong to the Prairie Area Library System [PALS], which includes 26 counties (23 in Illinois and three in Iowa) and 390 member libraries of a variety of types. PALS provides its members with daily van delivery, continuing education, communications, and committee activity. Through PALS, libraries also contract for access to Quad-LINC, an automated circulation system. (Quad-LINC is one of three automated circulation systems within PALS; the three are expected to merge in 2006 or 2007.)

“This (being more independent) would be even more expensive than being part of Quad-LINC. Boy, would people be mad.”
Library Staff Member

Iowa libraries reimburse the consortium for the cost of van delivery, Quad-LINC and continuing education and training, but are not billed for services like committees that have little or no incremental cost.

Including the Iowa counties has allowed Quad-LINC to achieve economies of scale. From 1984-2004, Iowa libraries provided about half of the revenue used to operate Quad-LINC. For the Iowa libraries, belonging to Quad-LINC meant that they didn’t need to purchase and maintain their own circulation system and automation platform, and that their patrons had access to materials from libraries across the river, among other benefits.

At the local level...

Libraries in Scott County serve distinct populations and have distinct strengths

The four libraries serve very distinct populations. In general terms, Davenport's library includes the county's urban core and central business district, and Bettendorf an affluent suburb, while the Scott County service area is historically rural and LeClaire is an historically blue-collar river town that is seeing an influx of newcomers.

The chart on the following page shows how local demographics compare to the state and the nation. "Scott County" refers to the entire county, including Bettendorf, Davenport and LeClaire. The figures are drawn from the 2000 U.S. Census.

The four public libraries in Scott County serve populations of very different sizes. All but one, the LeClaire Community Library, serve a far larger population than is typical for an Iowa library.

Population, central and branch libraries in Scott County, Iowa, FY 2002.

| Library | Pop. served | % of total pop. | Central libraries | Branch libraries |
|--|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Bettendorf Public Library Information Center | 31,275 | 20% | 1 | 0 |
| Davenport Public Library | 98,359 | 62% | 1 | 1 |
| LeClaire Community Library | 2,868* | 2% | 1 | 0 |
| Scott County Library System | 26,166‡ | 16% | 1 | 8 |
| Total | 158,668 | 100% | 4 | 9 |

*From census figures updated in 2002.

‡2002 Scott County Library System population minus LeClaire population.

Bettendorf Public Library

The Bettendorf Public Library serves an affluent suburban community, with levels of education, income, and home-ownership that are well above average for the state and the county, and a poverty level that is less than half the county average.

The City of Bettendorf provides far more support per-capita to the Bettendorf Public Library than that received by other libraries. This has allowed it to offer "extras" not currently available elsewhere, like a drive-up window, café and six well-appointed meeting rooms that allow it to serve as a center of community life. Its \$63.76 in expenditures per capita in 2002 put Bettendorf in the 92nd percentile of libraries serving a population of a similar size.

The library draws customers from around the region; at times, non-residents have made up nearly half of Bettendorf customers. Bettendorf's niche among Scott County libraries is providing best-sellers and well-reviewed new books.

| Indicator | USA | IA | Scott | Bet | Dav | LeClaire |
|--|------------|-----------|--------------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| Population, % change 1990-2000 | 13.1% | 5.4% | 5.1% | 12.3% | 2.8% | 4.1%* |
| Race / Ethnicity | | | | | | |
| White persons, %, 2000 | 75.1% | 93.9% | 88.5% | 95.0% | 83.7% | 97.7% |
| African American persons, %, 2000 | 12.3% | 2.1% | 6.1% | 1.6% | 9.2% | 0.2% |
| Asian persons, %, 2000 | 3.6% | 1.3% | 1.6% | 1.4% | 2.0% | 0.4% |
| Hispanic or Latino origin, %, 2000 | 12.5% | 2.8% | 4.1% | 2.5% | 5.4% | 2.2% |
| Foreign-born persons, %, 2000 | 11.1% | 3.1% | 3.1% | 2.9% | 3.7% | 0.5% |
| Education | | | | | | |
| High school grad. or higher, % of persons 25+ | 80.4% | 86.1% | 86.3% | 92.6% | 83.4% | 90.8% |
| Bachelor's degree or higher, % of 25+ | 24.4% | 21.2% | 24.9% | 38.8% | 21.5% | 20.3% |
| Housing | | | | | | |
| Homeownership rate, 2000 | 66.2% | 72.3% | 70.6% | 77.3% | 65.2% | 80.3% |
| Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2000 | \$119,600 | \$82,500 | \$92,400 | \$118,400 | \$80,200 | \$89,600 |
| Income | | | | | | |
| Median household income, 1999 | \$41,994 | \$39,469 | \$42,701 | \$54,217 | \$37,242 | \$45,644 |
| Per capita money income, 1999 | \$21,587 | \$19,674 | \$21,310 | \$28,053 | \$18,828 | \$21,243 |
| Persons below poverty, %, 1999 | 12.4% | 9.1% | 10.5% | 4.8% | 14.1% | 5.1% |
| Geography | | | | | | |
| Land area, square miles, 2000 | 3,537,438 | 55,869 | 458 | 21 | 63 | 4.2* |
| Persons per square mile, 2000 | 79.6 | 52.4 | 346.5 | 1,472.8 | 1,566.5 | 677.9* |

*Data supplied by the LeClaire Community Library director.

Davenport Public Library

The Davenport Public Library is the third largest in Iowa and the largest library in the Quad Cities. It is considered *the* library for research, particularly local history and genealogy, and for reference in the Quad Cities area. The centerpiece is Davenport's Richardson-Sloane Special Collections Center, which occupies 7,800 square feet in the lower level of the Main Library. The center supports three major areas of activity, including genealogy, local history, and government documents.

The Davenport Public Library serves the urban core and central business district along with growing suburban areas within the city limits. In 2002, its service area included 62 percent of the county's population. The Davenport population includes a higher percentage of racial and ethnic minorities than the county as a whole. Davenport citizens are somewhat less likely to have a college degree or to be homeowners and somewhat more likely to live in poverty than residents county-wide.

In November 2004, a slim majority of city voters approved an additional property tax of \$0.27 per \$1,000 of taxable value that will be used to pay for the operation of two new branches in west and north-central Davenport. Capital costs will be paid by the city and through fundraising by the library.

"We are a community. The Davenport people don't charge Bettendorf for using public parks. Davenport has swimming pools and Bettendorf people come to swim."

Resident of Scott County

The new west branch will be located in west Davenport at Fairmount Street and Duck Creek, the geographic center of expected growth there. That branch is expected to pull users from the Scott County Library System. The new north-central branch will serve the areas of new growth between I-80 and 53rd Street, and is expected to reduce the number of Davenport residents who use the Bettendorf Public Library.

LeClaire Community Library

From 1951 through 1999, the town of LeClaire was part of the Scott County Library System. Then, in November of 1999, residents voted to separate from Scott County and start their own library. The catalyst was a \$525,000 bequest for the purpose of helping LeClaire establish a city-owned and city-run library. The new library opened on July 2nd, 2004. The library's collection focuses on popular materials for adults and on children's materials.

The library's service area includes less than 3,000 persons, or about 2 percent of the county population. It serves a community with a strong base of blue-collar long-time residents as well as a growing number of affluent newcomers. The newest subdivision in LeClaire has a minimum house price of about \$400,000, and condos draw retirees and empty-nesters.

The percentage of high-school graduates, at 90.8%, and its median household income \$45,644, was higher than any but Bettendorf. Its homeownership rate is the highest in the county.

Scott County Library System

The Scott County Library System operates a new headquarters library in Eldridge and eight branch libraries and a bookmobile that serve towns across the county's 360 square miles. Each branch is a full-service library with rotating material collections, programming, reference and public service assistance. The Scott County system emphasizes three areas: popular materials for adults and young adults; information resources on topics of personal interest; and services to children that inspire a love of reading.

Even including the more densely populated cities of Davenport and Bettendorf, Scott County has only 346 persons per square mile; nearly 90 percent of Scott County is farmland. (Contrast that with the Bettendorf library, which serves just a few thousand more residents. Bettendorf can concentrate its resources on one library serving 21 square miles, or about 5 percent of the Scott County land mass.)

The library is one of two functioning county libraries in the state. Unlike the county's three municipal libraries, the Scott County Library System has taxing authority. It determines its budget and divides that by the population it serves, then levies a per-capita tax.

The per-capita tax has been a bone of contention for towns within the Scott County Library System. Until relatively recently, the county collected the per-capita tax dollars and sent one check directly to the library. That has changed, and now the county sends all of each town's tax revenue to the town, and the town is then responsible for writing its own check to the library. This method encourages each town to judge library services based on what that town receives rather than on services available to the county as a whole. The library payment sometimes consumes a substantial portion of the town's tax revenues and some consider it especially unfair to towns that lack a business or industrial tax base.

"I have a job I love going to every day and I know it's important to our community."

Library Staff Member

The library benefits because its funding is very stable, but at the cost of higher revenue. Its per-capita revenues are significantly less than for other libraries in Scott County.

Libraries in Scott County vary in quality

The HAPLR Index, created by Tom Hennen, combines both input and output measures into a system that ranks libraries based on a weighted score, using data submitted to the Federal-State Cooperative Service and published by the federal National Center for Education Statistics. The HAPLR Index uses 15 factors related to traditional library services, including circulation, staffing, materials, reference service and funding levels. The HAPLR Index is the one comparative tool available to U.S. libraries.

It is important to note that 40 percent of the Index is sensitive to circulation. This tends to put libraries with strong special collections, like Davenport, at a disadvantage be-

cause those items don't leave the building and therefore are not counted in circulation figures.

Because it is so new, LeClaire Community Library data have not yet been included in reports released by the National Center for Education Statistics, and therefore it has not received a HAPLR Index score.

Scott County libraries, 2004 HAPLR Index based on 2002 data.

| | # of libraries in its pop. category | HAPLR score | Rank of libraries in its category | Percentile |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------------|--|-------------------|
| Davenport Public Library | 530 | 485 | 278 of 530 | 47.6% |
| Bettendorf Public Library | 920 | 830 | 26 of 920 | 97.2% |
| Scott County Library System | 920 | 496 | 480 of 920 | 47.8% |

Statewide, Iowa's libraries received a weighted HAPLR score of 590 out of a possible 1000 and ranked 11th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia in 2004, based on 2002 data. Its neighbor, Illinois, had a score of 532 out of 1000 and ranked 20th out of 51.

In addition, a *Libraries Together* survey of Scott County residents found that the libraries received different "grades" from users. Overall, library card holders tended to rate the library they visited most often as an "A" or "B." Of card holders who visited each library the most often, the following percentages gave that library an "A" grade:

- Bettendorf, 71.7 percent;
- Davenport's main library, 41.7 percent (many cited problems with parking);
- LeClaire, 59.4 percent; and
- the Scott County system's Eldridge library, 62.2 percent.

Taxpayers pay different amounts for library services

Libraries in Scott County are used to comparing the amount of funds received per capita. That's part, but not all, of the total picture, which also includes tax rates.

In 2002, the average property owned by an individual in Scott County was valued at \$57,313. With the exception of LeClaire, whose government has provided tax incentives to new residential development, the tax rates per average property are much closer than the per capita rates would suggest. While Bettendorf, for instance, outspends Davenport almost two to one in dollars per capita, when the spending is measured as the impact on an average priced home, Bettendorf trails Davenport, at \$43.01 to \$36.67.

The per capita measure is a good gauge for what a library can deliver with its funding level, but the tax rate measure speaks much more loudly to the taxpayer.

| Community | Per person | Per average (\$57,313) property owned by an individual |
|------------------|-------------------|---|
| Bettendorf | \$68.91 | \$36.67 |
| Davenport | \$32.02 | \$43.01 |
| LeClaire | \$37.71 | \$111.45 |
| Scott County | \$27.44 | \$27.93 |
| Averages | \$38.69 | \$38.69 |

If there was a countywide property tax, with each property taxed at the same rate, the amount that each municipality spends on library services would change. This assumes that the total budget for library services would stay the same as it is now.

| Municipality | Change from current funds spent on libraries | Tax per \$57,313 property | Tax per capita |
|--------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Bettendorf | + 3% | \$36.35 | \$68.30 |
| Davenport | - 8% | \$36.35 | \$27.07 |
| LeClaire | - 67% | \$36.35 | \$12.30 |
| Other Scott County communities | + 34% | \$36.35 | \$35.72 |
| Totals | 0% | \$36.35 | \$36.35 |

Library users travel from library to library

A survey of library card holders found that, while people typically use their home library most often, many also travel to use other libraries. The survey, sent in March and April 2005, received a 48.2 percent response rate and had a 95 percent confidence level.

Of Bettendorf card holders, almost one-quarter had visited the Davenport Main Library in the last year. Almost half of Davenport card holders and around three-fourths of LeClaire card holders had visited the Bettendorf library within the last year. Of card holders in the Scott County Library System, almost half had visited Bettendorf and a little more than 40 percent had visited the Davenport Main Library.

The most-selected reason that card holders gave for why they used a particular library most often was that it was close to where he or she lived. The second most popular

reason was the selection of materials.

Across all libraries, card holders were least satisfied with the hours of operation, with 87.1 percent saying that they were very or somewhat satisfied. When asked what services they would like to see implemented within the next three years, the most common responses were Sunday hours and Friday evening hours.

Reciprocal borrowing is highly valued and underfunded

Reciprocal borrowing, which allows a person to use a library to which he or she does not pay taxes, provides benefits to both patrons and libraries. It means that a library no longer feels the pressure to have all the materials that its patrons might need, thereby reducing costs. It expands the world of materials available to patrons and increases convenience, particularly for people who live or work near another town's library. It means that residents of even the smallest or poorest municipalities have access to the resources of larger or better funded libraries.

The first *Libraries Together* survey, conducted in the spring, found that, of a variety of services and types of materials that the libraries offer, interlibrary loan received the highest percentage of satisfied ratings from library users, with 97.7 percent saying they were very or somewhat satisfied. Interlibrary loan allows a card holder to request materials from a library other than his or her home library, and is closely linked with reciprocal borrowing, which allows patrons to visit a library and check out materials.

The second *Libraries Together* survey, conducted in the fall, found strong support for free access to all libraries. When asked how libraries could best provide services to residents of the county, 78.6 percent of all respondents said that everyone in the county should have free access to every library and that the four libraries should work together to share decision making, buy materials and offer programs. The next-highest choice, at 9.1 percent, was that each library should provide services designed to meet the needs of its residents and non-residents should have limited access. The third

"LeClaire has a library. Davenport is getting new branches. The dynamics will change. The discussion three years from now will be different."

Library Trustee

choice, at 8.8 percent, was that everyone should have free access and one central group should decide what programs and services are offered at each library. The last choice, at 3.5 percent, was that every library should meet the needs of its own residents and non-residents should have to pay.

Most Iowa libraries, including the four in Scott County, participate in the statewide reciprocal borrowing agreement called Open Access, which allows Iowa cardholders to check out materials from any participating library. Open Access originally funded reciprocal borrowing at \$.80 per item, but currently reimburses at about \$.30 per item of the \$1 to \$2 per item that the state library has found that it costs. According to figures from the state library, Open Access funding in 1999 was \$955,000; in 2005, it was \$1,078,622, an in-

crease of 8 percent. During the same time, the public’s demand for materials increased by 49 percent, from 2,417,101 transactions to 3,595,408.

Library directors and the state library do not agree on the cost to serve non-residents. The state library analysis showed a cost of \$1-\$2 per transaction, while directors note that in Scott County, the cost per circulation—total circulation divided by operating costs—ranges from \$3.30 to \$5.25.

In addition, all four public libraries in Scott County are members of PALS, an Illinois-based library consortium that includes a reciprocal borrowing agreement through a shared automated circulation system called Quad-LINC. When residents of Scott County talk about reciprocal borrowing, they talk in terms of the benefits of Quad-LINC, which has a much higher profile locally than Open Access.

“This is my life’s blood. I love books. I don’t date; I don’t go to bars. This is what I do for fun—read books and go to the library.”

Resident of Scott County

In 2002, 46 percent of total Bettendorf library usage was by non-residents. That year, Open Access funding dropped to \$.22 per item. Bettendorf then instituted a six-item limit for non-residents, a limit that was rescinded when its new self-check system made the limit impractical.

All libraries serve non-residents to one extent or another. For example, in its first 12 months of operation, the LeClaire Community Library found that 21-27 percent of its circulation was to non-residents. In addition, the Davenport Public Library provides historical, genealogical and special collections, as well as reference services, to residents from around the region. Davenport is not reimbursed by any state or local program for providing non-circulating materials to non-residents.

While the new Davenport branches may reduce concerns about reciprocal borrowing within Scott County, changes in PALS may increase concerns overall. PALS will soon triple the area within Illinois that is covered by its reciprocal borrowing agreement. This means that Scott County residents will have access to even more items from Illinois libraries, but also that local materials will travel farther and may be less available to local patrons. However, software will provide for “scoping” in an attempt to keep the majority of materials within their current geographical area.

Some libraries elsewhere, faced with reciprocal borrowing imbalances, have pulled out of reciprocal borrowing agreements. Instead, they have required that adult non-residents purchase a library card for \$20-\$40, formed new agreements with other suburbs that excluded urban residents, or have quit lending to non-residents altogether.

Weighing options for libraries

Many assume that the way libraries are organized in their town is the way they're organized all over the country. But there are more options available for how library services are structured, governed and funded than one might imagine. While small municipal libraries are in the majority nationwide, there are a growing number of alternatives.

Iowa law allows for two types of non-municipal libraries – county and multi-jurisdictional – as well as for 28E agreements that can be used by municipalities to provide joint services.

Elsewhere in the nation, other types of structures are used. Sometimes, as with cooperative or federated systems, the entity provides services to the libraries rather than to patrons, like PALS serves libraries within its boundaries. In other cases, such as with regional/multi-jurisdictional, consolidated, and district libraries, the entity provides services directly to library patrons. The definitions below were drawn mainly from materials provided by the State of Minnesota. While some details would change from state to state, the basics are the same.

"I would like to see things as fair as possible for citizens. In Dixon, Iowa, they have a budget for the whole city of \$24,000. Property taxes are really low. Last year they had to pay \$9,000 to the library. You have other cities that pay almost nothing."

Member, Blue Ribbon Committee

Cooperative systems are created by the boards of several libraries that retain their autonomy. Cooperative systems may provide services such as joint interlibrary loan, centralized book processing, and joint training, among others.

A **federated public library system** is an administrative unit working to provide public library services, eligible to receive state and federal funds, but with participating member city and county public libraries in the system remaining autonomous with their own budgets, staff and boards. The federated system provides services to member libraries and usually no direct services to the public. It is governed by a board representative of member libraries and may or may not receive funding from cities or counties, according to the Minnesota handbook for library trustees.

A **regional library system (also called a multi-jurisdictional library)** occurs when a city within a larger geographic area provides funding for library operations, but does not provide library services directly. Instead, the funding is pooled with funding from other cities

and counties in the multi-jurisdictional area in order to provide public library services. The regional library provides administration, staffing, materials and other services needed for operations. The city may provide the library building. The municipality often appoints members to the regional library board of trustees. One difficulty with multi-jurisdictional libraries is that the level of funding tends to be driven by the municipality that is willing to contribute the least, so per-capita funding is often less than other alternatives.

Iowa law 336 allowed for the creation of multi-jurisdictional libraries that would function the same as those described above. The law, however, does not specify a formula for determining how much funding each municipality should contribute. Until that is changed, the law is unlikely to be used.

A consolidated public library system is a library administrative unit that provides direct library services to the public. The participating cities and counties provide the funding and all libraries are branches of the system. A board that is representative of the participating cities and counties governs the consolidated library system. There usually is a single budget. The regional library provides all administration, staff, materials and other services needed for the library to operate, according to the Minnesota handbook for library trustees.

Iowa law allows for county libraries, which operate as consolidated public library systems. One of only two in the state is in operation in Scott County. Iowa county libraries differ from consolidated systems in their use of the per-capita tax rather than the property tax.

A library district is a separate unit of government formed solely to provide library services. The library district has one administrative structure, one board and one budget. The library district has taxing authority and can go directly to citizens for funding, typically through a property tax. One board governs the library district, and members may be appointed or elected. All libraries within the district are considered branches of the district.

"I think not all the libraries in Scott County should be alike...I would like to have collections that somewhat overlap, but also have variations, some distinctive pieces. That is valuable and important... to drawing in a wide variety of people."

Member, Blue Ribbon Committee

These options fit fairly neatly into three main groups, which represent the major choices available to residents of Scott County:

- Be independent (municipal libraries)
- Collaborate more (28E agreements, federated and cooperative systems)
- Unify (consolidated or multi-jurisdictional libraries, regional or county libraries, and library districts)

What was involved in this analysis?

The four public libraries in Scott County requested a study of options for library service, with the likely community response to each option. Since the first of March, 2005, the

Consensus team has worked with the libraries to accomplish several steps.

- The first step was completed in April, with the release of “The Past and Present: Libraries in Scott County, Iowa,” which provided the broad picture of the current situation for libraries in Scott County and the rest of the state. The team reviewed historical and other materials and interviewed local board members and other community leaders.
- The second step was completed in July, with the release of “An Inside Look: Libraries in Scott County, Iowa.” That report looked inside each library to determine where its work could be done more efficiently and included the results of a customer satisfaction survey sent to library patrons. The team met with staff members and directors.
- A third report, “Starting Points for Collaboration: Libraries in Scott County” examined opportunities for the libraries to expand their efforts to work together in order to be able to provide greater levels of service. It was released in September. The team brought together staff members from the four libraries to talk about potential collaborative projects.
- The fourth report, “Four into One: Unifying Libraries in Scott County, Iowa,” examined mechanisms for creating one unified library and the potential impact on structure and cost of library service. It was released in November. The team met with directors to discuss the pros and cons of various options for unification.
- The fifth report, “Public Perspectives: The Libraries of Scott County,” detailed the conversations Scott County residents had during a series of public forums in October 2005 as well as a county-wide survey of various options for action.

“I’m embarrassed that we’re turning to Illinois to support our libraries. I think that’s scary. I feel like Iowa needs to pony up.”
Resident of Scott County

How is the analysis structured?

The analysis of the three options – collaborate, unify, remain independent – contains several elements designed to provide a well-rounded picture of each option in action.

1. Scenario. One vision of how this option might work, taking into account state and local perspectives and trends in library service.
2. Context. Basic facts related to the option.
3. Perspectives. What the public, trustees, elected leaders, directors and others had to say about this option.
4. Benefits and disadvantages.
5. Potential action steps. Actions that the libraries might want to take if they use this option.

The forecast for collaboration

The Scenario

By 2010, the public libraries in Scott County have created a framework for collaboration that has become a model for libraries throughout the state. Each library continues to have its own funding stream, board of trustees and staff, but by working together they have been able to increase the level of service they provide without increasing operating costs. People have differing opinions about whether the next step should be unification, but there's general agreement that increased collaboration has been very successful.

The boards of trustees have been conducting joint planning since 2006. They have built relationships, shared knowledge, and joined together as a powerful force to advocate for all libraries in Scott County. It hasn't always been easy, and there were times when the alliance seemed ready to break apart, but the straightforward way in which conflicts were handled have created a cohesive, high-functioning team.

The library directors have continued to draw praise for their willingness to work together across boundaries of turf. They have initiated several 28E agreements, which allow any public agency in Iowa to provide joint services and facilities with other public or private agencies, or to contract with another public agency to perform services. They have also worked with staff members to develop informal collaborative structures like cross-library committees.

The libraries started with low-hanging fruit – the high-impact projects that staff members identified during *Libraries Together*. Some projects were highly successful and others were not, but they learned valuable lessons from the failures and successes alike. The directors and trustees didn't force collaboration, but encouraged staff members to build relationships and find new possibilities at their own pace.

The most difficult challenge was developing a pool of shared temporary staff members. The logistics of working out different pay rates and negotiating with four unions were daunting, but eventually they were able to find a solution. Progress in that area helped pave the way for the libraries to jointly hire several staff persons, such as a coordinator for collaborative children's programming.

The public has noticed that there is more coordination among the libraries. They can go to one website to see programs being offered at all the libraries, checkout policies

"I'd like to try (collaboration) for five years, give it a chance and see what it really offers to the community. Let's move to that middle ground and see how it goes, and if it's not working, we can try something else."

Resident of Scott County

are the same, and at least one library in Scott County is open every day and every evening. All databases are available to every resident of the county from their home computers, and coordinated collection development has made it easier to get popular titles. While some were concerned that collaboration would cause libraries to become more homogeneous, the opposite has been true. Collaboration has allowed each library to develop its own niche and to specialize in certain types of programming and materials, because now it doesn't have to try to do everything.

The libraries have maintained their memberships in PALS, the Illinois-based consortium, and continue to count on the services it provides. As Iowa state officials became more aware of the cost savings available through consortia, they have begun to look more seriously at the benefits they could bring to other libraries in the state.

Collaboration has not solved the problem of uneven levels of reciprocal borrowing or underfunding of Iowa's Open Access program, which was designed to compensate net lenders. And there continues to be no additional state funding for the Davenport library's historical, genealogical or special collections. Local leaders are considering whether to spearhead a statewide push for increased Open Access funding or to promote a regional tax for regional library services, or both.

The funding situation for local libraries is relatively stable. Local philanthropies have stepped up to fund collaborative efforts at a higher level than they previously funded independent projects. Because the libraries have remained independent, though, they haven't seen the drop-off in individual giving that sometimes comes with unified libraries.

The context for collaboration in Scott County

Now as never before, the libraries in Scott County have an incentive to develop a collaborative structure that fits their particular needs. The governor has outlined a proposal to separate local governments into 15 or 16 regional groups, which would receive state funds to encourage the sharing of services, including library service. The four public libraries in Scott County have taken the lead in preparing for 2008, when shared services proposals may begin to appear on local ballots.

Libraries elsewhere have found that collaboration breeds collaboration. Shared efforts may start small, but as staff members gain experience and trust they naturally find new opportunities. To make collaboration work for the long run, three ingredients are critical:

- a willingness to collaborate on the part of all library directors and staff,
- recognition that one or the other library may need to take the lead in providing the collaborative activity to the others to make it work, and

"From what I've seen, the libraries have developed a wonderful sense of collaboration. I'd love to see the boards get together more often, get that sense of camaraderie and be able to discuss honestly and openly what's going on."

Resident of Scott County

-
- mutual agreement on the method of calculating and sharing any related costs.

The most common way for libraries to collaborate on an ongoing basis is through consortia like PALS. Nationwide, the drive to reduce costs have prompted libraries to form consortia that can negotiate lower prices from publishers, create shared automation systems, and achieve other economies of scale.

As the number of consortia has grown, though, they are beginning to compete with one another. Some consortia have merged, making them more unwieldy. One library director who helped start a consortium for small libraries found that consortia put libraries on the path to thinking and acting as a region. In general, consortia have more to offer smaller libraries than they do large ones.

“(Collaboration) will happen because we as communities will say that we need to do it. We can’t say that this is going to be another layer of bureaucracy; it’s more a coming together of people who make a difference.”

Library Trustee

At least a third of all consortia, according to a study by consultants Himmel & Wilson, provide continuing education, consulting, group purchasing, delivery, and interlibrary loan. The study found that consortia are sometimes developed in response to the diminished services that result from state budget cuts.

Opportunities for collaboration in Scott County

Among Iowa libraries, those of Scott County are almost unique in that they already have access to a successful consortium. While Iowa has Library Service Areas (LSAs) that were formed to provide consultation, training and technology, and to facilitate cooperation among libraries, they receive little funding. Their largest role is working one-on-one with the more than 80 percent of Iowa library directors who have no library science training.

While it is normal for some staff members to work together through PALS – directors and children’s librarians are members of PALS-based committees, for example – other staff members rarely intersect. And, because PALS is based in Illinois, more emphasis is given on that state’s issues than on those of Iowa. Despite having access to PALS, there are ample opportunities for local libraries to increase their level of collaboration.

Over a series of meetings, staff members and trustees of the four public libraries developed principles that they believed should guide their collaboration:

- *The patron comes first.* No change should be made if it doesn’t improve service for patrons.
- *The Principle of Uniformity,* which says that patrons are best served when library policies and procedures are the same.
- *The Principle of Individual Identity,* which says that libraries should build upon their distinct strengths.
- *Size doesn’t matter.* Collaboration should benefit every library, no matter its size.

-
- *Speaking up and standing up.* In order to build trust, staff members should be willing to explain themselves to others and to stand up for themselves on issues that they feel are important.
 - *Commitment to collaboration.* Collaboration takes time and those involved should make the commitment to actively participate.

Staff members and trustees of the four public libraries identified a range of opportunities for collaborative projects. Among the most favored options were:

- a shared calendar;
- enhanced communication;
- coordinated operating hours;
- a shared pool of temporary staff members;
- staff members jointly hired to oversee collaborative projects;
- a joint festival of early childhood learning;
- uniform and perhaps centralized processing;
- collaborative purchasing of databases;
- collaborative collection development, including weeding; and
- shared ideas for and reviews of programming.

Perspectives on collaboration

The language below includes both direct quotes drawn from interviews with various individuals as well as summaries of a group's perspective on the option.

Members of the public (based on public meetings and surveys)

Of the three options, collaboration is the best way to go right now. Collaboration may offer enough benefits that it becomes an end in itself, or it may pave the way for us to form one unified library. Better that we should take baby steps and see what works than leap into major changes.

One benefit of collaboration is that it's practical. It allows each library to meet the needs of its own patrons, but also to work with other libraries when it can save money or produce better results. Collaboration is already working, and we don't have to change state law or hold a referendum to do more of it.

Having the trustees conduct joint planning would be especially beneficial because we need to work as a region.

Collaboration would also help assure that any resident of the county can use any library for free, which is extremely important. Because the libraries would remain independent, though, they could keep their unique character. Collaboration allows libraries to keep their

"What's there not to like about (collaboration)? It's apple pie and the American flag—let's all work together to be more efficient."

Resident of Scott County

identities while increasing the ability to serve the whole county. It's the happy medium.

Efficiency is not nearly as important as the quality of service, so it is not a problem that collaboration may be less efficient than unification. In addition, libraries already seem to be operating very efficiently.

State or local government should not impose collaboration on libraries. Collaboration should be voluntary.

A concern about collaboration is that it would be too taxing for library staff members. You can only attend so many meetings before the quality of work suffers. It would also be difficult to work out salary inequities and union issues.

The Blue Ribbon Committee

The Quad Cities need to build a culture of collaboration, and the libraries are part of that. Government can't provide the services that the public says it wants without sharing assets and ideas. The libraries have already been effective with collaboration, and that should continue and grow. We don't agree among ourselves whether the end should be collaboration or unification, but we do agree that the libraries should take "baby steps" toward increased collaboration. With libraries, as with other areas the committee has looked at, union issues complicate collaboration. In those cases, it was necessary to use attrition to move all staff members to one union.

Mayors and city/county administrators

Collaboration can bring major benefits, like getting to show off your community to outsiders and saving money that can be applied to improving service. It just makes sense to collaborate rather than duplicate. For example, we wouldn't want another library to imitate Davenport's special collections. Different libraries will receive different benefits, and that's fine. A small library like LeClaire may have the most to gain from collaborating with other libraries, but each will receive something important in return.

A big benefit of collaboration would be that the libraries would maintain their independence, particularly in terms of funding. There's no way that Bettendorf residents would pay 3 percent more to belong to a unified system that might reduce their services. It's also unlikely that Davenport, LeClaire and Scott County would be able to afford a per-capita payment as high as Bettendorf's. Keeping the libraries separate allows them to continue to provide the same level of service they do now, for the same funds.

Libraries could use 28E agreements to formalize collaboration. Governments use 28E agreements all the time, like for wastewater treatment and a mutual aid agreement for firefighters and police officials. But they don't change the way we operate and they don't

"If the community sees that libraries are cooperating, it's a better image. If they see we're fighting tooth and nail, it hurts the image."

Member, Library Friends

create a particular benefit. They're like a prenuptial agreement. If you want to get a divorce down the road, you're going to, but with a 28E agreement you know in advance what the ending will look like.

Reciprocal borrowing would continue to be an issue if collaboration is the option that is chosen. It's unfortunate that the state doesn't provide real support for reciprocal borrowing or any support for the special collections in Davenport. It's not the first time the state has promised to fund something at a certain level and then not done so.

Frankly, we don't trust the state to play fair with local communities when it comes to libraries or anything else. The state legislature has focused on tax reductions at local government expense. When the state cuts our state funding, it's seemingly without any concern about what we'll have to do to make up the shortfall. With each rollback, municipal budgets get more squeezed. In some parts of Scott County, parks and libraries are on the line. Maybe the best outcome for *Libraries Together* is to protect a valuable resource from future damage, as the state tries to balance its budget on the backs of localities.

"There's more demand from the public for services. We can't provide those services without sharing assets and ideas."

Member, Blue Ribbon Committee

Library trustees

The public libraries in Scott County already collaborate, and that collaboration is working. It would be practical to move forward with more collaboration, but it should be done slowly rather than rushed. There are several important new opportunities for collaborative projects, such as a shared pool of temporary staff and agreeing on hours of operation. The possibilities have not nearly been exhausted.

One key action step will be for the boards of trustees to build the same kind of relationships with one another that the directors have already built. Trustees haven't had an open dialogue, and haven't communicated their plans and strategies to one another. It will be important to share information so that each board can take what the other libraries are doing into account.

Collaboration should not be mandated. It should happen because people in the local community say it should happen. It would be difficult for state government to force the libraries to collaborate, but with additional funding the state could encourage more collaboration.

Library directors

There is strong support for collaboration, while recognizing that it won't be totally painless. After all, it took time to build trust among the four directors, and we still have to be sure to voice our concerns and talk through differences of opinion.

Belonging to PALS, which gives us the benefits of a federated system, has been a

huge help to the libraries. Each library has seen major cost savings from the services that PALS provides, and it would be great to see the other libraries in Iowa have access to consortia like this. Experience with PALS has increased our commitment to collaboration as well as our collaborative skills.

There are a variety of opportunities for new collaborative efforts. We're interested in informal collaborations, but we would also like to develop new ways to share resources. 28E agreements would be an effective way to take collaboration to the next level and make it legally binding. The agreements could allow us to more wisely spend our funds and allow even small libraries to offer a range of services.

Another benefit is that 28E agreements are flexible. We could use them to enter into agreements for specific types of activity or, perhaps, for most library services. A major benefit is that we can still collect tax dollars separately, so we can provide services together but maintain independent funding streams.

Library staff members

There is some skepticism of collaboration for collaboration's sake. Collaboration can be very difficult in practice. For example, there was the time libraries hired a joint staff person to work on a collaborative project. Even though her responsibilities were very carefully defined, she still heard complaints that she spent more time at one library than another. She didn't know who was giving her her marching orders. Collaboration is not a panacea.

Libraries themselves should be the catalyst for collaboration and that collaboration should not be imposed from outside. We acknowledge that we can be territorial and reluctant to change sometimes. We would prefer not to be pushed too far, too fast.

"We (trustees) haven't had an open dialogue. We haven't talked about plans and strategies and about where we're going with our library...The first step is to tell each other what we're doing."

Library Trustee

One benefit of collaboration is that it allows each library to keep its identity. One concern is that, because the libraries are so different, collaboration may not be as beneficial for some as for others.

We are concerned that if collaboration saves money, state legislators will use those savings as an excuse to cut even more library funding than they have already.

Library Friends and Foundation members

Collaboration could strengthen library services in the entire county. Our community has realized, after many years, that economic development in one community benefits another. Collaboration builds on our culture of working together. Collaboration could bring benefits in terms of public relations and philanthropic funding, as well as allowing libraries to offer more services.

Collaboration is not without its problems, of course. It could be difficult to work

out joint purchasing agreements, and people might not like it if they couldn't get a book or a seat at a program at their home library because the library was serving more non-residents.

It is a major benefit that collaboration would allow libraries to have independent funding streams. The various communities have different standards. Local control gives each community the opportunity to pay for a higher level of services. If everyone pays the same, it doesn't give a local library the chance to excel and it could encourage mediocrity.

Mary Wegner, Iowa's state librarian

It would be very difficult to move from independent municipal libraries directly to a unified library. The middle ground – collaboration – holds the most promise for changes in the short-term. 28E agreements can be a useful tool in creating new, more formal types of collaborative projects.

The state library should help lead the charge toward more collaboration, but we don't have the funding that would allow us to do more than offer encouragement. Compare that to the role the state has taken in encouraging public schools to restructure, where the state provides the kind of funding for schools that allows it to wield both a carrot and a stick. When the state provides less than five percent of the budgets of Iowa libraries, it's difficult for it to make demands.

"How much further can we go with (collaboration)? That's a question we can't answer until we collaborate...The end product of collaboration, I think, is that it shows we need to unify."

Resident of Scott County

The reality is that libraries already collaborate more than most government entities. Any Iowan can check out a book from almost any public library in the state, but we'd never expect one city to provide free snow removal services to another.

Benefits and disadvantages of collaboration

| Benefits | Disadvantages |
|--|--|
| Increased efficiency is possible through coordinating and sharing services. | Some aspects, like administrative functions and governance, would be performed more efficiently if the libraries unified. |
| Better programs and services are possible as library staff members share knowledge and identify the niches they want their libraries to fill. | Collaboration takes time. Libraries have cut staffing to the bone, and finding time to collaborate may be difficult. Busy trustees, too, may find it hard to make time for additional meetings. |
| Standardized policies and procedures will reduce confusion among library patrons. | Because the library funding and operations remain independent, collaboration doesn't solve the problem of uneven levels of reciprocal borrowing. |
| The four libraries can undertake county-wide projects together that no one library would be able to handle on its own. | It takes longer to make some decisions when all four libraries must come to agreement. |
| Philanthropic funders are likely to spend more for collaborative efforts, while individual donors will continue to support their local libraries. | Turf issues don't disappear. It can be difficult to think about the good of the group if it seems to conflict with your own library's interests. |
| The four libraries can conduct joint training in subjects that aren't offered through PALS, and some training could also be open to local nonprofit staff members. | Funders, the state, library trustees and city/county administrators judge the success of library programs by the number of people who attend. Joint programming can be a barrier to each library making their numbers. |
| Collaborative projects like joint programs will create positive publicity. | The individual libraries may receive less recognition for joint programs. |
| Collaboration in areas like database purchasing and collection development recognizes that library users travel from library to library. | The patrons of each library have their own unique characteristics, and some may feel that their needs are going unmet in favor of one-size-fits-all programs and services. |
| | Each library has a different union for staff members as well as different pay scales. For collaboration to be most effective, it will require that all staff members belong to the same union and have the same pay scale. |

Potential action steps

The libraries would need to accomplish a variety of steps if they are to take on major collaborative efforts. More detail is available in the *Libraries Together* report on collaboration. Among the steps:

- Periodically convene staff members to create a plan of action for collaborative projects. The plan should build on opportunities identified during the first phase of *Libraries Together*. Staff members should prepare recommendations for use during joint strategic planning cycles.
- Periodically convene the four boards of trustees to develop a joint strategic plan. The boards should share their libraries' strategic plans, identify shared threats and opportunities, and create, implement and evaluate a plan of action to achieve the most important outcomes.
- Create a plan of action for dealing with salary disparities and different union contracts.
- Meet with city/county administrators to learn more about the ins and outs of 28E agreements.

The library staff and trustees have a clear sense of what would need to be done in order to manage the logistics of collaboration. In addition, we suggest several steps that the libraries could take to build public support.

Work with municipal governments to inform the public about the impact of tax capacity

Many members of the public had a difficult time distinguishing between the taxes paid per capita and taxes paid as a percentage of the value of their property. It can be even more difficult for laypersons to understand the impact of a community's tax capacity on how much they pay. It is a difficulty we have found among citizens of our own communities and it was not a surprise.

In general, we found an assumption that communities that pay more per capita for libraries would pay less if the property tax rate were the same in every community. Some Bettendorf residents, for example, expressed surprise that the amount they pay in taxes would actually *increase* if everyone paid the same tax rate. (This assumes the four libraries would receive the same total dollars as they do today.)

The reason for this is tax capacity. Communities with higher property values, typically suburban areas, can raise more money with a lower tax rate than communities with lower property values, typically urban and rural areas. Say, for example, that city govern-

"I have a lot of faith in our directors if they're willing to push this and look for things we can do together."

Library Trustee

ment needs to raise \$10 in taxes. If the property within that city's boundaries is worth \$1,000, the city only needs to take one percent of the value of the property. If the property is worth just \$500, the city must take two percent of the property's value, double the rate of the more affluent community. If everyone pays a rate of two percent, government will be able to raise twice the amount of money in the first community as it will in the second.

Another issue is public understanding of the role of tax incentives like TIF. As one government leader suggested, release of the figures about library taxes paid per average property could provide an opportunity for government to explain why it has chosen to use tax incentives. We would encourage local governments to share information and explain their reasons for using TIF to their citizens.

The more citizens understand the realities that affect the taxes they pay, the better. Without that understanding, libraries and municipalities may be weakened by incorrect assumptions.

Inform the public about what library services cost

Several participants in the public meetings talked about how they choose to patronize a particular library. Their language showed that they believed they had done a favor for the library they selected, even when they did not pay taxes to that library.

If libraries operated like bookstores, where usage generates revenue, this point of view would be perfectly valid. Because libraries operate largely outside the laws of supply and demand that govern for-profit businesses, it is not. In fact, as a public institution primarily funded by local tax dollars, a library receives about the same funding regardless of use.

Unlike other city services like snow removal and trash pick-up, the public views library services as being appropriately free for everyone, no matter where you live. The library profession has promoted this point of view by speaking in terms of "free public libraries" and by reciprocal borrowing agreements that lead customers to view every library as their own. In addition, because local libraries receive their income from their jurisdiction's general fund, each taxpayer does not see exactly what he or she pays for library services, as is the case when libraries are funded through a dedicated property tax.

When tax dollars decline and tough choices must be made, it is especially important that the public has a realistic understanding of the costs and benefits of library services. Library staff members talked about the high percentage of people who sign up for a free program and then don't show up. They thought that maybe people appreciate programs less because they're free, and the same may be true for other library services. Knowing the value of services could lead citizens to appreciate them even more, and to be more prepared

"People who live in the small towns, a big hunk of their property taxes go to the library system. One town I know gets only a bookmobile for a couple of hours a week. I think they would prefer to not pay the tax and to drive to Eldridge for the library."

Resident of Scott County

to make wise decisions about them.

Engage the public in pushing for adequate state funding

Nationwide, libraries have worked hard to shield their patrons from the impact of budget cuts. They have bent over backwards to do more with less and to cut funds for services that, while they may be important to the functioning of the library, are not as obvious to patrons. An unintended consequence is that libraries have reduced the political will available to push for adequate state funding.

Let's take reciprocal borrowing for example. The public doesn't understand the steps it takes and the associated costs whenever a person borrows an item from the local library. We found that many members of the public were resistant to the idea that the average costs per circulation were around \$4. One person pegged the cost at closer to a quarter. Many seemed surprised that there was any cost at all.

This is not to say that the public doesn't value the privilege of borrowing from other libraries. Members of the public highly value the ability to have access to other libraries and are eager to offer their own libraries to others. In general, while the idea of having to pay to use another library drew a very negative response, there was an equally strong commitment to sharing their own library's resources.

Iowa libraries could link the public's strong support for reciprocal borrowing with the political will to increase state funding for Open Access. The first step would be for libraries to agree that underfunding of Open Access is a problem for them all, not just net lenders. The next step would be to agree upon a fair cost-per-circulation payment. Based on what we heard from the public, we believe it would be wise to use marginal cost. Marginal cost is the cost to serve non-residents that are incurred after the building and utilities are paid for, which would be necessary even if no non-residents were served.

"I appreciate being able to use any library I go to, and if there would be a charge, that would be wicked to have to pay to get a book.."

Resident of Scott County

The third step is to implement a campaign to build public support for Open Access. The campaign should communicate the steps it takes for each item to circulate and the cost per circulation. The fourth step is to work with boards and citizens to advocate for that funding. For this step to be effective, the libraries would need to agree on their bottom line for funding and be willing to withdraw from the Open Access reciprocal borrowing agreement if that bottom line was not met.

The libraries in Scott, Muscatine and Clinton counties would, of course, need to negotiate a workable arrangement with PALS to allow them to continue to participate in PALS if the Open Access reciprocal borrowing agreements were put on hold.

The forecast for one unified library

The Scenario

By 2010, the four public libraries have moved towards becoming one unified library. It was a difficult decision to take this giant step, and the resulting turmoil made staff and trustees wonder at times whether they had moved too far, too fast.

The catalyst for unification was the belief that all citizens of Scott County should have the same quality of service at the same tax rate, and the recognition that a dedicated property tax was the best hope for providing stable and sufficient funding. If we were starting from scratch, leaders reasoned, we would have one administrative unit with multiple library buildings serving the entire county rather than four independent libraries. We should do what's right for the long-term despite the short-term difficulties.

Library and community leaders considered a variety of ways to create one unified library. Their preferred choice was to form a library district that would allow the library to levy a property tax and which would have the potential to include more than just one county.

Rather than try to pass new legislation allowing library districts, though, local leaders and state legislators decided it would be more practical to rework the county library law to allow a property tax. County libraries like the Scott County Library System have taxing authority, but state law requires a per-capita tax, which is considered regressive, rather than a property tax. State legislators viewed this as a way to encourage wider units of service throughout Iowa, and quickly approved the revision. They added to the law a requirement that the public approve the initial library tax levy and any increases.

“A lot of patrons already think we’re one library. They don’t know, or maybe care, that it’s four different organizations. So long as they get what they need, that’s all that matters to them.”

Library Staff Member

The public was less cooperative. Having voiced support for collaboration rather than one unified library, some initially felt betrayed by the decision to move forward with unification.

Residents of Bettendorf, in particular, felt that unification was a mistake. They were much less concerned about a slight increase in taxes than they were about the possibility of reduced services. Bettendorf citizens were willing to pay to create an excellent library and to share it with non-residents. They were not willing to send money outside their community or to see their library quality decline.

People who used the libraries heavily were concerned that the character of their

favorite library would be lost, while those who used libraries less were not concerned about a loss of identity.

The libraries worked together to answer citizen concerns and to explain the benefits of unification to the public. The public meetings initially drew people who strongly opposed unification. With time, however, more moderate voices began to be heard.

If the libraries thought the public was initially hostile to the idea of unification, it was nothing compared to the staff response. Staff members were concerned about losing their jobs, exhausted by the relentless focus on cost-cutting and efficiency, and worn out by the demand for rapid, extensive changes. Attitudes began to shift, though, as staff members saw the potential benefits of having a dedicated stream of funding that the unified library could count on and control. When the unified board of trustees promised to only cut staff through attrition, that also helped allay concerns.

“(Unification) has the biggest advantage in terms of cost savings, but that doesn’t mean it’s right..”

Resident of Scott County

Local elected leaders didn’t enjoy the controversy, but they did appreciate the fact that moving libraries out of municipal budgets could ease the strain caused by state funding cuts. Some municipalities were being forced to cut library funding at a rate that would have damaged the libraries’ ability to serve the public. Elected officials saw the separate taxing district as way to save an important community asset.

The first referendum was a partial victory. Residents of Davenport, concerned about deep funding cuts, voted to join the Scott County Library System, but residents of Bettendorf and LeClaire did not. At the same time, residents of Davenport and the Scott County Library System approved a property tax to fund the unified library.

Mayors and county government officials within the Scott County Library System strongly supported the move to a property tax, which helped assure success despite the fact that it was a tax increase. Another element of success was the work the Scott County system had done to upgrade its policies and procedures and to improve its service to the public.

The four directors and boards of trustees continue to meet to plan their next steps. Everyone agrees that another referendum should wait until the unification of Scott County and Davenport has a chance to prove itself.

The context for unification in Scott County

Around the country, as in Iowa, elected and government officials are looking at opportunities to restructure government in order to reduce duplication and achieve greater efficiency.

A 2002 review of national library data conducted by Tom Hennen showed that wider units of service did produce better libraries, although more research is needed to provide a more definitive answer. The key was economies of scale, and the ability to reduce

the total time spent on administrative, budgeting, technical service, acquisitions, and politics.

Another benefit of unified libraries, specifically library districts with a dedicated property tax, is that they no longer must compete for funds with other city services and can go directly to voters for taxes. Library districts generally have more and more stable funding than other types of unified libraries. The other types, such as multi-jurisdictional libraries, continue to receive tax dollars from the towns and cities in their area. They receive less funding than their counterparts because governments tend to pass the buck; the government that pays the least sets the standard.

Some unified libraries are experimenting with different ways to allocate tax dollars within a district than the traditional per-capita allocation. The Santa Clara County Library, for example, allocates salary budgets to each library using a formula based on circulation, population, and the assessed value of the community.

Funding can be used to draw a more direct line between quality of service and dollars, and to help push decision making as close to the customer as possible. One model would require that the board of a unified library develop a long-range plan that sets the stage, but also allows branch managers a large degree of autonomy. The plan indicates the local and size of buildings in each community and provides each library building with a base budget. The board would require certain standard levels of performance for staffing levels, hours open, and so forth, in exchange for the base budget. Beyond the base budget and basic standards, however, the board would reward libraries for achieving levels of excellence as defined by circulation, visits, and demonstrated customer satisfaction. The combination of base level standards and rewards for exemplary performance has the potential to assure ever-improving service.

“My concern is that a unified system would not be equitable. If you live in the city, you can’t imagine what it’s like to live in a small community. My concern is that they would not understand.”

Resident of Scott County

A significant trend nationwide is for affluent communities to withdraw from county-wide or regional libraries or from federated systems. (Because they typically provide adequate and stable funding, the trend is rare within library districts.) Citizens in affluent communities have chosen to secede or threaten to secede rather than send tax dollars away or use their tax dollars to provide reciprocal borrowing for non-residents. Often these secessions are prompted by budget cuts at the state and local level. Secessions also happen when towns are dissatisfied with the quality of service they receive for the amount they pay. If they can afford to open an independent library, they sometimes choose to do so.

Buildings and capital expenses are also impediments to unification. Individual donors remain far more inclined to give to an independent library in their home town than to a branch of a larger organization.

Perspectives on unification

Members of the public (based on forums and surveys)

Unification is too big a first step to take. It is important to move gradually and to start with smaller changes through collaboration. Later, it could make sense to revisit the idea of unification, but let's get some experience under our belt first by collaborating.

The most important thing is quality of service, not cost savings. We are not eager to pay more for library services, but neither do we need to pay less. Libraries operate efficiently already and draconian cuts in staff and services would serve nobody well. If unification was done purely as a cost-cutting measure, it would be a mistake.

It is embarrassing that Iowa libraries have to turn to Illinois for support. The state does a poor job of funding its libraries and, given that, it's really not fair for the state to ask libraries to economize unless the state is willing to provide some incentives.

What is most worrisome about unification is that it could take away from the individual character and personality of each library. People in different parts of the county have different needs and expectations for library service.

Unification could cause the libraries to become homogeneous and it could lead to the "lowest common denominator" of service. The stronger libraries might have to reduce their standards so everyone would be equal.

Many of the potential benefits of unification, like coordinated hours or joint long-range planning, could be achieved just as well through collaboration without changing how libraries are funded and governed. The four boards do a good job of connecting the libraries to their communities. One unified board might not represent the interests of each

part of the county, although it might be better able to serve the county as a whole.

Unification would provide one major benefit. If the unified library used the library district model, it would have its own revenue stream and wouldn't have to compete with other city services for funding. As local governments struggle to meet their budgets, it may be inevitable that libraries take this step so they are better positioned for the future. Having libraries operate separate from government isn't a problem.

Some support the idea of a county-wide tax because having everyone pay the same tax rate would be fairer than the current system. Overall, there is about equal support for a dedicated county-wide library tax as there is for keeping the current funding system. People who visit no library or a library other than their home library are most supportive of the county-wide tax, while those who visit their home library most often would like to keep the system as it is.

Governance and taxation are viewed as two distinct issues. Only about a third of people who answered a survey said they would pay additional taxes if libraries were oper-

"It would be a tremendously difficult task to make (unification) happen the way our communities are today."

"It would require a drastic change in how we look at local county government."

Library Trustees

ated county-wide, while more than 70 percent said they were willing to pay more if they paid the same tax rate as everybody else.

Blue Ribbon Committee

While there is agreement that collaboration is the best first step, we're not ready to close the door on the possibility of one unified library. Collaboration may not be able to get us far enough along and there could be good reasons to step out of our comfort zone and unify. Conducting planning at the county-wide level could help with things like siting libraries, and we may already have achieved the major cost savings possible through collaboration because of PALS.

While efficiency is important, it is not as important as maintaining the quality of service. The major concerns are that the libraries would become too homogeneous under unification, that the quality of service in Bettendorf would decline, and that the rural areas would get short shrift because the way of life there isn't understood.

Mayors and city/county administrators

At the state level, there's definitely a push to force regionalism to happen, and the reality is that the global marketplace has us as one region competing against other regions. If the state were to take a one-size-fits-all approach and force consolidation on local communities, though, that would be a problem.

The Scott County area already provides shared services, especially in back office functions. It has one wastewater treatment plant, one convention and visitor's bureau, and one solid waste commission, among other examples. Consolidating back-office functions can save money and improve quality, but it can be much more difficult to consolidate front-office functions. While the area hasn't seen much merging of governments, it has been very cooperative and collaborative.

Nobody elected us to lower their level of service. As elected and government officials, we measure success by how much we improve service. While there is pressure for regionalism, it must be tempered by the recognition of why people choose to live in one or another part of the county. People who choose to live in Eldridge or Davenport or Bettendorf do so because they have a certain expectation of the service level and the amount of taxes they will pay for that level of service. There may be limits to regionalism if it means that citizen expectations are not met.

We have no major objections to the idea of a library district that is separate from municipal government. The libraries already are governed separately from each municipality and we don't see our library as being under our control.

Having a separate tax for libraries brings benefits and disadvantages. The public

"When is it time to step out of our box? While I'm concerned about losing our identity, I think it may be time we step out of our comfort zone to unify."

Member, Blue Ribbon Committee

might view the idea with skepticism because they might see it as a dodge to allow government to raise taxes. The Davenport referendum for the new branches just barely passed, with 51 percent of the vote, and we don't know whether voters would approve a new tax for libraries. Governments would like the dedicated tax, though, because it would help them avoid the maximum caps that the state legislature has imposed.

While it could work to have other municipalities vote to become part of the Scott County Library System, the big barrier is the per-capita tax. The per-capita tax is onerous and regressive and should be changed to a property tax to make it more fair.

Overall, a unified district could be a net positive in the long run for elected officials, but it would be a challenge to get it enacted. It would be nice if you were the elected official following the group that voted this in. But if you're the elected official at that time, then on comes the storm.

"This library has a lot of community support, a strong volunteer group. To reduce the current level of services here, at the expense of this library, to raise it elsewhere, would not be well-received in Bettendorf."

Member, Blue Ribbon Committee

Library trustees

If the county was starting from scratch, a unified library would make the most sense. It could lead to more efficiency and wouldn't necessarily affect the quality of service. But at this stage, it would be politically impossible to unify. Urban and rural people use libraries differently; the various cities and rural areas of Scott County are too different to make unification a viable option. In addition, because the state does not support unification, the state-level barriers to unifying would be very difficult to overcome.

In addition, we are skeptical that the public would support a change in the way it was taxed and we are concerned that a unified system would take away the individual personalities of each library.

Some of the issues that might have pushed the libraries toward unification are well on the way to being solved. The new Davenport branches, for example, will reduce or eliminate uneven levels of reciprocal borrowing.

Library directors

It would not be wise to move directly to a unified system, particularly if it would require a vote of the public. Eventually, though, a unified system could bring with it some major benefits. It would reduce administrative costs and reduce per-capita costs for some parts of the county because the tax burden would be spread over a larger area. A unified system could make it more difficult to form new independent libraries. And, while the public might be more comfortable with collaboration, many already assume that the four libraries are one. Most citizens expect seamless service no matter which library receives their tax dollars.

There are two options for unified libraries currently allowed by Iowa law. The three municipal libraries could choose to join the Scott County Library System, which would require a vote in the three municipalities but wouldn't require a change in state law. The per-capita tax, though, is inequitable and we couldn't support using it.

Iowa law also allows formation of multi-jurisdictional libraries, which is our least-favored option. The law currently doesn't detail the formula that would determine how much each municipality would contribute. Until that is changed, the option can't be used. In other states, multi-jurisdictional libraries typically receive little funding because governments share responsibility for funding. In addition, using this option would require a vote of all residents in the county.

The best option for libraries would be that of forming a library district, which would have taxing authority and could go directly to voters for changes in the library levy. A district would 'own' its money and would be better able to manage it, and the district could expand to include more than just one county. The siting of libraries then wouldn't have to be based on municipal boundaries. It would be important to push decision-making down to the lowest possible level in order to keep the unique nature of each library and to assure a level of local control.

"Right now, the library competes with garbage pick-up. If it was given a separate system, it would be easier to stand on its own merits."

Resident of Scott County

Some issues deserve consideration. It would be very important to Bettendorf residents that the quality of service not decline. LeClaire residents, who recently voted to separate from the county system, would likely be reluctant to join a unified system. The rural areas would likely see more centralized service under a unified library, which could raise concerns in some towns.

Library Friends and Foundation members

Having everyone pay the same for library services would be a major disadvantage to unification. It is more fair that each community should decide what it pays for libraries than that they should have to all pay the same, as the library is more important to some communities than it is to others.

The economies of scale could be an advantage, but improving services is a higher goal than saving money. Unification could also encourage some communities to have higher standards for their libraries and to be willing to pay more for library services, particularly if libraries could go directly to voters to approve taxes.

Library staff members

It's not unusual for patrons to assume that the libraries in Scott County are already part of one library. They sometimes even refer to another library as a branch of their own. People expect to go to any library and be served, and unification would build on that. But unifica-

tion would be a problem because people are also used to each library having its own character and its own strengths. People know they can go to Davenport for history and genealogy and to Bettendorf for best-sellers, for example. Patrons would not like to see all the libraries become the same.

Unification might be more efficient in some ways, but it's hard to see how it could reduce staffing levels. The libraries are already at bare-bones staffing as it is. If there were assurances that no jobs would be lost through unification, it would be easier to support it, but we still wouldn't assume there would be cost savings. In general, we are exhausted from all the changes we have undergone already in order to cut costs and provide better service. The thought of going through more and bigger changes, well, we would have to be convinced that it would make equally major improvements in service to patrons.

"Everybody paying the same tax rate would be fair. People are going to have to understand they're going to have to put up the money. It's an investment in children, in what the future's going to be."

Resident of Scott County

Mary Wegner, Iowa state librarian

While collaboration is the best first step, I would like to see Iowa pass legislation that would allow the creation of library districts. That's unlikely to happen, though, because it would run counter to a trend at the state level. The state legislature appears to be increasing the level of involvement and authority of the state as it concerns the ability of local governments to collect and spend money.

Benefits and disadvantages of unification

| Benefits | Disadvantages |
|--|--|
| Greater efficiency, as governance, administration, technical services and other costs are reduced. | Tax rates for suburbs typically rise, and funds may go toward serving other parts of town. |
| Library districts, with a dedicated tax, no longer must compete for funds with other city services. Municipalities can use the funds previously spent on libraries for other purposes. | If the quality of service is inadequate, communities that can afford to start an independent library may do so. |
| Library districts can go directly to voters for tax increases. Library districts generally receive more funding than other types of libraries. | Libraries must provide services, such as payroll or janitorial, that their governments previously provided. There is an increased cost if government didn't bill the libraries for support services. |
| Philanthropic funders may be more likely to provide funds to one unified library. | Individual donors are less likely to support the branch of a unified library than they are an independent library. |
| Reciprocal borrowing is no longer a bone of contention because the unified library owns all materials. | Heavy library users fear that the distinct character of each library will be lost. |
| Iowa law already allows a county library with taxing authority, and Scott County already has one in operation. A change to the property tax would make it workable. | A multi-jurisdictional library, where each city provides funding, receives fewer dollars. The government that pays the least sets the tax rate because nobody wants to pay more than his share. |
| Some citizens view having everyone pay the same tax rate as being more fair than the current system. | Library districts may be viewed as "another level of government" by citizens, who may also oppose any new tax. |
| A unified system would allow decisions to be made that would benefit the county as a whole. | Moving to a unified library would require a vote of the public, which would be expensive and time-consuming. |
| Library districts can roll over funds remaining in their account to the next year, which aids in planning and budgeting. | The public has indicated that it is not ready for a unified library and would prefer collaboration instead, at least as a start. |
| A library district could expand to include additional Iowa counties. | The cost to transition from independent to a unified library would be considerable. |
| Library staff members would be paid at the same rate for comparable work. | The action steps required to make the transition would be time-consuming and politically sensitive. |

Potential action steps for three ways to unify

The *Libraries Together* report on unification contains action steps that the libraries would need to take to transition from independent libraries to a unified library. Before that, the libraries would need to secure changes in state law and voter approval in order to unify.

County system: If the municipal libraries decided to join the Scott County Library System, they would need to take several steps, including:

- Make the case to the public about the benefits of unification and find ways to address public concerns.
- Work with the state library and state legislators to change Iowa law governing county libraries. The current law requires a per-capita tax, which should be changed to a property tax.
- Voters within Davenport, Bettendorf and LeClaire would need to vote to join the Scott County Library System.

Multi-jurisdictional library: If the four public libraries chose to form a multi-jurisdictional library, they would need to:

- Make the case to the public about the benefits of unification and find ways to address public concerns.
- Work with the state library and state legislators to modify the law governing multi-jurisdictional libraries so that it contains a workable funding formula.
- All voters within the county would need to vote to join the multi-jurisdictional library.

“If unification enhances the services to the disadvantaged, I see benefits. If unification reduces services to small communities, I’m opposed.”

Resident of Scott County

Library district: If the four public libraries chose to form a library district, they would need to:

- Identify the benefits of creating a new state law to allow library districts rather than choosing to modify the existing law governing county libraries.
- Make the case to the public about the benefits of unification, and find ways to address public concerns.
- Work with the state library and state legislators to pass a law allowing library districts.
- All voters within the county would need to vote to join the library district.

The forecast for more independent libraries

The Scenario

By 2010, the four public libraries of Scott County have strengthened their positions as independent libraries. The libraries reasoned that the public values the unique characteristics of each library and that any changes that would make them more similar would be unpopular. So instead, each library focused on working internally to strengthen its ability to provide a complete range of programs and services to its own patrons.

All four libraries continue to belong to PALS because each receives services at a much lower cost than it could afford to provide independently. Because PALS requires libraries to take part in its reciprocal borrowing agreement, county residents can continue to borrow materials from other libraries free of charge. In addition, the new Davenport branches reduced the reciprocal borrowing pressures between Davenport and Bettendorf.

The rest of Iowa has experienced the national trend for affluent communities to withdraw from reciprocal borrowing agreements. When several large suburban libraries withdrew from the state's Open Access program, citing low payments, the Bettendorf library felt the pressure. After being hit with increased demands from Iowa libraries on top of the demands from an expanded PALS service area in Illinois, Bettendorf withdrew from Open Access and now only loans to the three Iowa counties included in PALS.

While libraries continue to serve all county residents and staff members serve on some PALS committees, that is about the extent of their working together. They aren't opposed to collaboration; they simply don't have the time. The three municipal libraries are focused on staying afloat, as cuts in state funding have forced their governments to slash funding to libraries and parks. With its higher tax capacity, Bettendorf is in a better position to weather the storm, but even it has had to reduce hours, cut staffing, and eliminate some popular services and programs.

The Scott County Library System is in a more stable position because it has taxing authority. The regressive per-capita tax, though, continues to cause problems. The library system supported local mayors when they lobbied the state to allow a property tax instead. When legislators failed to change the law, some mayors began talking about jointly opening an independent library.

Philanthropic funding is also a problem. Local funders were tired of funding four

"I think local control is fair. It gives the local community the opportunity to pay more for a higher level of service. To say everyone should pay the same, it guarantees mediocrity. It doesn't give local libraries the chance to excel."

Member, Library Friends

different libraries and were eager to support collaborative or unified library services. When the libraries chose to remain independent, one consequence was a sharp drop in philanthropic funds. LeClaire, the newest and smallest library, was first to see the effects, but Davenport was the hardest hit. Its programming was almost entirely dependent on philanthropic funding; without it, only the very basics remain.

On the positive side, individual donors and local businesses have stepped up their support. When they saw their libraries were struggling, people joined the Friends and foundations groups and donated money at a higher rate than ever before. While individual support hasn't replaced the lost tax and philanthropic funding, the libraries have benefited from increased local commitment.

After losing philanthropic funding, one library began charging non-residents a fee to attend its programs. The library reasoned that most of the funding for its limited programs came from local citizens and businesses, who shouldn't be asked to underwrite non-residents. The other libraries soon followed suit. When they found that the people who paid in advance were much more likely to attend, the libraries began charging their own residents a small fee, as well.

Initially out of desperation, the Davenport Public Library began to embrace the idea of earned income. It conducted a survey of Davenport One members to find out what services would benefit them and what they would be willing to pay. It found a fairly profitable niche serving the business community with research, web searching and other classes and services. It has used those fees to underwrite other programming.

Still, the result overall is that the libraries in more affluent communities with high tax capacity, like Bettendorf and, increasingly, LeClaire, have been better able to maintain library quality than those in communities with lower tax capacity, like Davenport and the rural areas of Scott County.

Because the public is accustomed to independent libraries and because reciprocal borrowing is still in effect, there has been no real controversy about the direction the libraries have chosen to take. Some are perplexed that libraries didn't choose the option of collaboration, but most citizens are mainly concerned about the decline in services due to funding cuts. There is the sense among local civic and elected leaders, though, that an important opportunity has been lost. They had looked to the library directors as an example of leaders willing to work together across boundaries, and were disappointed when the libraries turned inward.

Library leaders and elected officials hope that as the economy improves, all the libraries can regain the ground that they have lost. Citizens are beginning to talk about a county-wide quality-of-life tax to replace government funding for popular services like libraries and parks.

"We want them to come. We want them to use our library. It's not their fault they chose the more convenient library."

"We understand that no library is only serving its own residents."

Library Trustees

The context for independence in Scott County

The history and tradition of Iowa is steeped in the concept of local control, with each town and city in charge of its own destiny. The effects of that are seen in Iowa's libraries.

While state law allows three kinds of libraries, the only option with an adequate funding structure is that of municipal libraries. All but two libraries in the state are municipal; the others are county library systems. Iowa has many more very small libraries than the national average, and more than 80 percent of the state's library directors have no previous library experience.

The state has regional library service areas that were intended to assist libraries. Most of their work revolves around providing one-on-one training for inexperienced library directors. Neither they nor the state library have the funding necessary to provide services like automation, van delivery and shared databases that are available from Illinois consortia. Only three counties, including Scott, have access to an Illinois-based consortium, in this case the Prairie Area Library System [PALS].

Each of the four local libraries has distinct strengths and serves distinct populations.

The Bettendorf Public Library serves an affluent suburb and offers bestsellers and well-reviewed new books, as well as meeting rooms that have allowed the library to serve as a community center.

The Davenport Public Library serves the urban core with well-attended children's programming, and it serves the region with its historical, genealogical and special collections.

The Scott County Library System provides eight branches and a bookmobile to a large service area that includes rural and small-town residents. It provides a strong selection of materials for children and is beefing up its children's programming.

The town of LeClaire split from the Scott County Library System when a private citizen left a half-million dollars to the town on the condition that it opened an independent library. The LeClaire Community Library is a common meeting point for old-time residents as well as newcomers, and an example of best practices for small-town libraries.

Each library has a Friends group and a foundation. All four have conducted capital campaigns, two of them very recently and another is in the midst of a campaign.

"We want our patrons to have access to a full range of materials, so we have to let other people have access to ours."

Library Staff Member

Perspectives on independence

Members of the public (based on forums and surveys)

Each library has its own distinct character and its own special niche and that's very important. Library users travel, and no one library can meet every need. You may go to Eldridge for meeting space or a children's program, and when it's time for serious research, you

head to downtown Davenport. It's great that each library is different, because it reflects its community.

Local control makes each library more responsive to local citizens, and competition can encourage libraries to try harder. In addition, personal relationships with our hometown library staff members are important. Libraries shouldn't feel like Wal-Mart.

Still, when we think of what "local" means in terms of libraries, all of the public libraries in Scott County pretty much feel like our local library, no matter where we live. Local control may be less important these days than it used to be.

It's fair that communities that are willing to spend more money should get the extras. What each library provides will also fit with local expectations. A small library like LeClaire will have a different collection policy than a larger one like Bettendorf. A research library like Davenport will want more databases than one like Scott County, with a stronger emphasis on hobbies and personal interests.

While it might be fair to ask non-residents to pay to borrow materials, this would never fly. Charging non-residents would be a huge step backwards, like putting a toll-booth at the boundary of each community. The community has worked hard to build bridges and it shouldn't begin building walls instead.

"It's easy to say you want independence when you're living in Bettendorf or Davenport, but I drove in many times (from Scott County) to make sure my kids got what they needed."

Member, Library Friends

We're also used to being able to borrow from any library and it would be hard to give up the privilege. There is disagreement about whether it costs much of anything per circulation. A few would be willing to pay a fee, particularly if it was a flat annual fee, to use another library. The overwhelming majority, though, believe that libraries are an important public resource that should be available to all without charge. There would be strong opposition to having to pay, or asking others to pay, to borrow materials from any library.

The Blue Ribbon Committee

If the libraries were to be more independent, it would be a step backwards. It's important to think at a broader level and not try to offer the same service in each town and city. The small towns may be suffering from their desire for independence, because some could be fiscally stronger by contracting out for services.

The idea of charging for services shouldn't be dismissed out of hand. There are non-resident fishing licenses and people pay user fees for solid waste disposal; the precedent has been established.

Mayors and city/county administrators

Choosing to remain independent, or to become more independent, would be a mistake. Particularly after undertaking a study like this, to move backwards towards independence

would be fighting the trend. The state is pushing regionalism, but even more importantly our county is moving towards more collaboration and sharing of services. While independence would allow each library to continue to tailor its services to its community, collaboration would also offer that benefit and many others.

Library trustees

Becoming more independent would be a step backwards for our libraries. No library exists only to serve its own residents. The important thing is to encourage people to use any library, no matter whether it's their home library. While uneven levels of reciprocal borrowing can be seen as unfair, it's more important to make libraries available to everyone. Still, the state could help solve the problem by adequately funding Open Access.

Library directors

Libraries exist to serve their patrons and our patrons are best served when they have access to any library and when libraries work together. We prefer collaboration to independence because it allows us to do more for the public.

Libraries are also faced with a difficult situation when those values conflict with the reality that serving non-residents takes scarce resources. Whether it is non-residents borrowing best-sellers at Bettendorf or using the genealogical materials at Davenport, it costs money. We would rather make our resources available to everyone for free, but when non-resident use becomes too great we must balance our desire to share with the need to serve our own taxpayers.

“What you really want is to see some use of the library. People come in to use the computers or come in to read the paper. They may never check out a book, and they’re not going to pay the \$4.”

Resident of Scott County

Our preferred solution would be to have the Open Access program fully funded, and for the state to provide supplemental funding for regional resources like the special collections. The state is unlikely to step up, though, so it could be useful to consider other funding mechanisms.

Library Friends and Foundation members

It's easier to be in favor of increased independence if you're living in Bettendorf or Davenport, with more resources and stronger libraries. If there were barriers to non-resident use, residents of some communities would not be able to get what they need. Still, charging non-residents to borrow materials would provide another revenue stream and could encourage library users to be more responsible because people are more likely to abuse free services. The costs of reciprocal borrowing are worth taking seriously, but there should be a better way of recouping the cost than charging individual patrons.

Library staff members

Being more independent, creating barriers between libraries, would be a step backward. People feel an allegiance to libraries, even when it's not the library their taxes support.

Because our patrons benefit when they can use the resources of other libraries, we can't charge others when they want to use ours. Because we are used to providing services to everyone, that mindset would be difficult to change. As librarians, we want to serve whoever walks in the door.

In addition, initiatives like reciprocal enrollment in Scott County have set a precedent for not charging non-residents. We provide free public libraries. If we charge to use them, we may as well charge non-residents to use our public parks. Some citizens, though, might see charge non-residents as fair because it would mean that people who use a service pay for the service.

"The user fee concept, if you use it you pay for it, that's the way we need to pay solid waste fees, etc. I have a non-resident fishing license and wouldn't mind paying a non-resident library fee."

Resident of Scott County

Benefits and disadvantages of independence

| Benefits | Disadvantages |
|---|---|
| Each community has the library quality that it is willing to pay for. | Some communities have a stronger tax base. It's not fair when some pay a higher tax rate but can't raise as much money. |
| Each library has an incentive to focus on meeting the needs of its own residents and on developing its own strengths. | The trend in Scott County and in Iowa is for more collaboration and sharing of services. Independence bucks the trend. It's a step backwards. |
| So long as reciprocal borrowing is in effect, the public is likely to be satisfied. | The state's Open Access program pays a fraction of the cost – marginal or total – of reciprocal borrowing. |
| Citizens are much more willing to share their library with non-residents than they are to send tax dollars to support a library outside their home community. | Independent libraries are less efficient, as each duplicates services offered by the others. |
| Individual donors are more likely to support independent libraries. | Philanthropic funders are less likely to support independent libraries. |
| Independent libraries build pride and help keep small towns alive. | Independence encourages small towns to hold onto services like libraries that they can no longer afford to provide. |
| There are precedents for asking non-residents to pay for services their tax dollars don't support. | There are precedents for providing free services to non-residents. |

Potential action steps

Because this option is so similar to what the libraries are doing today, there are no particular action steps that the libraries would need to undertake. If anything, the libraries would cease some activities, such as monthly meetings of the library directors.

Appendix A

The Consensus Team

Consensus, a nonprofit organization based in Kansas City, Missouri, has more than 20 years of experience in conducting public policy research and in engaging citizens in finding solutions to public policy problems. Consensus conducts grants-funded work in metro Kansas City to fulfill its mission of putting the *public* in public policy. It is also a leader among nonprofit organizations in taking on entrepreneurial projects that fit within its mission.

Since its founding in 1984, Consensus has led a variety of projects that engaged citizens and improved its community.

- **Public policy studies.** In April of 2004, Consensus released its most recent policy white paper, “Making Book: Gambling on the Future of Our Libraries,” a study of the structure and funding system for metro Kansas City libraries. The paper has drawn praise from library leaders around the country. OCLC has selected it for a recommended reading list and *Public Libraries Quarterly* printed the executive summary in a recent issue. Consensus has engaged citizens in studying many other issues as well, among them minority business development, child care, school district governance, safe neighborhoods, funding for higher education. Its work has resulted in new or revised laws at the state and local level, and new or improved programs, as well as public education.
- **Deliberative public forums.** Consensus leads KC Forums, a high-profile civic engagement project that gives diverse citizens the chance to deliberate on a variety of important issues. KC Forums is guided by a team of twelve leading nonprofit organizations. In October, Consensus was co-convenor with our local public television station of “By the People,” a nationwide effort of MacNeil/Lehrer Productions and PBS. The day-long day of deliberation occurred in 17 cities and was the focus of a prime-time PBS broadcast. Consensus recently completed a shared learning agreement sponsored by the national Kettering Foundation, for which it also serves on a research work team.

In addition, Consensus led a regional visioning project called Compass, was the first organization to utilize the “future search” process for a community, and spearheaded the creation of the Promise Project, which provided training for youths and adults and board placements for young people.

Consensus has a regional and growing national reputation for being neutral, thorough, principled and skillful in engaging the public. It is led by an active working board with representation from several professions and major corporations.

The Consensus team working on Libraries Together combines expertise in civic engagement, communications and survey research with expertise in library operations.

Jennifer Wilding, project director

Jennifer Wilding was the author of *Making Book: Gambling on the Future of Our Libraries*, a Consensus white paper about the structure and funding of libraries in metro Kansas City. Her work, released in April 2004, has been praised by library directors across the country and was included in an OCLC recommended reading list.

Wilding combines an understanding of library structure and funding with broad knowledge of public policy and 20 years of experience writing for the public. In addition, she is a recognized leader in civic engagement. She directs KC Forums for Consensus, which uses the National Issues Forums process to engage citizens on local issues. Wilding's work has led to two research agreements with the Kettering Foundation and to the opportunity for Consensus to serve as co-convenor of PBS "By the People" day of deliberation events.

Thomas J. Hennen, Jr.

Hennen has been a practicing librarian for almost 30 years. He is presently the director of Waukesha County Federated Library System in Wisconsin, and previously directed library systems elsewhere in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The Waukesha County Federated Library System has won five National Association of Counties Achievement Awards in the last two years, for innovative programs and long-range planning efforts. Hennen is currently the chair of the Wisconsin Library Association Library Development and Legislation committee.

Hennen is the author of Hennens' American Public Library ratings (HAPLR), which uses data provided by 9,000 public libraries to create comparative rankings. The rankings have gained media notices in hundreds of communities since their first publication in *American Libraries* magazine in January of 1999. Hennen has published more than 40 articles on a wide range of topics, including library futures, standards and accounting. His book for Neal-Schuman, *Hennen's Public Library Planner*, was published in April 2004.

Mary Jo Draper

Draper is principal of Mary Jo Draper Communications (WBE). She founded Draper Communications after 25 years as a print newspaper reporters and public radio talk show host and news director. Draper has worked with nonprofit groups, foundations and governmental clients on a variety of communication and planning projects.

Draper Communications was a principle contractor on the KC Safe City Initiative,

which involved more than 200 citizens and public safety professionals in a year-long planning process. At KCUR Radio, the metro Kansas City NPR affiliate, Draper served as director of a year-long project on health care for children, which was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Martha Kropf, Ph.D.

Martha Kropf is assistant professor of political science at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. She received her Ph.D. in political science from American University.

Dr. Kropf previously served as project coordinator for the University of Maryland Survey research Center, where she worked with all aspects of survey research, specializing in questionnaire design. She coordinated projects for clients such as the Harvard School of Public Health, the Maryland Department of Public Health, and the Prince George's County, MD, Public Schools. In 2004, Dr. Kropf and her students designed and implemented a public opinion survey for the Kansas City, Missouri, Public Library.

Mary Outwater, Ph.D.

Mary Outwater is the director of the Public Opinion Learning Laboratory at the University of Oklahoma, where she conducts surveys and analysis for government, non-profit, and academic clients. She also teaches various political science classes in the areas of political behavior and public opinion. Prior to coming to Oklahoma she earned her B.A. from California State University, Long Beach, and her Ph.D. in political science at Ohio State University with a specialization in survey research.