

#2674  
Citizens Library Study Committee  
300 Nicollet Mall  
Minneapolis, Minn. 55401

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## REPORT OF THE CITIZENS LIBRARY STUDY COMMITTEE TO THE 1973 LEGISLATURE

Over the past decade Minneapolis and Hennepin County have been working out arrangements for delivery of a number of public services--services which, when suburban Hennepin County was more rural than urban, were handled in a much different manner. Minneapolis, when it contained most of the population of the county, was, by contract or otherwise, in the dominant position of providing many services to county residents. But as the suburban population approached and then exceeded that of the city, the situation was altered considerably.

In such areas as libraries, courts, corrections, health and hospitals, and parks possible new arrangements have been reviewed and, in some cases, major changes have occurred, for example, the abolition of the old justice-of-the-peace system and creation of a new county court in 1963. In other cases the precise permanent arrangement is not yet determined. Such is the situation with libraries.

The Minneapolis Library Board, which is responsible for public library service within the city limits of Minneapolis, and the Hennepin County Library Board, which is responsible for public library service in suburban Hennepin County, have been engaged for several years in serious--although, so far, futile--discussions about the best permanent framework for adequate long-term library service for citizens of Minneapolis and Hennepin County.

In April 1967 both Boards adopted a statement pledging to work toward merger in the next three years. The 1967 Legislature passed a law with the language that "The library boards of the county of Hennepin and the city of Minneapolis shall commence merger discussions of the two library systems for the purpose of establishing an agreement of amalgamation to be effective January 1, 1973." On the last day of the 1969 Legislature this law was amended to read: "The county of Hennepin and the library board of the city of Minneapolis may agree to merge their public library systems at such time and in such manner as they may mutually agree. Such merger shall be subject to enabling legislation by the legislature of the state of Minnesota."

Between the 1969 and 1971 Legislature the two Boards worked intensively together but were unable to agree. The 1971 Legislature reviewed possible merger legislation but, because the Boards were not in agreement, took no action.

Unrestricted use of all libraries in the county, both city and suburban, by all citizens of the county, both city and suburban, has been preserved throughout these discussions through a separate, year to year contract. In recent years, however, this concept has been jeopardized because of the increasing difficulty which the two systems have experienced in reaching agreement on how much the Hennepin County Library Board should pay the Minneapolis Library Board for suburban use of the Central Library in downtown Minneapolis. Inevitably, both Boards go down to the wire--with the threat of separation hanging over the negotiations--before reaching agreement on a payment for the next year.

But both Boards have continued to work closely on seeking a satisfactory long term agreement--even though both have held very strong conflicting opinions

about fundamental issues of finance and organization. They fully recognize that continued uncertainty and intensive debate detracts from their ability to concentrate on the questions of improving library service for citizens of Minneapolis and Hennepin County.

Shortly after the end of the 1971 Legislature, representatives from both Boards and a few legislators met to review the situation. They agreed to continue to pursue the issue but felt it would be helpful to enlist some non-involved persons to assist them. The Citizens League and the League of Women Voters were asked to suggest names. As a result of these conversations, the Citizens Library Study Committee was formed. Its membership:

State Rep. O. J. (Lon) Heinitz, chairman  
State Rep. Thomas Berg, vice chairman  
State Rep. George F. Humphrey  
E. J. Cooper, Hennepin County Library Board  
Peter Heegaard, Hennepin County Library Board  
Alan MacLean, Hennepin County Library Board  
David Doty, Minneapolis Library Board  
Mrs. Virginia Kremen, Minneapolis Library Board  
Mrs. Francis Naftalin, Minneapolis Library Board  
Mrs. Nancy Witta, citizen member  
John Carmichael, citizen member  
Mrs. Jean King, citizen member  
Greer Lockhart, citizen member  
James R. Pratt, citizen member  
Donald Van Hulzen, citizen member  
Thomas Veblen, citizen member

The committee's general assignment was to review the need for public library service for the citizens of Minneapolis and Hennepin County and recommend the most feasible and economical approach for assuring such service on a long-term basis.

The committee held its first meeting April 19, 1972. In its first four meetings in April and May the committee received background information from a number of officials involved in library service at the city, county, metropolitan and state level. It became apparent during these meetings that several options merited serious investigation. The committee then divided into 4 subcommittees, each with an assignment to review a different option.

The options were addressed to different aspects of library service but all had a common thread: placement of the Central Library in downtown Minneapolis on a permanent, solid financial footing. Not that this issue was seen by all committee members as the most important question. It was recognized, however that whatever proposal emerged would have to address this problem in one way or another.

The options under consideration were: (a) provide a statewide financing base by increasing state aid for all public libraries (b) provide a metropolitan financing base through the restructuring of the Metropolitan Library Service Agency (MELSA), now a voluntary association of public libraries in the metropolitan area, (c) provide a county-wide financing base through merger of the Minneapolis and Hennepin County Library systems (d) devise some approach to treat the Central Library in downtown Minneapolis separately from all others.

The subcommittees reported back in mid-June with possible details for each of the options. But the full committee found it very difficult to reach a consensus on any option or combination of options. Consequently it was decided it was decided to name a new subcommittee for further study. Membership on the subcommittee included representatives from the two library boards and citizen members. The subcommittee met several times in July and August without reaching agreement. To facilitate preparation of a report to the full committee, it was agreed to let the citizen members of the subcommittee meet separately and develop a proposal. This was accomplished. Rather than vote on the proposal from the citizen members, the subcommittee referred the proposal to the full committee without recommendation.

The full committee at its final meeting, December 4, 1972, adopted by majority vote the proposal of the citizen members, with minor changes.

The full committee, also by majority vote, recommended that the three-part proposal, as detailed below, be submitted as a single, unified package, not as three alternatives. In effect, the majority of the full committee supports (a) increased state aid (b) a restructured MELSA and (c) a merged Minneapolis-Hennepin County Library Board.

A minority report was submitted by committee members representing the Minneapolis Library Board and appears at the end of this document.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### I. State Aid

We support an annual state aid to public libraries of \$1 per capita plus \$10 per square mile statewide. The funds would be distributed in a two-step process. First, each library region of the state would receive its proportionate share considering its population and square miles. Second, within each library region, the statute will not specify how the money will be distributed to each library. Instead the distribution will be determined by the board of the designated regional agency, within certain state guidelines. Each regional agency is to develop a plan for distribution on the basis of services which one library system provides for another system or for the citizens who reside in an area of another system. A per capita distribution will be specifically disallowed.

Each regional agency's distribution plan would go into effect unless disapproved by the State Board of Education.

## II. MELSA Structure

- A. General Comments -- MELSA would be modified from a voluntary association of public libraries in the seven-county metropolitan area to a permanent, legislatively-created agency with a broad responsibility for library planning and service in general -- not just service as may be provided by the public libraries which have been members of MELSA to date.
- B. Structure of the MELSA Board -- The board would be made up of various citizens of the metropolitan area who are not employed by any library system nor serving on any other library board or holding any other public office. To provide adequate geographic representation and still satisfy the one-man-one-vote test the board should be larger than otherwise might be desirable, for example, as many as 14 or so. The same kind of open nominating process for appointment to the board would be followed as we recommend below for the Minneapolis-Hennepin County Library Board. The appointing body would be the Metropolitan Council. MELSA members would be appointed by district, not at-large, from areas of approximately equal population. Perhaps one could be named from each Metropolitan Council district.
- C. Powers and Responsibilities -- MELSA would be chiefly responsible for planning library service throughout the region and preparing recommendations for the Legislature on the desirability of MELSA arranging for centralized cataloging, uniform policies on purchase of materials, and adoption of uniform policies on fines, fees and other administrative details. Consistent with the state aid recommendation MELSA would, of course, prepare the plan for apportionment of state aid dollars among public libraries in the metropolitan area and to carry out its own responsibilities.

## III. Unification of the Minneapolis-Hennepin County Library Systems

- A. General comments -- While the plan for unification provides for a full merger of the systems, it does not preclude the possibility of postponing the effective date for a period of time or an interim period during which selected services may be merged while administration and finances still remain separate.
- B. Name -- The name of the new system should reflect the fact that it replaces the other two. An appropriate name would be the Minneapolis-Hennepin County Library System.
- C. Library Board of Trustees -- Continued recognition of the needs in both Minneapolis and suburban Hennepin plus the need to look at library service in the county as a whole, both city and suburban, has led us to propose as follows:
  - \* Open nominating process -- In all cases where appointments are to be made, the appointing authority shall solicit nominations for appointment

from groups deemed interested in libraries. In addition, any person or group may submit a nomination. Nominations from individuals or groups would include an indication of the willingness of the nominees to serve if selected. This would guard against abuse of the nominating process. The appointing authority itself would have the right to add additional names for consideration. A reasonable time before making the appointments, perhaps one week, the appointing authority would make public a list of all persons nominated, including those persons added by the appointing authority, but without revealing the source of any nominee. The appointments then would be made from that list.

\* A nine-member board -- selected as follows:

- Three residents of Minneapolis appointed by the Minneapolis City Council for three-year staggered terms, except that the first members appointed would be named by the outgoing Minneapolis Library Board and could include members of that Board.
- Three residents of suburban Hennepin County appointed by the Hennepin County Board for three-year staggered terms. Members may be members of the outgoing Hennepin County Library Board.
- Three residents, members at-large in the county, appointed by majority vote of the other six members, to three-year staggered terms. None of the three at-large members may have served on either the old Minneapolis or Hennepin County Library Boards.

If the other six members fail to make any of the three appointments by a certain date specified in the statute, the statute should provide for a "fail-safe" mechanism whereby the remaining appointments would be made forthwith from the list of nominees under consideration. Perhaps this job could be given to the chief judge of Hennepin County District Court or to the Governor.

- Vacancies would be filled in the same manner as other appointments.

\* Officers -- The nine-member board annually will elect officers, including a chairman and such other officers as needed, from among its own membership.

D. Finances --

\* Non-property revenues --

- All library-generated revenue plus all state and federal funds made available for libraries will be assigned to the Library Board for its use.
- State aid dollars which have been made available to the Minneapolis Library Board as part of municipal property tax relief must continue to be forthcoming to the new Library Board to assure no reduction in funds available to libraries and to avoid a property tax increase.

\* Property tax revenues --

- Based on its estimate of funds from other sources, the Library Board will determine the amount needed for operating purposes from a property tax levy and submit a levy request, along with its operating budget for the coming year, to the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners. If the levy request does not exceed the total dollars levied separately for the Minneapolis and Hennepin County Library Boards for operating purposes in the last year of their separate existence, the levy shall be approved by the County Board of Commissioners as submitted. The determination of the exact property tax levy above that amount will be made by the County Board of Commissioners, within a maximum mill levying authority as provided by state law or any other property tax limits the Legislature may impose. The maximum mill levying authority should be no less than the higher of the two maximums which have been in effect for the Minneapolis and Hennepin County Library Boards. If the County Board of Commissioners desires to reduce the proposed property tax levy below that requested by the Library Board, the County Board of Commissioners would state its reasons in writing hold a public hearing, and then make a final decision. Then the Library Board, as necessary, would adjust its operating budget accordingly. Any reduction in the requested tax levy could not, of course, reduce the amount below the legislatively-guaranteed minimum.

\* Operating expenditures --

- The Library Board will have full control over the allocation of dollars in its operating budget, from whatever source.

\* Capital budget --

- The Library Board will own, operate and manage all real and personal property and will approve plans for the renovation of old libraries and the building of new libraries and determine what properties shall be bought or sold.
- The Library Board will annually prepare a 15-year estimate of capital needs and a 5-year and a 1-year capital budget.
- To permit the building programs of the Minneapolis and Hennepin County Library Boards to proceed without interruption, the present county library limit of \$20 million in bonds, with a maximum of \$15 million outstanding at any time, would be increased to \$30 million, with a maximum of \$20 million outstanding at any time.
- Because the present building plans of Minneapolis and Hennepin County are in different stages of completion, it is not possible--initially--to adopt a uniform capital levy throughout the county. The law should look forward to--if not require--a time in the future when the capital levy will be the same throughout the county. In the interim, however, the following approach is to be followed:

- . All current outstanding debt will continue to be retired, separately, by Minneapolis and by suburban Hennepin.
- . Bonds issued for capital improvements outside Minneapolis will be retired by a levy on property outside Minneapolis with the present 2-mill statutory maximum for retirement of these bonds remaining in effect; bonds issued for improvements within Minneapolis, except for the central library, will be retired by a levy on property within Minneapolis; bonds issued for central library improvements will be retired by a mill levy on property in all of Hennepin County.

- \* Trust funds -- The trust funds of the Minneapolis and Hennepin County Library systems will be consolidated. All income and expenditures will be controlled by the Library Board. All future gifts, devises and bequests whether of real or of personal property will be received, at the discretion of the Library Board, and will be owned and managed by the Library Board. An annual independent audit will be made. Revenue from sale of property originally received as a gift shall be placed in the trust funds.

E. General powers and responsibilities --

- \* All policies relating to the functioning of the library will be made by the Library Board. These will include, but not be limited to, the kinds of service to be given, the hours of service, the determination of the contents of the collections, and the establishment of reasonable fees and fines.
- \* The Library Board would be charged with promoting the use of library service to all citizens of the county, which would include, but not be limited to, (a) new ways to make library cards available with a minimum of inconvenience to citizens, (b) being open during the hours of the day and week to be convenient to the maximum number of citizens, and (c) aggressive efforts to "market" certain specialized library services to potential users, including those services offered without charge as well as those for which fees may reasonably be imposed.
- \* The Library Board will be assigned the responsibility of (a) continuing to develop a strong reference and research capability with the Central Library in downtown Minneapolis as its core, and (b) establishing a system of community libraries convenient to the entire population of the county.
- \* While the Library Board will have legal responsibility for only a portion of library service within the county--since private, school and university libraries are under other administrations--the law should state, nevertheless, that the Library Board has a broad charge to plan for good library service throughout the county, from whatever source. As deemed necessary, the Library Board should submit recommendations to the Legislature on ways to accomplish more effective service utilizing all library resources in the county.

- \* The Library Board will hire necessary staff. All present employees of the Minneapolis and Hennepin County Public Libraries will become employees of the new Library Board, and will retain all present rights, benefits and perquisites, including the right to remain in their present pension fund. In effect, all employees will be assured of employment and benefit protection at least equal to that which they enjoy today.
  - \* The Library Board will utilize central services as provided by Hennepin County government, such as purchasing, accounting, attorney and personnel.
  - \* The Library Board will have power to enter into contracts with others, such as the Board of the Minneapolis Athenaeum, MELSA, consultants and architects.
  - \* Provisions of the Minneapolis City Charter pertaining to the Minneapolis Public Library will be superseded by the new law.
  - \* The Library Board will be designated as a non-profit charitable corporation, which will serve to assist it in receiving gifts and bequests.
  - \* The Minneapolis Athenaeum Board will be informed of this proposal. The new Library Board should commence negotiations with the Minneapolis Athenaeum to amend the existing contract with the Athenaeum to substitute the merged library system for the Minneapolis Public Library.
  - \* The Library Board will be responsible for museum service, a designation which has been held by the Minneapolis Library Board. The law should require that the Library Board report to the next session of the Legislature on whether, and how, to expand, maintain or discontinue museum service as part of the Library Board function.
- F. Continued study -- The statute should spell out that the Legislature recognizes that unique circumstances have led to the type of unification as herein provided for the Minneapolis and Hennepin County library systems, and that this should not necessarily be regarded as the "ultimate" framework. Therefore, the Legislature should provide a way for continued review of the overall organization and structure of library systems within the Twin Cities metropolitan area. This should be accomplished by the Legislature instructing the MELSA board as herein reconstituted to review its own structure and that of library systems within the region (including the system for Minneapolis-Hennepin County as herein provided) and report to the next session of the Legislature on any desirable changes.



## Citizens Library Study Committee

### Introduction to Minority Report

The Minority Report of the Citizens Library Study Committee argues that the original objective of the committee--to develop a formula for the "best library service at the lowest cost"--became lost. The long range philosophic overview is missing. The committee instead concentrated on administration and government of libraries rather than on recommendations for improving service for the patron, or recognizing changes in the pattern of service that metro suburban development has brought.

- I. The Minority Report concurs with the Majority Report in support of State Aid.
- II. The Minority Report is opposed to restructure of MELSA until there has been consultation with other MELSA members and consideration of their needs. The Majority Report recommendations have merit under such scrutiny.
- III. The Minority Report is opposed to merger because it is outdated, regressive, and too limited in view to achieve the stated goal since the studies of the early 60's recommended this. With the growth of population in the suburbs in the past decade library service is required and delivered to the entire metropolitan area without regard to political boundaries. Merger with the Hennepin County Library system creates an artificial unit which will needlessly complicate improvement of library service for the metropolitan area. It is thus shortsighted and does not further the public good.
- IV. The Majority Report is inadequate in its failure to recommend protection of the vital element of a good library system: the basic reference collection. In Minnesota the Minneapolis Central Library is that resource. This cannot be reproduced at any cost. It has the capacity for serving the entire state when funded adequately. Protecting the quality of this resource is the first priority of the Minneapolis Library Board.

December 14, 1972

## **Citizens Library Study Committee**

### **Minority Report**

It is greatly to the credit of Minneapolis and testifies to the strong commitment of citizen's dedication to good governmental practices that responsible, busy citizens have spent the past 9 months trying to thrash out and recommend changes to bring about improvements in library services and economies in the cost of operations for the Minneapolis and Hennepin County Libraries.

The Citizens Library Study Committee at the conclusion of its deliberations recommended changes affecting public libraries in the area of

- (1) Increased State Aid

- (2) Restructure of MELSA (Metropolitan Library Service Agency)

- (3) Merger of the Hennepin County and Minneapolis Public Library Systems.

This minority report is written with the intent of reviewing the process which led to the majority recommendations and demonstrating why the minority takes some exception to them. The minority is of the opinion that there were omissions in the gathering of information and that the Study Committee did not truly consider or evaluate enough facts to support its recommendations. The minority group is not opposed to change, but we want them to be well thought out.

The Library Study Committee stated its primary objective to be the recommendation of a formula for "the best library service at the lowest cost" in order to write a legislative program. The Committee did not address itself to "better service." The niceties of tidying up the administration of two separate library systems into one organizational chart became the overriding preoccupation of the majority to the exclusion of any consideration of how libraries can best meet human needs. We believe this may reflect the corporate business experience of the citizen members who are not attuned to operating a public service facility. During the sessions of the committee no specific criticism was ever made of the manner in which either library system is providing library service. There was no claim or demonstration of failure to perform within the limits of their taxing power or budget authority; of failure to be progressive or innovative in their programs, of inadequacy in maintaining their acquisitions in books, periodicals and other informational data; or improper planning in their building program; of overstaffing; or, of neglect of the needs of special groups found only in the inner city. One is led to believe the library patron has few problems with the libraries as presently organized.

In regard to the majority report recommendations:

- I. State Aid - We initiated the consideration of, and strongly support, increased state aid for public libraries as recommended here and in the State Board of Education's budget request to the Governor.

- II. MELSA - We do not oppose a restructuring of MELSA, but we do take exception to such recommendation at this time because MELSA Board opinion was never sought, nor was there at any time involvement of people from outside of Hennepin County. Yet the Study Committee found it could not consider library service except in terms of the natural service area--the Metropolitan Area.

The recommendations, therefore, were generated out of a limited group which did not choose to take advantage of different points of view. We believe that broader consultation should precede rather than follow publication of recommendations.

The Metropolitan Council, the Metropolitan League of Women Voters and the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce are just beginning to turn their attention to library service. Therefore the theoretical proposals of the majority are premature, though worthy of consideration by future studies.

- III. The third majority recommendation involves merging the Minneapolis Public and Hennepin County library systems into one operating entity. The testimony presented to the Study Committee does not yield evidence that merger would improve service to the patrons of either system nor that it would result in consequential cost savings.

As a matter of public policy it should be the general rule that a proposal to combine two existing units of government ought to come after a showing of overriding public interest. Such an assumption seems to have been made by the majority report, but there is a lack of public sentiment among Minneapolitans for such a merger. This pressure to merge these two governmental units appears to arise from purely political sources.

- IV. The Majority report is inadequate in regard to safeguarding the quality of the basic collection in the Minneapolis Central Library. We are concerned that a merged system will be dominated by suburban priorities. The Hennepin County Library Board has announced its first priority as that of providing neighborhood or branch library service. The Hennepin County Library Board has stated that preserving the quality of the Minneapolis Central Library collection is not its major priority; yet it is the existence of this as the back up reference facility which gives worth to all the public libraries of the region. Instead of merging of Minneapolis and Hennepin County Libraries the need is to expedite development of a plan whereby the collections of the metropolitan area can be used and maintained adequately to complement and supplement rather than duplicate each

other. That provides real cost saving. MELSA is beginning to effect such service. MELSA cannot do a more effective job until it has more authority, more money for staff, for planning and the commitment of all members to work towards such broader goals. Yet it is the obvious vehicle via which more unification of activities can be accomplished. The pressure for merger from the county impedes such progress.

The reduction of administrative units is not a panacea. If it were, then all local administrative units should be dismantled and surrendered to the counties, perhaps even to the state. It is a demonstrable proposition that fewer organizational units do not necessarily improve service or reduce costs.

We assert that merger will not advance the public interest; the merger recommendation of the majority is detrimental to the public interest in the following respects:

- (1) it is outdated and shortsighted.
- (2) it seeks to replace an elected body with an appointed one which then removes the library from any reasonable exercise of control by citizens.
- (3) it by-passes the checks and balances of fiscal control, particularly with respect to capital expenditures by giving the new organization power to incur bonded indebtedness up to \$30 million without adequate review or veto.
- (4) Minneapolis Central Library would not be guaranteed priority consideration to maintain its quality and to reach its full potential as a metropolitan back-up resource.

To conclude, we oppose the introduction of a bill merging the two systems. Merger is outdated and regressive. A metropolitan consideration of library service retaining local control is indicated by current use patterns in the real city. Functions proposed to be handled by a merged system can be handled by enlarging the scope of MELSA. The majority report falls short in three major respects:

- A. it fails to take into account tax impact, cost savings, service improvements, or protection of the prime reference collection.
- B. it grows out of a narrowly constituted committee that did not weigh all of the community interests (e.g. minority and disadvantaged peoples) and that did not consult sufficiently beyond the borders of the county although its recommendations have wide repercussions that would affect other libraries in the Metropolitan area.

C. it rationalizes an outdated position with respect to merger.

We urge the conscientious people who served on the Citizens Library Study Committee to concentrate their efforts on the Study Committee's first recommendation: increased state aid for libraries to provide for regional library development and to help relieve urban library overburden.

The authors of the minority report are interested in exploring in depth the question of a broader base of funding for the Minneapolis Central Library, treating it separately from the branch libraries. The question is complex and needs to be done in an unpressured atmosphere. Consideration would be given to feasibility of shaping a unique reference service possibly in conjunction with St. Paul Central Library which would have the capacity to serve the entire state. Such need has been spelled out in the State Plan for Library Service adopted by the State Board of Education in 1972.

December 14, 1972