LIBRARY BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:
Victoria Cox, Bruce Kessel, David Norrgard, Roberta Weltzin, Lori-Anne Williams, Susan Wolsfeld

LIBRARY BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:
Matthew Anderson

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:
Susan Nemitz, Library Director; Mary Larson, Library Board Coordinator; Sandy Walsh, Library Manager; Julie Neville, Building Services Manager

OTHERS PRESENT:
Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County Commissioner; Joan Bartell, Friends of the Suburban Ramsey County Libraries; Marlene Moulten Janssen, Sally Lederer, Metropolitan Library Service Agency; Geruth Buetow, Arden Hills resident

CALL TO ORDER:
Norrgard called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Conference Room of the Library’s Administrative Offices, 4570 North Victoria Street in Shoreview.

PUBLIC COMMENT/INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS:
Lori-Anne Williams was welcomed to her first official meeting as a Library Board trustee, and visitors were introduced.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES:
At the suggestion of Cox and Norrgard, a “Resolution Regarding the Successful Grand Opening of the New Ramsey County Library in North St. Paul” was prepared by staff and added to the agenda.

At Kessel’s suggestion, the January 19, 2005 Library Board minutes were amended to include the paragraph on MELSA Initiatives. The February 28, 2005 minutes were amended to state that Norrgard called the meeting to order and adjourned the meeting, rather than Cox. A paragraph explaining the cancellation of the February business meeting was added, along with Kessel’s request for a condensed five-year budget projection to be included as part of the budget information prepared for the Board.

Kessel made a motion to approve the Library Board agenda for March 16, 2005 as amended, the Library Board minutes of January 19, 2005 as amended, the February 2, 2005 minutes as presented, and the February 28, 2005 minutes as amended. Cox seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

MELSA INITIATIVES:
Marlene Moulten Janssen, Executive Director, and Sally Lederer, Promotions Director, were present to update the Library Board on MELSA initiatives. Janssen began by giving background information on the MELSA organization, which was founded in 1969 under a joint powers agreement between the seven counties and two cities in the Twin Cities metro area. MELSA is one of twelve regional library systems in the State of Minnesota, and is governed by the same laws that apply to public libraries. Its budget for 2005 is $3.1 million dollars, which comes primarily from State funding designated to support library services and provide cash reimbursements to member libraries. MELSA has both a Governing Board, comprised of one representative from each of the nine member libraries, and an Advisory Board, comprised of the nine library directors. Teams composed of representatives from each system move MELSA business forward, with MELSA initiatives achieved via cooperation of the member libraries.
Lederer distributed MELSA pins and informational folders to the Library Board and visitors present. She briefly mentioned recent promotional efforts, including the bus advertisements focusing on reciprocity of services, the updated MELSA library card application form, which has been translated into many different languages, the MELSA Summer Reading Program Kickoff, which features Booker™, the RCL mascot, and the library booth at the Minnesota State Fair. She noted that the next promotional campaign will feature the databases funded by MELSA and available at the nine library systems in the metro area.

Nemitz noted that MELSA also provides quality professional development opportunities for library staff at no cost, an extremely valuable service due to limited budgets.

**2006-2007 BUDGET TIMELINE:**
Ramsey County has proposed its timeline for the new two-year budget process. A budget kickoff meeting will be held April 1, and the Library’s 2006-2007 budget request will be due on June 3. A budget hearing with the County Manager is scheduled for June 8, and departmental budget hearings with the County Board are tentatively scheduled for October and November.

The new two-year budget process will allow flexibility for minor updates in the second year, but leave time for the County Board and departments to focus on policy issues.

**FACILITIES PLANNING UPDATE:**

**North St. Paul:** Nemitz reported that the grand opening of the new library in North St. Paul on March 12 was very well attended, with many local dignitaries present. Press coverage was exceptional, and Nemitz showed a video clip from a local newscast regarding the opening celebration. Refreshments were donated by the North St. Paul Tap & Grill, and the staff all worked very hard to ensure the day’s success. Nemitz will provide monthly statistics on the usage of the new facility for the first few months.

Nemitz also noted that the State of Minnesota has a lien against the former library facility in North St. Paul, due to an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) grant received in 1997. The grant amount at that time was $11,500, but the current fair share that must be repaid to the State has been assessed at $22,000. The County has elected not to protest the assessment and potentially risk losing the buyer for the property.

**Maplewood:** The 60-day moratorium approved by the Board on February 28 has begun. Library and Property Management staff, working with the City of Maplewood, have begun exploring potential alternative sites in Maplewood for a new facility. Nemitz displayed a map featuring potential sites near Maplewood Mall. Commissioner Reinhardt suggested that the City of Maplewood could purchase and donate a new site for the library, which has been done with several other sites in suburban Ramsey County over the years. Kessel also suggested that the Library Board consider a multi-use facility if the current site is deemed unworkable.

The Maplewood design team continues to revise the schematic drawings to bring the cost estimates within budget. Some square footage can be trimmed without a significant impact on the program needs of the library, but other cuts would undermine the purpose of the expansion. The Library Board reaffirmed its desire to have a coffee shop, and reiterated the importance of including an automated materials handling system, which helps staff keep up with increased business. Nemitz noted that other cost-saving measures are being considered, including a fund-raising campaign similar to that used for North St. Paul; asking the County to reduce its property management fee for the project; and not offering service at an alternative location during construction.

**Arden Hills:** Nemitz reported that she, Nick Riley and Terry Speiker of the County Manager’s Office, and Jody Yungers of Ramsey County Parks & Recreation, met with Senator Chaudhary to follow up on his proposal to seek State funding for a combined library/interpretive center in Arden Hills. Basic guidelines for State funding require that such a facility must have regional significance to qualify, and Ramsey County would be required to fund half of the project cost. The State would maintain an ownership interest in the facility, similar to the situation at North St. Paul with the ADA grant.
The timing of Senator Chaudhary’s proposal may potentially conflict with Parks & Recreation department initiatives, which include creating a park area on the arsenal site.

If this proposal moves forward, additional partners would need to be identified. Nemitz will contact the Science Museum of Minnesota to determine if they would have any interest in partnering with the Library in Arden Hills. Cox volunteered to help brainstorm partnership ideas.

LIBRARY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM:
At the February 28, 2005 Library Board retreat, the Board asked Nemitz to prepare an overview of how a “Library Ambassador Program” might be implemented. This idea was first suggested during the Board’s strategic planning during 2004.

Nemitz indicated that she attempted to create a program which would discourage staff from skipping over the library’s staff managers if a problem arose. Under Nemitz’s proposal, each Board member would be assigned a library facility, outside their home city, and would be responsible for following local community happenings, City Council meetings, and school district initiatives. Board ambassadors would also meet annually with the Library Director, branch manager, and branch staff to discuss the state of the branch library.

The Board discussed the considerations outlined by Nemitz in the draft proposal, including whether this approach will increase responsiveness and improve the relationships between the Board, Director and staff, and whether Board members are willing and able to commit the time required of the additional responsibilities.

Cox spoke in favor of the draft proposal, while Wolsfeld expressed concern that she does not have the additional time to commit to these new duties. The Board discussed whether adopting such a program would discourage future applicants to the Library Board because of the time commitment expected.

Other options were discussed, including utilizing a clipping service to keep abreast of local issues, or determining whether Ramsey County has a staff member already performing this task, which could benefit the Library as well. Adopting portions of the proposal was also considered. Ultimately, the Library Board decided to give the program a trial run, without any formal expectations for each Board member. Nemitz will outline seven libraries with appropriate community assignments for the April meeting.

2004 YEAR END RESERVE LIST:
At the end of each budget year, all Ramsey County departments are required to submit a list of unpaid obligations and planned expenditures. The Library’s proposed list of encumbrances for 2004 totals $96,461.44, which includes primarily unpaid obligations from 2004, along with unspent balances in technology funding and branch discretionary funds from vending revenue.

Also reserved are funds attached to remaining projects from 2003, 2002 and 2001 funding, which the staff recommends for carryover. Ramsey County Budgeting & Accounting has asked that the Library Board reaffirm these encumbrances as well as those from 2004.

No special project funding is recommended from 2004 unspent funds. Additional revenues received but not appropriated during will fall into the Library’s fund balance, a practice encouraged by Ramsey County Budgeting and Accounting.

Nemitz noted that she is instituting a policy that unspent funds will only be carried for one year, rather than the current County guideline of three years. This policy will take effect at the end of 2005.

Cox made a motion to approve the 2004, 2003, 2002 and 2001 encumbrances as proposed by Library staff. Williams seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously by the Library Board.
LIBRARY FINES AND FEES:
Library fines are charged to encourage customers to return materials in good condition and in a timely manner, making them available for other customers. The Library Board reviews fines and fees annually in conjunction with the budget preparation process. Library staff recommends that the current fine structure be reaffirmed.

The current library fines and fees were last revised in 2003, when the Library Board approved increasing the adult daily overdue fee from $0.25 to $0.30 per item, and also approved lowering the fine threshold from $10 to $5.

Cox made a motion to approve the current library fines and fees. Williams seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. Kessel recommended that the Library Board consider implementing changes next year, noting that several of the fines and fees have not been updated in almost ten years.

RESOLUTION REGARDING THE RETIREMENT OF LINDA KNISH:
Cox made a motion to approve the Resolution Regarding the Retirement of Linda Knish, and to authorize the appropriate signatures on the document. Kessel seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION REGARDING THE NEW LIBRARY IN NORTH ST. PAUL:
Williams made a motion to approve the Resolution Regarding the Successful Grand Opening of the new Ramsey County Library in North St. Paul, and to authorize the appropriate signatures on the document. Cox seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT TO THE LIBRARY BOARD:
Nemitz’s report for March 2005 was submitted prior to the meeting, using the format approved by the Library Board at the February 28 retreat. She noted that the report’s format will continue to evolve over the next several months. Updates since the report was submitted included:
- The bill to change the Washington County Library Board into an advisory board was approved by the House on March 14, 2005. The bill was previously passed in the Senate on March 7.
- The Internet filtering bill will be heard on March 17, 2005. If approved, some level of filtering may have to be implemented or MELSA funding would be forfeited. Nemitz noted that newer, more palatable filtering software options are available. The wording regarding 18 year old students versus high school graduates is currently conflicting, and will need to be resolved in the final bill. If approved, the law would take effect in January 2006.

MELSA REPORT:
Nemitz reported that the MELSA Governing Board is considering a change in how its funds are disbursed, from the current method of base-level operational funding to initiative-based funding. Williams noted that it is easier for each library system to fundraise for its own initiatives, but operational funding is extremely difficult to fundraise, and should be preserved at the MELSA level.

FRIENDS OF THE SUBURBAN RAMSEY COUNTY LIBRARIES REPORT:
The Friends did not meet in March. Current initiatives include the development of a new organizational chart that reflects the merger of the Friends and Foundation.

NEXT MEETING:
The Library Board’s next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 20, 2005, at the Ramsey County Library in Arden Hills, 1941 West County Road E-2, beginning at 7 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:
Following a motion by Kessel and a second by Weltzin, Norrgard adjourned the meeting at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Larson, Library Board Coordinator