

Member Contributions Committee
with Directors Advisory Council
Dormann Library, Bath
November 16, 2009

Present:	<u>Term</u>	<u>Population Served</u>
Jenny Peer, Savona	2009	0 – 1,900
Barb Radigan, Pulteney	2009 – 2010	0 – 1,900
Karen Deutsch, Wayland	2009 – 2011	2,000 – 4,999
Lana Meissner, Alfred	2009 – 2011	5,000 – 14,999
Brian Hildreth, Wellsville	2009 - 2010	5,000 – 14,999
Pauline Emery, Corning	2009 – 2011	15,000 and over
Lynn Overgaard, Penn Yan	2009	15,000 and over
Owen Frank, Steele Memorial Library	2009 - 2010	Central Library
Jim Sleeth, Elmira	2009	At-large

Allen Smith, Chemung County Library District, Board president,
Pat Sawyer, Friendship, Library Director
Sue Myers, Friendship, Board President
Alice Taychert, Hornell, Library Director
Kathy Plate, Prattsburgh, Library Director

Absent:

Cindy Dutton, Cuba (2,000 – 4,999) (comments appended)
Luke Rondinaro, Montour Falls, (0 – 1,900)

Present: Sherry Collins, Bonnie Webber, Philip Archer, STLS Trustees;
Ristiina Wigg, STLS staff

1. Distributed discussion points from October 29th meeting

2) Reviewed chart discussed at October 29th meeting - proposing 18-19% increase from 2011 – 2013, based on cost-share formula

- Jim Sleeth urged STLS not to increase cost-share contributions more than 10% per year, and to go even lower than 10%

- Barb Radigan read a letter (appended) from Carolyn Sherman, Little Genesee, asking why any member contributions should be necessary. She cited the Chautauqua – Cattaraugus Library System which does not charge fees
- Sue Myers agreed with Ms. Sherman's letter and read a letter (appended) that she had sent to Ristiina Wigg urging STLS to find ways to reduce costs. She said that consolidation of libraries, discussed at a previous committee meeting, was unacceptable. Local libraries are the heart of our communities. The Friendship Board raises funds all year long. Ms. Myers suggested that to save money fewer deliveries be made and that Friendship patrons were willing to wait for books. She also made suggestions regarding rotating collections, staff health insurance, using grant funds to reimburse libraries for transportation to workshops, and that STLS think outside the box. "You can't just push fees over to small libraries – even large libraries."
- Jenny Peer commented that the group spent a lot of time at the last meeting reviewing other options and agreed that this model was the most palatable (using same formula factors resulting in proportional increases), however not everyone at the last meeting agreed with the size of the increases
- Sue Myers suggested that STLS charge per service. She asked what the base fee per library would be. Libraries could decide what they could and could not afford
- Lynn Overgaard said that STLS has basic operating costs. "If three libraries drop out of delivery, it wouldn't save very much."
- In answer to a question Ristiina Wigg described the formula factors for state aid to library systems – no. of square miles, no. of counties, per capita, amount spent system-wide on books, local services support aid
- Jenny Peer asked about additional NYS funding reductions and the increase in costs for NYS retirement.
- In reviewing the chart showing 2009 Library Vote and History, Jenny Peer asked how many members do not have a public vote on their budget? (20%). Suggested that those libraries might not be able to increase their funds
- Bonnie Weber said that the Pulteney Library, which does not have a public vote, asks the town for an annual increase and the town has supported the library
- Jim Sleeth asked whether members wanted a greater or lesser library system. He advocated for four basic services plus outreach, rotating collections, and downloadables. With fewer services provided really well, libraries would be more satisfied. Example, bibliographic control is essential to control the accuracy of the database; reducing deliveries would not reduce patron demand
- Jim Sleeth also suggested that STLS talk about the functional value of services so that all members could get on board and support them. Current lack of agreement on importance of services is divisive

- Allen Smith described his perspective on public votes. A large cash flow (Chemung County Library District) means large cash flow problems. The increasing contribution numbers are significant for small libraries and also significant for CCLD. The District has been threatened by a Chemung County taxpayers group who said they would work to stop any building project. Voters supported the library's 2009 proposal at 60%, a drop from 68% support in 2007. The District Board has decided that they have to be careful. STLS services and contributions were the primary discussion at the last CCLD meeting. The 2013 increase represents a full-time employee
- Pat Sawyer said that the Friendship Library is operating on \$43,000, \$29,000 from taxpayer vote with the rest from state aid, grants, and fundraising. The library gets 3 deliveries/week from STLS, physical processing which is not to the level that Friendship wants, and help with computer problems. As a two-person library, they don't have time to attend meetings. Staff is paid slightly over minimum wage. Friendship is a poor community – movies are their highest-circulating item
- Karen Deutsch said that everyone is between a rock and a hard place. STLS is in the same boat as everyone else
- Ristiina Wigg commented on historical differences between the Chautauqua-Cattaraugus Library System and STLS. The following description has been provided by Catherine Way, CCLS director: "CCLS members receive an annual system grant (funded by money received from both counties and the System's own State funding) to buy books and other materials and pay no fees for system services, except that automated libraries (17 of 36 libraries are "live" so far) pay the annual SIRSI/DYNIX maintenance fee charged for each additional library. The CCLS director also directs the co-central library (the System is located in the Jamestown library building); some central library funds support system-wide activities (downloadables, databases), members automate on their own with System help with barcoding, deliveries are twice per week (started August 1, 2009), county funding goes to the library system; CCLS once used county funds to operate a bookmobile which was taken off the road in June, 2009. Funding from both counties has not increased in five or more years. The Prendergast Library pays the lion's share of the automated system's maintenance costs."
- Sherry Collins described how the STLS automated system was initially funded with member items twenty or more years ago. In 2008 state aid to libraries and systems was cut twice; in 2009 it has been reduced again with the Governor now proposing a second 10% cut. She said that the STLS board has been hammering at this problem, and are not making changes in a vacuum – looking at how to proceed, projecting the future based on current trends. If the stock market and NYS rebounds, these increases may not be necessary. "We are all in the same sinking boat together."

- One person said that the System is nowhere if libraries close. Another said that the libraries are nowhere if the System closes.
- Brian Hildreth has presented the proposed costs to his Board; their first reaction was sticker shock, but they are looking at the numbers as well as the %. The Library is funded to provide great services to taxpayers. The Wellsville Board asked what STLS has done to cut costs. The library can't survive without the system – each needs the other. Thought in previous STLS planning that we were all in agreement on services; is STLS offering services that we don't need? Wellsville froze wages this year, reduced book budget by \$20,000. If we stop looking toward the future we will be behind the times.
- Alice Taychert described the Hornell Library's successful request for voter support for \$150,000 in new dollars. The Mayor responded by decreasing the city's contribution. The Library System has drastically changed; larger and smaller libraries have separate needs. Libraries have to consider demanding less from the System.
 - Have to prioritize
 - Have we added things that are not appropriate, e.g. downloadables?
 - Hornell hasn't used a rotating collection in yearsSouthern Tier covers a huge area (3,500 square miles) with few people. Each library's funding structures are different. Hornell's deliveries are important – each day the library sends out as many bags of books as it borrows. This is not an easy situation for anyone. Alice suggested a two-year increase in member contributions, four years may be pushing too far into the future
- Pauline Emery said that the bottom line talks. Has the STLS Board considered what STLS would have to do if a member balked at contributing more?
The Southeastern Steuben County Library, Corning supports STLS services.
If there has to be a loss of services it shouldn't be on the side of smaller libraries
- Jenny Peer said this information will go back to the STLS board, but because the Board makes the final decision, the end result will not be an agreement, it will be a bill. The STLS Board will decide unilaterally.
- Lynn Overgaard addressed the governance issue. In STLS each individual library does not get a vote; the System has representative government. Libraries elect trustees; those people are there to represent you. These meetings function as hearings
- Allen Smith asked about a contractual agreement between member libraries and the System
- Lynn Overgaard said that her last contract with STLS went back to 1984. That date even predates the Chemung Southern Tier merger
- Brian Hildreth said that the committee has agreed that the cost-share formula worked, but do not agree on the percentages

- Barb Radigan said that Pulteney Library could live with losing rotating collections if STLS dropped physical processing or charged the full cost
- Owen Frank reiterated that priority services include delivery, information technology, cataloging and processing, and interlibrary loan, rotating collections, innovative formats such as downloadables
- Philip Archer summarized his experience as a new STLS trustee
 - STLS has considered fundraising and libraries said “don’t fundraise locally.”
 - STLS trustees have been told that if the Board is going to fundraise, individual System trustees need to make a significant contribution
 - The discussion at this meeting is valuable
 - Members need to work with their System trustees. For example, he is the only trustee from Yates County. The other position is vacant. This Board is empowered to vote as it sees the need
 - He praised all who were there for what they are doing in their libraries; this has to be a cooperative effort
- Sue Myers said that at the Friendship Library they don’t know what health care is. The Board also expects the library director to give 20 hours/week in unpaid time. The library can’t cut anymore. It’s difficult to find staff. Brian Hildreth echoed that sentiment; Wellsville has had difficulty recruiting staff. Sue would hate to see the a time when the library could no longer operate
- Allen Smith asked about governance. If libraries have been paying cost-share since 1998, why hasn’t STLS increased costs a little more during the past years so that this large increase would not be necessary?
- Pat Sawyer said that two weeks ago the cost-share increased by 10%; why has it now jumped to 18%? Ristiina Wigg explained that the 2010 cost-share increase is 10%; this group is discussing increases from 2011 – 2013
- Bonnie Weber said that the STLS board will want to consider all the information thoroughly. If more time is needed to make a careful decision, STLS trustees may decide in January rather than December. Several libraries commented that they need to know sooner rather than later in order to prepare their budget proposals
- Jenny Peer pointed out that the 2011 cost-share is going to be recalculated using updated information about the number of staff computers using workflows, and 2009 circulation figures
- Jenny Peer referenced an e-mail (appended) from Rose Woodard, Chemung County Library District, in which she described rotating collections as an archaic service

Wrap-up comments and final thoughts

- Lana Meissner – If STLS personnel costs are the largest portion of the budget, what is the minimum number of staff needed for STLS to function as a System? What would the worst case scenario look like? The percentage of population using each library varies, # of people placing holds, # using rotating collection, # using interlibrary loan, quantity of service provided. Lana has discussed the proposal with her Board. They are not thrilled, understood that costs go up, could not do without the service
- Kathy Plate – Couldn't do without STLS. Cost increases inevitable. Concerned about town funding, but couldn't do without System services
- Owen Frank – Can't do without STLS services. Preserve the core (services)
- Barb Radigan – Agree with Owen as long as we agree on what the core services are.
- Lynn Overgaard – Doesn't envy STLS Board members. This has to be dealt with so that library can plan budgets and funding requests
- Allen Smith – Nobody wants to make cuts, can't predict technology, pleased to hear passionate remarks
- Sue Myers – Ludicrous to pay trustees to come to meetings. Think outside the box
- Jenny Peer – Don't think STLS could have been more thorough in the process – the number of meetings held and staff made every effort to provide info
- Karen Deutsch – Appreciate that STLS has subsidized libraries to the extent they have. We are all between a rock and a hard place
- Brian Hildreth – Appreciation to everyone. Different needs and priorities, continue to work together
- Bonnie Weber – Thanks to everyone for coming. The Board will review all comments, so not every T may be crossed by December meeting; however the Board understands the necessity to make a timely decision
- Philip Archer – Appreciates hearing from everyone
- Sherry Collins – Appreciates everyone's input, candor, and lack of blood spilled

Ristiina thanked everyone for coming.

Next steps

- Preliminary report at Nov 17 STLS Board meeting
- Proposal of cost-share formula 2011 – 2013 considered by Board at Dec 15th Board meeting
- Adoption in December or at January STLS Board meeting

Letters/E-mails from Individual Members:

Sue Myer, Board President, Friendship

I am again writing to you on behalf of the Friendship Free Library Board. We are appalled at the actions you plan to take on cost-sharing. An 18-19 % increase is outrageous! Why can Chautauque County Library System absorb the state decreases without charging its member libraries and you pass all costs on to the libraries. In fact they do not charge their member libraries for any of the services. I am tempted to send this letter and the previous letter to Senator Young for her opinion. STLS needs to tighten its belt! A ½ staff person cut is not much. What else can you do? Cut deliveries to once a week. Stop paying trustees to come to meetings; they will come if they are interested. Give libraries a choice of what services they want along with their costs. What is the base cost per library? In 1999 you began charging and costs have increased dramatically ever since, Maybe rotating book collections should be once every 4 months. How much will this save? If you cut services, do you need as much staff? What benefits are offered to staff? Maybe a less costly health insurance should be looked at or possibly increase the % staff is paying towards their benefit. What else? Think outside the box not just pass your financial woes on to libraries.

Carolyn Sherman, Library Director, Little Genesee

On behalf of the Genesee Library Board discussion at a meeting this week, we have very great concern about the proposed increases suggested by STLS. They felt it will cause many of the small libraries in the system to cut back or even close. Even our Federal Government, New York State Government, Allegany County or our Town Government would never come up with figures like these. Don't you realize that Allegany County is 1st or 2nd poorest County in the State? Our Board has talked to Ristiina before and never had any success in STLS not continually pushing for more from us every year. We remember when STLS never charged and how well the System worked then. Our Library is next to Portville, New York Library in the Cattaraugus System and they pay no fees to their System. How do they manage and STLS cannot? Portville only has two deliveries a week and gets along fine their employee told me today. They are still not automated and very happy with the situation. Doesn't STLS see that all of us need to scrimp and save as much as possible to even survive? Hopefully, we hope some remedy can be worked out. We do not want our 101 year old library to close because of not better management on STLS's part.

Cindy Dutton, Library Director, Cuba

Rusty and all -- I just realized that I can't make it to this "last" meeting. I am fine with raising member contributions but also think we must look at charging more for services (processing, rotating collections) and/or could we possibly build a fee into deliveries - so those getting more than a base delivery (defined as 1x week ??) would pay for 2 or 3...?? Just a thought. I know there are worries about charging more for processing but perhaps we'll be surprised and not many libraries will opt to do their own. I have always maintained that processing is a DEAL - I wouldn't want to devote space and money to all those supplies plus labor!

Rose Woodard, Branch Librarian, Chemung County Library District

I don't understand why emails with these suggestions go to everyone. It seems people who don't realize the casualties of these fees may just perhaps listen to this and vote without the proper knowledge. For example, charging for rotating collections comes to mind. I thought that the reserves (send item list) would take care of this. We tell our patron they can get what they need by reserving it (and at home on the internet). They just have to wait. This is the "Delivery". For all the rotating collections moving around the libraries and a poor use of staff time doing this, I see that the libraries doing this have fewer deliveries because we reserve things daily and the collections move every so often (monthly or every 2 months); thus charging the other libraries for more deliveries? I also see it as duplication of services. Can't we move ahead? Rotating collections is as old of service as the card catalog. Sorry for the rant, but I hope everyone reads this as "food for thought".

Additional Information (Distributed at previous Member Contributions meeting)

- History of STLS member contributions
Over this year the System has discussed funding contributions with members, offered all members the opportunity to attend, distributed meeting notes, and based on discussion, provided members with advance notice of funding changes.

Southern Tier has absorbed fluctuations in income and expenses in order to make member costs predictable. For example, the system did not ask members to contribute to delivery costs when the price of gasoline doubled, nor did member contributions increase in the middle of 2008 when the NYS began cutting library aid

- STLS 2009 Cost Reductions – \$91,500
 - staff training
 - Sirsi/Dynix annual maintenance
 - no contribution to the replacement reserve fund for building maintenance
 - reduced purchase of professional materials
 - purchased used delivery truck with a negotiated contribution from Simmons-Rockwell Ford
 - replaced a full-time cataloger with ½ time cataloger