

Mid-Michigan Library League

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Randy Riley, State Librarian
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Dear Mr. Riley (Randy):

I have surveyed the eleven library cooperative directors in the state to see how many still have public libraries without an integrated library system/automation for circulation and the public catalog. I feel it is important for us to get the rest of the public libraries automated and on the MeLCat system for interlibrary loan so that the public can have some expectation of basic service when they enter a public library in Michigan. It has been a concern of mine that there is disparity that keeps growing due to lack of resources and libraries changing cooperatives, making “have” and “have-not” areas of the state.

From the responses I have garnered, I believe there are eight libraries that are not automated:

- Mid-Michigan Library League – one class III library and two class I libraries
- Superiorland Library Cooperative – two class I libraries
- White Pine Library Cooperative – one class IV library and two class I libraries

Since there was additional LSTA funding added this year, it may be an opportune time to provide funds to achieve automation for these final eight public libraries. The motivation to automate is sometimes present, but oftentimes not. However, I feel that it may be time to call the question. If libraries receive assistance for automation so that they can be automated by FY20, perhaps in FY20, the Library of Michigan can make opportunities for additional funding via LSTA contingent upon their being automated. The offer of assistance would come first, followed by a natural consequence should the library not take advantage of the assistance.

When I first came to Mid-Michigan Library League, I was disappointed to discover that two LSTA grants that had been given to the cooperative had not resulted in a shared library automation system, and that indeed there were un-automated libraries still, and many not yet on MeLCat. We have resolved this issue in terms of MeLCat implementation, but still have the remaining three un-automated libraries. Should LSTA grant funding be awarded for this purpose, you could hold the cooperative

directors responsible to achieve success. Since each of the three cooperatives has a different situation, the grant might look different in each case.

For example, Superiorland has a shared automation system, so the work would be barcoding and attaching materials to the shared database for Superiorland. MeLCat implementation would be a separate step, presumably, as not all libraries in that cooperative are on the RIDES delivery system. For White Pine, I understand that all of their members have had the advantage of being on MeLCat, even though they are not all automated. It is unclear how this was not able to happen for Mid-Michigan Library League, however we are situated to provide RIDES for all members, and we no longer are providing the “old fashioned” interlibrary loan. So, we are motivated to get the final four libraries (three un-automated, one automated but not on MeLCat) served for interlibrary loan so that Michigan residents do not live in “have not” service areas.

Recently, we have had several libraries in MMLL migrate to the Apollo ILS (Biblionix), which is serving them well at an affordable price. For example, Pentwater just migrated for \$800, with an annual cost of \$1,200 for the basic ILS service in the “cloud.” (They had been paying \$2,500 annually with Auto-Graphics.) If the three un-automated libraries were to begin barcoding and attaching holdings onto MeLCat, at the end of the process they would have the ability to “MARC-out” their database and automate with their vendor of choice. In addition, they would have an easy path to MeLCat for interlibrary loan. I believe we can make this happen by hiring temporary staff to assist with barcoding and attaching items to MeLCat for these libraries. This work could be done on-site at the libraries, or at the co-op office, sending materials via RIDES.

I asked Walkerville how long the process of barcoding and attaching took them and discovered that they spent about 12 weeks (while school was not in session, as they are a school public library) and had a couple people working. It is not clear to me how many hours were spent in total, but the collection size is around 12,000 items. If you are open to providing LSTA funds to complete the automation of public libraries in Michigan, I am sure we can get a good estimate of what it would take. I would estimate that a dedicated staff person could process at least 25 items per hour. Paid an ambitious \$15/hour, a collection of 30,000 might take 1,200 hours or \$18,000 for about 30 weeks of full time work. I am sure that is more than necessary, but it gives an idea.

Respectfully Submitted for Your Consideration,

~ Sheryl

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