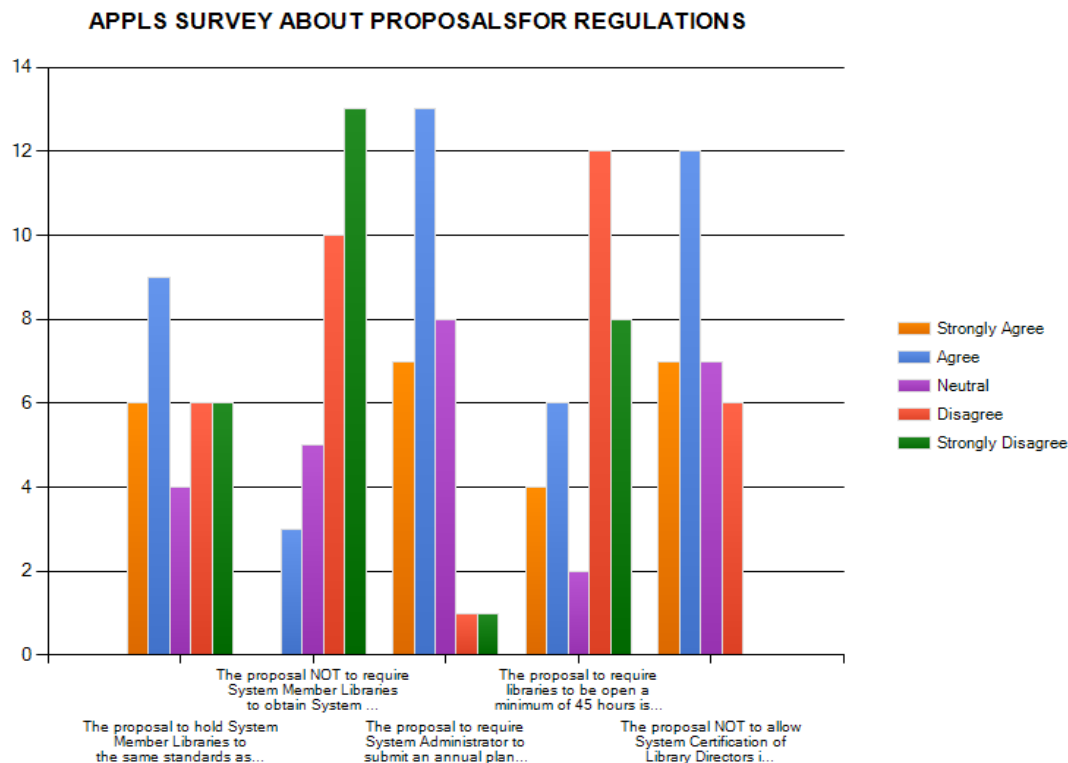


APPLS Survey Concerning Proposed Changes to Regulations of the Pa. Library Code

Introduction

After the conversation between Stacey and the System Administrators (SAs) in Carlisle on January 29th, it was not apparent that there was consensus on the proposed changes to the regulations relevant to Systems. The Officers of APPLS felt that surveying the System Administrators about the degree of their support for the proposals would provide a basis for discussion among the SAs and, hopefully, useful feedback to OCL. The survey was emailed to 34 SAs and it was completed by 32 SAs.

Results of Survey



Highlights of Survey Results

The SAs generally agree on the value of three proposals.

- Seventy-four percent of the SAs Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the proposal to limit the System Board’s function to approve renovations and/or new construction.
- Sixty-eight percent of the SAs Agree or Strongly Agree with the proposal to submit an annual plan, but there are questions as to what this plan would actually require.
- Sixty-six percent of the SAs agree that System Certification should be discontinued.

The SAs generally split on the value of two proposals.

- Forty-eight percent of the SAs Agree or Strongly Agree that holding all libraries to the same standards would not seriously affect their Systems. Thirty-eight percent of the SAs Disagree or Strongly Disagree that the proposal would seriously affect their Systems.
- Sixty-three percent of the SAs Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the proposal to require libraries to be open a minimum of 45 hours. Thirty-two percent of the SAs Agree or Strongly Agree with the minimum number of hours.

Survey Results and Comments

It should be pointed out that when SAs had strong feelings about a proposal they tended to make detailed comments about their feelings, whereas SAs who did not have strong feelings about a proposal tended not to make comments or to provide only short comments. Therefore the comments provide a fairly complete picture of why SAs may strongly support a proposal but only sketchy information about why SAs did not support a proposal.

Table One					
The proposal to hold System Member Libraries to the same standards as Non-System Libraries will “NOT SERIOUSLY” affect my System.					
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
6	9	4	6	6	31
19%	29%	13%	19%	19%	

Table One indicates the 48% of the SAs Agree or Strongly Agree that holding all libraries to the same standards would not seriously affect their Systems. Thirty-eight percent of the SAs Disagree or Strongly Disagree that the proposal would seriously affect their Systems.

The two comments made by the SAs agreeing with this proposal indicated that all the libraries in their Systems already met the non-member standard. One SA taking the Neutral stand suggested libraries not able to meet standards may need to become branches.

There were eight comments from SAs who did not support this proposal. These SAs cited the historical reason that independent libraries joined a System in order to be held to specific System standards in exchange for agreeing to share resources, to provide county-wide services and to provide one voice when dealing with county commissioners. A SA quote: “Individual libraries that are non-system libraries collaborate less & meet less & really do function alone.” On the point of the 12% of collection expenditures, one SA cited the difficulty for individual libraries to meet this standard when funds are spent at the System level for e-books, e-audios, and ILS services. The added costs of meeting these standards independently would lead to closure of a number of libraries.

Table Two					
The proposal NOT to require System Member Libraries to obtain System Board approval for renovations and new construction is a GOOD idea.					
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
0	3	5	10	13	31
0%	10%	16%	32%	42%	

Table Two shows that seventy-four percent of the SAs Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the proposal to limit the System Board’s function to approve renovations and/or new construction while only 10 percent support the proposal.

SAs who disagree with this proposal cite the need for coordination on a county-wide level to ensure that county funds are being used for new construction or renovation where there is adequate need for services in that location to justify the expenditure of funds. On the continuous fund issue one SA says “The System will be providing operating support in perpetuity for the member libraries and should have a say in size of building, timing of campaign/construction, etc.” Other SAs comment that a planning model is necessary to demonstrate need, financial capability, and the effects new construction will have on the extension of the network, technology and other support services.

Two SAs who support this proposal commented that it should be the library’s choice to move ahead with construction or renovation as long as system funds are not used or the federated library raises adequate funds to cover the project.

Table Three					
The proposal to require System Administrators to submit an annual plan is a GOOD idea.					
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
7	14	8	1	1	31
23%	45%	26%	3%	3%	

Table Three indicates that sixty-eight percent of the SAs Agree or Strongly Agree with the proposal to submit an annual plan but there are questions as to what this plan would actually require. Six percent of the SAs Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the proposal.

A quote from an SA sums up the questions about this proposal: “It depends on the process that is designed: what are the criteria, the accountability, the consequences, etc.? Is this parallel to the District plan? When Districts and Systems overlap, shouldn't there be a collaborative, comprehensive plan?”

Table Four					
The proposal to require libraries to be open a minimum of 45 hours is needed to meet the needs of the communities libraries serve.					
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
4	6	2	12	8	32
13%	19%	6%	38%	25%	

Table Four indicates that sixty-three percent of the SAs Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the proposal to require libraries to be open a minimum of 45 hours. Thirty-two percent of the SAs Agree or Strongly Agree with the minimum number of hours.

SAs who disagree with this proposal cite staff costs, misallocation of funds, not taking into account community needs. In small libraries there is a need to keep the minimum number of hours below 40 hours because they cannot afford to pay more than one to one and a half FTEs. For security reasons, libraries often need two staff members working at all times. Funds are misallocated when staff is paid to keep a library open when few patrons enter. Funds used for open hours cannot be used to purchase materials or replace computers. One SA’s comment on community needs: “Libraries in small communities with hours meeting community needs that are regularly posted & allow for the community to utilize library resources for 35 hours has been sufficient for over ten years.” This proposal does not take into consideration non-duplicated hours with main and local hours.

SAs who agree with this proposal fear that without a set number of hours for weekdays and weekends there will be a decline in accessibility and libraries will be open to meet the availability of staff rather than the convenience of the customers. The idea of libraries becoming branches was also mentioned.

One SA suggested an alternative to the proposal: “I think a baseline number is needed but more importantly a variety of hours that should include an evening or two, a morning or two, weekend hours - a minimum of 5 hours. Population served, square footage of your facility and community assessment all taken into consideration.”

Table Five					
The proposal NOT to allow System Certification of Library Directors is a Good idea.					
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
7	12	7	19	0	32
28%	38%	22%	19%	0%	

Table Five indicates sixty-six percent of the SAs agree that System Certification should be discontinued. Nineteen percent disagree with this proposal and 22 percent remained neutral.

SAs who agreed with this proposal cited the need for professionalism, a marker to help Boards when hiring, and need for standardization of certification. The need for professionalism was summed up by one SA: “If we want to be taken seriously as a profession, if we want to have funders take us seriously we need to stop this nonsense of System Certification. We want quality libraries, we need to have quality, educated, and skilled people running them...not just old ladies who love to read or the bored niece of some bullying board member.” To assist boards a minimum education requirement is necessary because Boards have a tendency to hire "anyone" with System Certification standard in place. Concerning standardization one SA commented: “Until System Certification is the same in every system and designed at a higher level, you will have some systems rubber-stamping certification while others take it seriously.”

Two SAs Neutral comments make the case for training offered by OCL to replace System Certification and also to have a grandfather clause if System Certified Librarians are no longer recognized.

“So many state libraries provide strong systematic certification courses for different levels of staff. Particularly in states where there is not an adequate MLS pool for hiring library directors. I wish that PA would put something more behind this. Until/unless this is done by OCL—I don’t understand why systems would not remain empowered to certify library directors. I think it would be unfair if OCL removed this empowerment without something effective in place at the exact same time the empowerment was taken away.”

“This would need to be a grandfathered-in case due to those already system certified. Requiring a librarian to go back to school after many years of running a library is illogical. You learn by doing & you will learn more on the job than you will ever learn in school. Being able to find future replacements to work at the current wages (often minimum wage to start) is going to be the real problem. Anyone with a degree will not take these jobs so you will be creating a real problem to fill the positions. Even my position as library director after 21 years is only paying starting wage salaries with no benefits, so all public libraries may face hardships hiring qualified candidates....”

APPENDIX

COMMENTS MADE BY SYSTEM ADMINISTRATORS

COMMENTS MADE ON THE SURVEY TO PROPOSAL #1

1. The proposal to hold System Member Libraries to the same standards as Non-System Libraries will “NOT SERIOUSLY” affect my System.

Strongly Disagree

C1. It would have quite an impact on us.

C2. This affects our smallest libraries with one staff member open 35 hours & no way to be open 45 hours. Financially they can't afford to be open 45 hours. Goal of systems was to work together to support the smaller libraries & help them. That is why we have a system administrator to go & assist them as needed. We provide more support for our small libraries than our large libraries with staff. Library boards want to function as individual libraries to serve their individual community & the system coordinates the services countywide to ensure residents in the county have service. Forcing these small libraries to become branches complicates the annual report statistics because it forces two entities to put their budgets & statistics together. They will still function separately, since I have seen it elsewhere in my district in prior years (both libraries wanted to be counted separately). The thinking seems to be the exact opposite of what we have believed is reason for a system, which was to pull resources and services. Yes, depending on the funding in your county will depend on your level of system service. Funding & individual library needs has created the differences seen in system services. It seemed that we wanted to encourage libraries to work in systems so that we promoted collaboration. Making all standards the same takes away the incentive to collaborate, meet together & share resources. Individual libraries that are non-system libraries collaborate less & meet less & really do function alone.

C3. The idea behind Systems is to share resources to enable better services to the public, while this is a laudable goal... it may not be practical and cause the closure of many small libraries since consolidation is not likely.

C4. This is a system member benefit that helps to hold the system together. It is benefit that many of the libraries have used at various time when they have had a “down” year in meeting the collection expenditures, maintaining LFE or maintaining local government income from year to year. It is benefit that I have sighted to Commissioners when they ask the workings of a System.

Disagree

C1 My libraries are so small that their budgets are below \$100,000 per year-- inadequate to operate at those standards.

C2. It will affect them but I don't disagree that stronger standards for system members should be held to some higher standards as they receive incentive aid.

C3. Collection % in particular especially as we shift \$ to ebooks and eaudio which is at system level

C4. Purpose of lesser standards was an invitation for smaller libraries to join a system.

Strongly Agree

C1. There are no non-system member libraries in my system so this would not be an issue for me.

C2. For the most part, libraries in Lackawanna County already meet the same standards as non-system libraries.

Agree

C1. Berks County has always held system members to the same standards as independent local libraries.

Neutral

C1. All members of my system are currently meeting standards, though I see how this could be a real issue for those system who have larger members "pulling-up" the smaller members, etc. However, I feel that there does need to be standards to exist as a state-supported public library and if a small library can't meet these basic standards, then perhaps we need to look at them becoming branches, etc.

COMMENTS MADE ON THE SURVEY TO PROPOSAL #2

2. The proposal NOT to require System Member Libraries to obtain System Board approval for renovations and new construction is a GOOD idea.

Strongly Disagree

C1. We need to be able to guide county-wide service and location of libraries is a vital part of that

C2. The system is there to look out for the best interests of the whole. They should be aware of what is going on at the individual library level and support efforts.

C3. The System Administrator and the System Board need to be kept informed and must give approval for renovations/construction. Otherwise we will have chaos.

C4. Have seen our libraries (all sizes) need help & planning with building projects. Our system administrator has been active in four major library renovations or building projects. One library more recently did exclude the system administrator from planning although they needed the system to support their Key 93 project, so they report to the county board at meetings.

C5. Two major concerns: (1) The System Board should have a role in coordinating access to library services (where are new libraries needed, which libraries need renovation/expansion, where are there too many libraries already); (2) The System will be providing operating support in perpetuity for the member libraries and should have a say in size of building, timing of campaign/construction, etc.

C6. The System Board is responsible for service to the System service area, shouldn't they be allowed to 'weigh in' on new facilities as that is still a major factor in public service.

C7. .Construction may affect the system as a whole and the system members need to be aware of such projects.

Disagree

C1. We need teeth in the requirement, not to let them build with no review process.

C2. I think it would be okay not to require approval of System Board for renovations, but for new construction I think it would be a good idea to have System Board approval.

C3. If the library gets in over their head, there is the chance it will pull down the other libraries in the system.

C4. There needs to be some mechanism in place to demonstrate need and financial capability.

C5. There are consequences for countywide service when new or expanded locations are planned without system review or input. Expectations about extending network, technology, and other support may be unrealistic without system input.

Neutral

C1. If the system is going to take on additional expenses (not paid for by the member) as a result of renovations or new construction then it should be MANDATORY for the member to get approval via the system process. This could be at the level of local system agreements.

C2. Change wording to consultation or make the systems decide to include/not include in their system standards/agreements.

Agree

C1. As long as system funds are not used for the project.

C2. They are independent libraries. If they raise the funds to renovate or construct they should. System board may not be able to "approve" but some requirement to keep system board in the loop.

COMMENTS MADE ON THE SURVEY TO PROPOSAL #3

3. The proposal to require System Administrator to submit an annual plan is a GOOD idea.

Strongly Disagree

C1. We submit a Count Coordination Plan that is enough. When the State pays for the entire operation of the library system, they may require an annual plan of action for improvement.

C2. We already submit county coordination aid plan and plans for use of state aid

Strongly Agree

C1. It tends to keep people on task if there is a plan at the start.

Agree

C1. We wear 3 hats: we don't have a separate system admin. It is more work...

C2. Needs more explanation since we already do a county coordination plan (don't see what else they would want from the system). Our system already includes everything we are able to do with funds in our county coordination plan. This may not be the same for other systems.

C3. Planning is a good thing, as long as it is not onerous.

C4. Is this referring to County Coordination plans? If so, then, yes, I think they are a good idea.

Neutral

C1. Need more information on what might be required and what this might replace.

C2. It depends on the process that is designed: what are the criteria, the accountability, the consequences, etc.? Is this parallel to the District plan? When Districts and Systems overlap, shouldn't there be a collaborative, comprehensive plan?

C3. While to me the goal is to encourage strategic thinking, this just seems like yet more paperwork.

COMMENTS MADE ON THE SURVEY TO PROPOSAL #4

4. The proposal to require libraries to be open a minimum of 45 hours is needed to meet the needs of the communities libraries serve.

Strongly Disagree

C1. Not realistic for libraries with small service area

C2. I believe that there should be a range of hours permitted and funded and that it would be fair if libraries are offering fewer hours or resources they should receive less funding.

C3. Each community's needs should be determined by each individual library /community, not by the state.

C4. I think a baseline number is needed but more importantly a variety of hours that should include an evening or two, a morning or two, weekend hours min of 5. Population served, square footage of your facility and community assessment all taken into consideration.

C4. 35 hours for smaller communities is acceptable

C5. How is a set # meeting the needs of communities? Maybe 45 as an average, allowing some libraries to be open 25 or 30 and others to be open 55 or 60.

C6. I think 45 hours is too many. I think there should be a standard for hours, but not that many (45 is too many).

Disagree

C1. I think in systems, a schedule of operating hours that represents a variety of opening hours as opposed to everyone operating from basically a similar schedule would be more beneficial to county residents. It might be more cost effective for some libraries to be open fewer hours, but at staggered times around the county.

C2. My two little libraries that would have to increase hours would not see an increase in usage. They are now "dead" on Saturdays.

C3. Member libraries are struggling with 35 hours. Hours should be what is best for the community not a dictated amount.

C4. This would have quite a negative impact on our libraries' ability to serve their communities. What good is it if the library is open 45 hours but doesn't have enough money to replace computers or buy materials.

C5. You need to keep the hours below 40. Most libraries cannot afford more than one to one and a half fte's

C6. This allows no flexibility in terms of local/county determination of where and when hours are appropriate. In addition, does this take into consideration non-duplicative hours with main and branch locations?

C7. Libraries in small communities with hours meeting community needs that are regularly posted & allow for the community to utilize library resources for 35 hours has been sufficient for over ten years. Now libraries have less funds to keep the doors open yet they provide more services than ever before. Requiring them to be open 10 more hours a week will eliminate their eligibility for incentive aid state funding, which these libraries have depended on for well over ten years. No matter the size

of the library if they were eligible for the aid previously than the requirements should still allow them to be eligible for the aid. It is not library board members and librarians fault that historical library funding is poor and often cut on a basis of funding crisis.. Libraries are always going to be a target for budget cuts even when they are loved they can't compete with sewage and water needs, fire companies, maintenance of prisons, increases in medical costs, or juvenile rehabilitation. Local municipalities are always looking to keep the taxes low and still keep the roads maintained. Now they have more needs to meet than ever, which can include legal costs. Our system tried a library referendum and it showed that people who live in small rural communities won't vote to increase taxes even for libraries. The local municipalities that supported the library well already would vote to support a library tax and those not paying for the library voted NO to paying a library tax. Thus why we have so many local municipalities in PA trying to keep the taxes down,

Strongly Agree

- C1. Outreach sites and improved websites and e-resources might be allowed to be part of the mix if a sound plan is submitted.
- C2. YES! There must be minimum hours of operation and YES there must be mandated evening and weekend hours or there will be a swift decline in accessibility--libraries will be open at the convenience of the staff not in response to the needs of the community.
- C3. I don't think there should be separate standards for basic service hours. It might be 35 or it might be 45, but it should be the same.
- C4. Idealistically I like this hours requirement but realistically this is going to be really difficult.
- C5. I feel that there does need to be standards to exist as a state-supported public library and if a small library can't meet these basic standards, then perhaps we need to look at them becoming branches, etc

Neutral

- C1. My libraries are all open more than 45 hours a week. We should consider offering libraries unable to be open this many hours an incentive to merge with another library.
- C2. I really like that they are talking about meeting the needs of the community, I'd just like to see how they are going to define that (metrics/surveys/etc)

COMMENTS MADE ON THE SURVEY TO PROPOSAL #5

5. The proposal NOT to allow System Certification of Library Directors is a Good idea.

Strongly Agree

- C1. A minimum education requirement assists boards in their hiring. The lowest level should be the qualifications for Library Asst. That being said, having more options to get the library science credits is needed. Also I believe some grandfathering in of those system certified would have to be offered but with time (2 -3 yrs) to obtain what is needed.
- C2. Require at least "something" official. Boards have a tendency to hire "anyone" with that standard in place. Breathing is the only requirement.
- C3. Until System Certification is the same in every system and designed at a higher level, you will have some systems rubber-stamping certification while others take it seriously.
- C4. If we want to be taken seriously as a profession, if we want to have funders take us seriously we need to stop this nonsense of System Certification. We want quality libraries, we need to have quality, educated, and skilled people running them...not just old ladies who love to read or the bored neice of some bullying board member.

Agree

- C1. Statewide consistency for system certification would be beneficial.
- C2. Certification of library directors should happen at the state level.
- C3. Although I believe this will affect all of the other libraries, I think that Library Directors should be professionally trained in order to create a more robust set of libraries in the state.
- C4. No one knows what system certification means.
- C5. The question is very confusing and with the answer involves a double negative.
- C6. This does not affect my system. However, I suspect that the process varies greatly from system to system. However, a new certification process for this level of library should not require a significant expenditure of time/money on the part of the new library director.

Netural

- C1. So many state libraries provide strong systematic certification courses for different levels of staff. Particularly in states where there is not an adequate MLS pool for hiring library directors. Or states where local financial distress makes it impossible to pay an MLS a good salary. I wish that PA would put something more behind this. Until/unless this is done by CL—I don't understand why systems would not remain empowered to certify library directors. I think it would be unfair if CW removed this empowerment without something effective in place at the exact same time the empowerment was taken away
- C2. Again need more specifics. Replace this with something specific or make requirements clear at system level
- C3. Depends on what would replace system certification. Requiring library assistant or provisional will be extremely difficult.
- C4. My libraries would strongly disagree with this statement. This would need to be a grandfathered in case due to those already system certified. Requiring a librarian to go back to school after many years of running a library is illogical. You learn by doing & you will learn more on the job than you will ever learn in school. Being able to find future replacements to work at the current wages (often minimum wage to start) is going to be the real problem. Anyone with a degree will not take these jobs so you will be creating a real problem to fill the positions. Even my position as library director after 21 years is only paying starting wage salaries with no benefits, so all public libraries may face hardships hiring qualified candidates. When I was in college it was rare for anyone to go for a public library degree, since they knew the money was in schools. Even I took all the college classes to work in a school environment, so it is my choice to work in public libraries for less. Unfortunately, college students graduated with a lot of debt and public libraries aren't paying enough to help them pay the cost of student loans.
- C5. I'd like to know how a system can 'certify' a library director to begin with ... I need more info.
- C6. It depends on the library's service population. I think for smaller populations, system certification is sufficient

Disagree

- C1. While I understand that smaller places may not be able to afford to pay an MLS librarian, I feel that it is a great disservice to our profession that "just anyone off the street" can do our job. There needs to be some sort of formal training -- perhaps state sponsored -- that assures that all state-aided libraries are staffed with properly trained directors, etc.