

Invited Testimony on Libraries to Wisconsin Legislative Study Committee  
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## Preamble

A hundred years ago, almost no one in Wisconsin had access to the services of any public library. By mid-century over half the population enjoyed access to a library. But as recently as twenty-five years ago nearly a quarter of the state's population still had no legal access to any library.

Today, residents have legal access to at least those public libraries in their own area. Each of these advances were major steps. None took place easily or without major leadership efforts. Unfortunately, these hard-won advances of the last century are in danger of being reversed because of unfair tax compensation for some libraries. By the dawn of the new century, I hope we can assure that every state resident can use any convenient library. We should not stop at mere physical access. Electronic access through the internet and other computer technologies are simultaneously shrinking our world and increasing our potential for getting needed information to all state residents.

The total cost to do all that it is envisioned here would be less than the cost of a few paperback books per state resident each year.

## Executive Summary

I am the administrator of the Lakeshores Library System, a public library system serving the residents of Racine and Walworth Counties. I am speaking today on my own behalf. I have been asked to provide you with some historical background and to suggest some general possibilities for the future. A hundred years ago, almost no one in Wisconsin had access to the services of any public library. By mid-century over half the population enjoyed access to a library. But as recently as twenty-five years ago nearly a quarter of the state's population still had no legal access to any library. Today, residents have legal access to at least those public libraries in their own area. Each of these advances were major steps. None took place easily or without major leadership efforts. Unfortunately, these hard-won advances of the last century are in danger of being reversed because of unfair tax compensation for some libraries. By the dawn of the new century, I hope we can assure that every state resident can use any convenient library. Minnesota, among other states, has taken the giant step of providing complete access to any library in the state. We should not stop at mere physical access. Electronic access through the internet and other computer technologies are simultaneously shrinking our world and increasing our potential for getting needed information to all state residents.

We owe it to the next generation to pass on this heritage, improved and expanded. Arguments over who should pay, and how much, for the public library lunch have bedeviled library planners for over a century. Each generation has developed partial answers and left the most difficult problems unsolved, passing them on to future legislatures, local officials, and library planners. Those accumulated problems have now reached nearly a critical mass. The very existence of this committee may well be the best proof of that proposition. I have been told that the legislature works on the wise principle of: "if it's not broken, don't fix it." A legislative council is charged

with fixing problems by statutory remedy. Things must be deemed broken, or there would not be a legislative council.

Stated simply, Wisconsin must provide for universal resident access to better libraries with fairer compensation. It must do so in an increasingly electronic, computer driven world. Public libraries are valuable to the state's residents, and the state has a strong interest in their improvement. The Legislative Council should ask the Legislature to make the State a better partner in the library service business than it has been.

All state residents now have access to at least some libraries but that access is unfortunately limited.

While the ideal is access by all residents to all libraries, the ideal cannot, must not, override the issue of fairness. Attention to fairness requires that compensation be provided so that some property taxpayers do not unduly subsidize others. Insufficient attention to fairness has already resulted in the erosion of access by some state residents. There are many more problems rising to the surface.

The sheer complexity of library use and tax patterns causes problems that do not occur with other tax supported services. Because of the system law of 1971, counties have grown accustomed to taxing rural residents and sending reimbursements to libraries within their own counties, although they often object when the money crosses borders. It is fairly easy to see the value and fairness in this level of compensation. Library municipalities do not want to send money out of their communities to pay for services they are already taxing for and providing locally. This is true even when there is a considerable imbalance in the use rates. The lending municipality expects compensation, the borrowing municipality, having funded its own library, expects residents to use their own library regardless of any inconvenience to the user. It is this impasse that should be solved by the state legislature.

The current state funding which the legislature has provided to the Division for Library Services and the 17 Public Library Systems, while valuable and necessary, is (at under \$5 per capita) insufficient to accomplish the tasks needed for further progress. Libraries need to get beyond today's debates about fair funding and on to implementing technologies for the information superhighway.

The non-resident circulation dilemma has reminded more than one observer of a pinball game. We bounce from solution to solution, never getting to universal access. Examples of attempted solutions are: the Hephner and Schneiders' amendments to ss 43.17, last sessions AB 878 to allow townships to opt out of their home county's tax levy, the proposal from SRLAAW for allowing libraries to retain system membership when they refuse access to underpaying counties or municipalities. These and other proposals clearly speak to the need for a statewide solution to the problems.

The Inform Wisconsin bill was first considered by the legislature in 1994 as Senate Bill 694 when it was introduced by Senator Potter in the Senate Education Committee. It would allow

for the free flow of library use across all internal borders. The program requires that a county plan must pay for such use, and it provides additional state funding with which to pay.

The library community has been working on the Inform Wisconsin program since 1987, when a DPI Task Force was appointed, but the Legislature did not consider the package until 1994. This time lag may explain why some in the library community have given up on Inform Wisconsin as a proposal, believing that it will never pass the legislature. It seems as if the proposal has been languishing for years, but it really has not had a fair hearing yet. It has never been beyond the Education Committees in either house. A Legislative Council endorsement would bring it to the full legislature's attention for the first time.

The proposal deals with two major issues and would have two budget categories: statewide library access and public library improvement, as its subtitle implies. Library access piece was budgeted at \$2 million. I have done a fair amount of research on that issue and believe the price tag should be closer to \$5 million. The public library improvement aspect proposed as rising over a 10 year period to \$60 million or more. I believe this element of the program should be targeted as technology and automation funding to the degree possible. Even fully funded, the program would cost less annually per state resident than 3 paperback books!

I think most of us would much prefer the carrot of funding in a program like Inform Wisconsin but many have or will ask you to give us a stick which we can use to bring reluctant counties and cities to the bargaining table.

Recently the System and Resource Library Administrator's Association of Wisconsin passed a resolution seeking legislation that would be specify that libraries could remain members in good standing even if they refused service to a county or municipality that they believed was not adequately reimbursing them. While I am confident that libraries would use any such power wisely, it is likely that residents will complain to the legislature for further remedies if the legislation is enacted.

In 1996, Representative Coleman took the lead in winning passage of the "Pioneering Partners" program.

It provides for automation grants for schools and public libraries. What may be needed is an "Ongoing Partners" program. I hope you will consider merging this useful grant program with the Inform Wisconsin proposal to deal with our current access and technology needs.

We need a program that ensures resident access to all state libraries as well as fair compensation for nonresident use. The best way to do this would be with a state-wide borrowers card, using state-wide automation connections. The legislature and the library division clearly recognize the needs, as demonstrated by the Pioneering Partner program, the library division proposed Technology Initiative, and this study committee. But it is not merely a question of finding the money to begin investing in automation, we need an ongoing commitment to upgrading the equipment and paying the telecommunications costs. Libraries need automation packages to

track use, but that use is increasingly electronic access and often does not even result in an item being 'checked out.'

As you deliberate you will need to contend with those who believe that an internet connection is a substitute for a library. We must remind them that only a tiny fraction of the tip of the iceberg of data has been digitized and made accessible online. Much of what is now free and freely accessible will be available for a fee only as soon as a few copyright and 'cybermoney' issues have been resolved. Libraries will have to become the public transit on the information superhighway. We must make libraries gateways to carefully selected electronic resources for those with home computers. For those without computers we must provide that access in library buildings. At the same time, and for the foreseeable future, we will need to continue to provide for access to the huge piece of the knowledge iceberg that has not yet been digitized.

Today, I would like to give you all a library card good anywhere in the state, but I can't. I hope you can convince the legislature to provide access by all residents to all Wisconsin libraries by the time we open the book on the new century.

## **Section 1: Sowing the Seeds: Early History (1895-1950' The First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

The state's commitment to libraries dates to 1895 when it established the Wisconsin Library Commission to plan for library improvement, but as late as 1970 nearly a quarter of the state's residents, mostly rural, had no legal access to any library in the state. Other residents had access to just one or two inadequately funded and stocked libraries.

In 1895, Senator Stout, took a page from Andrew Carnegie's book. He believed so deeply in the value of public libraries that he financed the first biennial budget of the Free Library Commission from his own pocket, rather than wait until the legislature shared his vision for a Wisconsin where all citizens could freely access convenient libraries.

When Senator Stout served as the first chair of the Free Library Commission which the state established, there were but 25 public libraries in the state. Today there are over 380. Most were built in the first 30 years of this century.

Frank Avery Hutchins, Wisconsin's first state librarian, and other state library pioneers, used the railroads to spread the public library gospel. Hutchins and other authors of the Wisconsin Idea held the people in such high esteem that they would go to nearly any length to extend educational opportunities to them. They packed up books in large railway trunks and sent them to villages throughout the state. These demonstration projects helped convince the locals that they needed a library. Once the citizenry were convinced, oftentimes Andrew Carnegie and other benefactors stood ready to build a building if only the city council would agree to ongoing operations.

Hutchins was fond of quoting Melville Dewey's vision of a day when one could go to any town and ask the locals not IF they had a library but rather WHERE it might be found. Though he did not live to see that day, we enjoy the fruition of that vision. You are charged with carrying that vision forward. For today, residents of any community in the state can refer to at least a few libraries as "our libraries." I urge you to bring about the day when all state residents look to all our state's libraries as "our libraries."

By the Great Depression, most of today's libraries had been established. Despite the economic reversals of most libraries, library use increased dramatically, a trend we still see today. Library use increases more quickly when the economy sours, less quickly when times are good. Even though public libraries were relatively new and seemed less critical than other municipal services, neither the depression nor the ensuing world war diminished their numbers or their popularity.

### **Post-War Planning**

During the Second World War, library leaders in Wisconsin and nationally, began to plan for the future with rare vision. They established post-war planning committees to chart a course for the

future. Most library people recognized that the time had come to stop trying to multiply the sheer number of libraries, even though a quarter of the population was still unserved. Building libraries in corn fields was not going to be cost effective. It was time to begin to extend the services of existing libraries to the countryside through larger units of service and public library systems.

Ten years of lobbying culminated in the 1956 passage of the federal Library Services Act. That act was designed to extend the existing city and village library services to the many unserved areas of the country. Wisconsin benefited from these demonstration grants. Walworth County, one of the two counties, along with Racine, in my own Lakeshores Library System, was one of the early beneficiaries of these grants.

## **Section 2: Cultivating the Soil: Recent Developments (1950's to present) System Planning and Development: Wisc. Stat. 43.24**

Library leaders found themselves having to re-invent libraries for a new age. Library service needs were changing along with the transition from rail to highway transportation in the state. With good highways and cheap fuel, people could travel previously unheard of distances for commerce, recreation and, yes, library services. Transportation patterns were changing. A more mobile society had different needs and libraries responded. Libraries established extension departments to serve rural areas. They began slowly building the political base for tax support from townships and counties that were reluctant to enter into this entirely new area of service. But an uneven patchwork of agreements and service patterns developed throughout the state which only state action could address.

As late as the 1960's, there was still a quarter of the population in the state who were without access to any library. This led the library community to urge the legislature to make these problems into an opportunity. Over the course of a decade, library leaders built the coalition that resulted in the 1971 passage of the Public Library System Law, Wisconsin Statute 43.24.

County government was not usually a participant in library service delivery in Wisconsin until the Public Library System law was enacted. This law used the incentive of state funding to induce counties to exercise the option of taxing municipalities without libraries. The county funds generated could then be used to reimburse libraries for services provided to residents of the county-taxed areas. The law required public library systems to provide specified services such as: access by all system residents to all system libraries, interlibrary loan, delivery services, continuing education, automation planning and more. System services are ordinarily to libraries, rather than directly to the public.

By 1987 all counties had exercised the option of voluntarily joining systems by taxing communities without libraries. All state residents then had guaranteed access to at least the libraries in their own county or system. But the problem (opportunity) of access by all residents to all libraries remained.

43.17(10), the 'Hephner Amendment' - 1985

In 1985 the Wisconsin Legislature passed AB 332. The bill, introduced by Representative Hephner, became ss 43.17(10). It mandated public libraries to provide service to residents of adjacent library systems or lose the benefits of system membership. The goal was more access by more people to more libraries. But who should pay for this step forward?

There was an irony to this particular unfunded mandate. Usually it is at least clear who is required to pay for an unfunded state mandate, not so for Wisconsin Statute 43.17(10). The goal was clear. It was the mandate which was fuzzy. The goal was to allow all Wisconsin residents use of any convenient library in the state. The legislature clearly had a vision that nearly all

librarians share. This vision has been frustrated because property tax patterns follow municipal and county lines while use of libraries follows natural traffic patterns.

We in the library community missed the chance to convince the legislature to take the next logical step forward and fund what it mandated in 1985. Why did we miss our chance? Because our vision faltered. We focused on the magnitude of the cost problems rather than on the clear opportunity to achieve statewide access. Traffic patterns and the geographic accidents of library placement automatically result in unequal distribution of library use and any resulting state funds.

Many in the library community asked why they should support a program in which only some libraries "benefited" and not others. If we had instead focused on the opportunity, rather than the cost problems, we might have realized that no libraries would benefit, citizens would. Libraries should not "benefit," but they should be fairly reimbursed. Any just solution to the problem must recognize this.

43.17(11), the Schneider's Amendment - 1991

By 1991 the unfunded mandate in 43.17(10), the "Hephner amendment," had caused enough trouble that the legislature acted again. This time rather than take a step forward, it took a step to the side, but at least it did not take a step backwards. Representative Lolita Schneiders authored AB 272. Representative Schneiders' bill said that libraries lending out materials should not be punished by expulsion from a system because they were not being reimbursed for use by residents of another system. The law allowed particularly hard pressed libraries to stop subsidizing residents of another system without jeopardizing their library system membership and services.

Milwaukee Exception to 43.17

It should be noted that ss. 43.17(10) & (11) make an exception for library use across the Milwaukee County border. Milwaukee County is not required to have intersystem agreements for library use across the border that other systems are expected to negotiate. This is often misinterpreted as an advantage to Milwaukee County or its libraries. It is not. The advantage is to counties like Racine with borders on Milwaukee County. These counties cannot afford to pay for the cost of reimbursing libraries in Milwaukee county. The disadvantage, of course, is to residents that might find it more convenient to use Milwaukee libraries.

Without the added funding included with Inform Wisconsin, Racine County, like most counties on Milwaukee's borders could not afford the costs involved with using libraries in Milwaukee. We have no hard data because the border is currently closed, but I estimate that the costs to Racine County alone could easily exceed \$150,000. Such costs could add 20% or more to the current Racine County property tax on non-library municipalities and another 5 to 10% to the property taxes of library municipalities.

### Assembly Bill 878 - 1996

The State Legislature's Education Committee in 1996 considered, but rejected Assembly Bill 878, an act to amend 43.52(1m) and 43.64(2) relating to the establishment of a new library or participation in a joint library by a town and exemption from the county library levy. The president-elect of the Lakeshores Library System Board, and member of the Legislative Council was very concerned about the potential results of this bill and urged reconsideration. AB 878 was introduced in the Wisconsin Legislature on February 13, 1996 by Representatives Skindrud, also a member of this council.

Wisconsin Statute 43.64 (2) now requires any Town, desiring to enter into a joint library agreement under 43.53, or establish a new library under 43.52, to apply to the County Clerk to establish its eligibility. AB 878 would substitute notification for application, thereby eliminating any County ability to verify eligibility. AB 878 made no provision requiring a town to continue to provide for funding that its residents do or might make of libraries other than the one it is establishing or affiliating with. The legislation could have severely impacted the tax base for the Racine County library levy, and many others. The Racine County Board of Supervisors opposed AB 878 as written and so notified its state legislators and the Wisconsin Counties Association. The legislation was initiated by individuals in the Green County and Marathon County areas because of concerns that counties were not allowing library funding to follow library use across county lines. The divergence of opinion on the need for legislation was understandable. The goal is universal access, individuals keep casting about in good faith for solutions.

### SRLAAW Proposal for Non-resident Borrowing -1996

In 1996, the System and Resource Library Administrator's Association of Wisconsin (SRLAAW) passed a resolution seeking legislation comparable to 43.17(11) to apply within a system. The intent would be that libraries lending out materials should not be punished by expulsion from a system because their home county or a municipality in a nearby community had failed to adequately reimburse the library. In effect, frustrated librarians are giving up on asking the legislature to provide a the carrot of statewide funding in a program like Inform Wisconsin, and they are instead asking the legislature to provide a stick which they can use to obtain fair compensation. I personally prefer the carrot to the stick, but I understand the frustration of waiting for the legislature to see the need.

### Section 3: Defining the 'Non-Resident' Problem

It is next to impossible to deal with this issue without drawing a road map of sorts and defining our terms.

The table below attempts to illustrate the 11 types of circulation. We have a very hard time trying to even name these types of circulation, much less appreciate why they matter so much to some libraries. I sometimes think we could name them with number and letter combinations like

1A. That would stand for circulation from a library's own residents at the home library by locally taxed residents (as indicated in line 1, column A, below) Type 2B circulation would stand for circulation from home county libraries by county-taxed residents, and so on.

		Circulation amount = 43.8 million		
		A	B	C
		Locally-taxed	County-taxed	Total
Circulation type				
1	From Own Residents at Home Libr.	72.1%	n/a	72.1%
2	From Home county libraries	8.2%	15.3%	23.5%
3	From Different County, Same System	0.8%	1.4%	2.2%
4	From Adjacent System Libraries	0.5%	1.1%	1.6%
5	From Non-adjacent System Libraries	0.2%	0.3%	0.5%
6	From Out of State Libraries	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
7	Totals	81.8%	18.2%	100.0%

The majority of circulation in the state (72.1% and 15.3%) is type 1A or 2B.

Type 2A through 5A circulation, at almost 10% statewide bears the most explaining. In Lakeshores we call this Intermunicipal circulation. Many others call it "crossover

circulation." If citizens of Library City A got to Library City B in roughly the same measure, this type of circulation can simply be discounted by both cities. It is when there are imbalances that problems arise. The community doing the net lending demands reimbursement, the borrowing community, having taxed its own residents does not wish to pay. Both often turn to the County, which almost as often responds that it is taxing those WITHOUT libraries, so it is an intermunicipal not a county problem.

In Lakeshores we have arranged an uneasy truce on this issue after many years of discussion. We ask the county to tax for the only the items that the residents it taxes borrow. Then we adjust the distribution to libraries to account for the libraries that are net "crossover lenders." This solution only works when you can get a consensus among librarians and trustees and when the overall impact is marginal, however.

Averages, it is said, obscure almost as much as they illuminate. That is certainly true in this context. The amount of circulation in type 4B, from an adjacent system to a county-taxed resident is only 1.1% on an average statewide basis. This seems inconsequential to most. But this average includes libraries where this type of circulation may amount to 33% or more of all their business, while to the vast majority of libraries it is a non-issue. It depends on traffic patterns and the geographic accidents of where county, city, village or township boundaries were drawn. This is why you will hear different stories from different libraries, trustees, elected officials, and the public regarding what is the REAL problem of non-resident circulation.

Consider the example of the Burlington Public Library. Burlington has just over 9,200 residents. Only 43% of its circulation is to city residents. Crossover circulation (types 2A through 5A, are about the same as state averages, but types 3B, and 4B, county-taxed circulation from other counties is almost 18% compared to under 3% as an average statewide. The two taken together, crossover municipal and other county rural, amount to almost 1/3 of Burlington's

circulation. That is a considerable impact for Burlington. But for most Lakeshores Libraries there is no such impact. Burlington just happens to sit very close to two county borders and near several smaller cities that use it as a trading center.

<b>1993-1995 Burlington Public Library Circulation Ratios</b>			
<i>Circulation amount = 206,000</i>			
<i>Circulation type</i>	A Locally- taxed	B County- taxed	C Total
1 Home Library to Own Residents	43.1%	n/a	43.1%
2 Within Home county	5.9%	28.9%	34.7%
3 From Different County, Same System	0.9%	10.7%	11.6%
4 From an Adjacent Systems	3.8%	6.8%	10.6%
5 From Non-adjacent Systems	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
6 Out of State	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
7 Totals	53.7%	46.3%	100.0%

In order to give a full picture of circulation in Wisconsin we would need a 1,700 row by 380 column spreadsheet, to cover the number of city, village and town residents that use or might use one or the other library during a year. It is only possible to track and reconcile that much circulation detail with an automated circulation system and an agreed upon procedure.

The State should establish a statewide pool of funding as envisioned in the Inform Wisconsin Proposal to allow funding to follow the library user to any library he or she chooses to use. Let the current partners do what comes most naturally. Cities and villages pay for their own building and their proportion of use. Counties should reimburse libraries WITHIN their counties at appropriate levels. The state should be the ongoing partner that picks up the remaining costs for the other types of circulation.

## **Section 4: Reaping the Harvest: Planning for the New Millennium**

### **The Need for State Support**

The existing state funded services of the Division for Libraries and Community Learning and seventeen public library systems, while vital and necessary, are simply not enough to make possible the next major step forward. Neither the Division nor the public library systems have the resources to address all of the complex and thorny problems that revolve around equitable compensation to every public library. Fairness requires that compensation be provided when individuals that do not reside in a given municipality use that municipality's library.

The sheer complexity of library use and tax patterns causes problems that do not occur with other tax supported services. Allow me to use an example. When I pay my property taxes in the Town of Mount Pleasant, I know that a portion of those taxes go into snow plowing. The town does not plow any other town or village streets, nor does any other community plow ours. So I get what I pay for providing the town manages snow removal efficiently. If the town did plow any other community's roads, we would have every reason to expect reimbursement. But when it comes to library services, the picture changes radically. Individuals can use their library card at many of the state's libraries, but in many cases, the lending library is not fairly compensated. Why? Because of the complexity of the lending and taxing involved.

Because of the system law of 1971, counties have grown accustomed to taxing rural residents and sending reimbursements to libraries within their own counties, although they often object when the money crosses borders. It is fairly easy to see the value and fairness in this level of compensation. Library municipalities do not want to send money out of their communities to pay for services they are already taxing for and providing locally. This is true even when there is a considerable imbalance in the use rates. The lending municipality expects compensation, the borrowing municipality, having funded its own library, expects residents to use their own library regardless of any inconvenience to the user. It is this impasse that should be solved by the state legislature.

#### **Inadequate County Funding**

In 1995, Residents without their own library, and taxed by counties to provide open access, accounted for:

- 31% of the state's tax base,
- 27% of its population,
- 18% of library circulation
- 14% of library funding.

Those in library communities point to these data as proof that counties are not paying their fair share. Elected officials note that most other government services are based on the property tax base. The media and the public at large usually make comparisons based on population. Librarians usually want 'county' funding to equal usage rates.

The Inform Wisconsin proposal attempts to address the inequities by requiring that counties pay at specified minimal levels of per capita funding. The levels would be far below those of library municipalities, but there would be a substantial impact on a few rural counties in some parts of the state.

### Inform Wisconsin Proposal

The Inform Wisconsin bill was first considered by the legislature in 1994 as Senate Bill 694. It would allow for the free flow of library use across all borders in the state. The program requires that a county plan to pay for such use, and it provides additional state funding with which to pay. Please note that the "net lending" problem is not just an issue across a system border. It exists within system and county boundaries as well.

The library community has been working on the Inform Wisconsin program since 1987, when a DPI Task Force was appointed, but the Legislature did not consider the package until 1994. This time lag may explain why some in the library community have given up on Inform Wisconsin as a proposal, believing that it will never pass the legislature. It seems as if the proposal has been languishing for years, but it really has not had a fair hearing yet. The proposal deals with two major issues and would have two budget categories: statewide library access and public library improvement, as its subtitle implies.

The Library access portion was budgeted at \$2 million. I have done a fair amount of research on that issue and believe the price tag should be closer to \$5 million. The public library improvement aspect proposed as rising over a 10 year period to \$60 million or more. I believe this element of the program should be targeted as technology and automation funding to the degree possible.

### Pioneering Partners Program

In 1996, Representative Coleman took the lead in winning passage of the "Pioneering Partners" program.

This new program provide \$10million 1996-97 through a new, continuing appropriation for grants for educational technology or distance education projects to be administered by the newlycreated educational technology board. The funding is both for schools and public libraries. There is also provision for \$15 million in loans. While this is an important program, I am sure Representative Coleman will agree that it needs expansion. What may be needed is an "Ongoing Partners" program.

We need a program that ensures resident access to all state libraries as well as fair compensation for non-resident use. The best way to do this would be with a state-wide borrowers card, using state-wide automation connections. The legislature and the library division clearly recognize the needs, as demonstrated by the Pioneering Partner program, the library division proposed Technology Initiative, and this study committee. But it is not merely a question of finding the money to begin investing in automation, we need an ongoing commitment to upgrading the

equipment and paying the telecommunications costs. Libraries need automation packages to track use, but that use is increasingly electronic access and often does not even result in an item being 'checked out.'

Careful consideration must be given to the appropriate roles of all the parties to this enterprise we call public library service.

- Local municipalities with libraries should retain their historical local autonomy, as well as the related responsibility for financing and maintaining library buildings.
- The majority of counties have federated library structures and should continue their role of providing funding from rural and suburban areas that can be funnelled to autonomous libraries. The county role in area wide planning should be strengthened.
- The state role should include covering the costs of circulation that is neither direct 'county' nor 'city' circulation. It should also substantially cover the cost of the automated systems required to do the necessary circulation tracking. The state should further broker online, full text and related telecommunications services on a statewide basis for all citizens and all types of library services.

## **Conclusion**

Just as previous generations had to handle the transition from rail to highway, we must handle the change from highway to information superhighway.

The Inform Wisconsin proposal is the best solution to the non-resident access problem. Its provisions are complex because the library use issues are complicated. But please stay focused on the opportunity for universal access, rather than the problems that the complexities that library use and tax patterns cause.

Public Libraries have always been important partners in lifelong learning for Wisconsin citizens. Libraries provide critical skills that will keep Wisconsin competitive in the global marketplace. Libraries contribute greatly to literacy. Increasingly the necessary literacy skills include computer literacy. As we approach the 21st century, and the emerging "information superhighway," we must continue these roles.

Inform Wisconsin will make the State a better partner in the library service business. It will solve some of the thorniest access and funding problems we face. Twenty five years ago nearly a quarter of the state's population had no legal access to any library. Today, residents have legal access to at least those public libraries in their own area. This was a giant step indeed. The next step should be to assure that every state resident can use any convenient library. Neither the Division for Library Services nor library systems can do this with current resources.

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**Appendix: 43.17 Public library systems; general provisions.**

**(10) BORROWERS' CARDS.** [the 'Hephner amendment']

Except as provided in sub. (11), all public libraries in a public library system shall honor the valid borrowers' cards of a public library in an adjacent public library system, other than the Milwaukee county federated library system. The requirement under this subsection does not apply to the Milwaukee county federated library system.

**(11) COST OF LENDING SERVICES.** [the 'Schneiders' amendment']

(a) In this subsection, loan means a unit of service that involves the checking out of a single a specific period of time.

(b) A public library in a public library system may refuse to honor valid borrowers' cards of a public library in an adjacent public library system if the total amount of the reimbursement received by the item from a library to an individual for use outside the library for public library for the preceding year from that adjacent public library system, and from counties and municipalities that are located in that adjacent public library system, is less than the adjusted cost incurred for that year by the public library in honoring these cards.

(c) For purposes of par. (b), the adjusted cost shall be calculated by determining the actual cost for each loan incurred by the public library honoring the cards for a given year in the manner provided by the rules promulgated by the department under s. 43.24 (2) (n) and multiplying that amount by the remainder calculated by subtracting 500 from the total number of loans made in that year by the public library to borrowers from the adjacent public library system. For purposes of this paragraph, a renewal of a loan constitutes a separate loan. (d)

Any reimbursement made by a county under par. (b) may not result in a reduction in the level of support for public library services provided by that county to residents of that county. (e)

If a public library in a given public library system refuses to honor the valid borrowers' cards from an adjacent public library system, annual meetings shall be held between representatives of the affected public library systems to discuss the resulting lack of services to the affected borrowers and the costs of providing such services. The affected public library systems shall provide the division with written minutes of these meetings. History: 1971 c. 152; 1981 c. 96; 1985 a. 29, 176, 177; 1985a.332 s. 253.