



For Immediate Release
Monday, September 12, 2022

Rock County Board Approves Library Merger, Two Counties Yet to Vote

Thursday, September 8, 2022 – Janesville, Wis. – The Rock County Board of Supervisors is the first of three counties to consider a resolution to merge Arrowhead Library System (ALS) and Lakeshores Library System (LLS) and passed it with a vote of 26:0. Racine and Walworth counties must also pass similar resolutions approving the formation of the new, merged Prairie Lakes Library System (PLLS) ahead of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction’s (DPI) October 15 deadline for annual Public Library System Plans. Committee consideration in Racine County begins Tuesday, September 13, and committee consideration in Walworth County begins Thursday, September 22.

Prior to the vote, Rock County Supervisor Bill Wilson summarized the benefits of a merger, “The result of the merger is fewer dollars being spent on administrative purposes and more dollars being available for direct services to aid libraries.”

In August of 2021, the Boards of Trustees of ALS and LSS each voted to embark on a journey to determine if the two library systems should merge, thus forming a new regional library system that would serve the counties of Racine, Rock, and Walworth.

The eight-member ALS/LLS Joint Merger Exploration Committee identified and researched issues related to the merger. The committee compiled the issue research with background information, supporting documents, and an executive summary creating the detailed Final Recommendation Report. The Joint Merger Committee voted 7-1 to recommend a system merger. The ALS and LLS Boards of Trustees reviewed the final recommendation document. Then in July, each library system board voted unanimously to proceed with a merge.

“This merger is so exciting for our area because it solidifies a lot of partnerships patrons are already benefitting from and opens the door for additional improvements,” says Steve Platteter, Director of Arrowhead Library System.

Prairie Lakes Library System would begin operation on January 1, 2023, and maintain current services and operations during its first year. PLLS also plans to engage in year-one strategic planning to align its services with the needs of its 22 public library members. Patrons will not be directly affected by the merger; local library boards will maintain local control over their policies and procedures as before (as outlined in state statutes), and because library systems are funded through state appropriations and fees to member libraries, county budgets need not be altered. The merger's major benefit is reduced overhead and administration costs, which will result in more dollars for services.



The ALS/LLS Joint Merger Exploration Committee's Final Recommendation Report and other public documents relating to the proposed merge are available at <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Kgm2-75arnZG2xBdV-LXVx28-JNL094m?usp=sharing>. County Board meetings and meetings of the ALS/LLS Joint Merger Exploration Committee are open meetings with time for public comment. Send questions to als-llsjointcommittee@wils.org.

About Wisconsin Public Library Systems

The creation of public library systems fostered the establishment of a strong network of resource sharing and mutually beneficial interdependence. The creation and development of public library systems in Wisconsin were voluntary and gradual. No county or public library is required to be a member of a library system; yet, as of this writing, all of Wisconsin's 72 counties and more than 380 public libraries are library system members. Wisconsin's 16 public library systems developed in distinct ways in response to the needs of their member libraries and area residents. According to the statutes, two library systems may merge if approved by the System Boards of Trustees and the County Boards of Supervisors of the participating counties.

###

Contact: Tovah Anderson, Public Information Coordinator
 Arrowhead Library System
 608-868-2872

 Steve Platteter, Director
 Arrowhead Library System
 608-868-2872 Cell: 262-689-9179

 Steve Ohs, Administrator
 Lakeshores Library System
 262-514-4500 x68