

February 14, 1983

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ad Hoc Committee on Relations with RPL; Mrs. Moore, ex officio

FROM: Bob Dumas

The meeting of the Committee with representatives of Rolling Prairie Libraries has been confirmed for February 21 at 4:30 p.m. and will be held in the Board Room of the Library.

The Board desired that I send a memorandum to the Committee to provide the background to the letter from Mr. Plotzke informing that the fund for purchase of Permanent Loan books will be eliminated and that the salary for a cataloger to work at DPL will be replaced with a \$10,000 payment toward the salary. Mr. Inman's salary is currently \$24,486.

Both of these agreements with RPLS were initiated during the tenure of Ray Ewick as Executive Director of RPLS.

Originally the agreement that eventually led to the Cataloger on DPL staff but on the RPLS payroll was based in the desire of the Rolling Prairie Libraries System to establish the practice of reciprocal borrowing, i.e., to allow patrons of all affiliated public libraries to borrow materials at any library that was a member of the system. Because of the number of small communities in the proximity of Decatur, it was recognized by Mr. Ewick that there would be a considerable use of this Library by patrons of affiliates and because of the size and level of support of these libraries there would not be a reciprocal use by patrons of DPL. To compensate for this excessive reciprocal borrowing RPLS agreed to pay Decatur Public Library for each circulation to reciprocal borrowers over and above an agreed number, I believe 800 annually. Later because of the large number of reciprocal borrowings and the inconvenience of the record keeping, Mr. Ewick suggested and I agreed that this arrangement for payment of excessive reciprocal borrowing be terminated and that the payment of the salary of a cataloger to work in Decatur Public Library be substituted.

This was particularly desirable at the time since Rolling Prairie Libraries had recently begun providing \$15,000 a year to both the Lincoln Library in Springfield (who with DPL serves as co-headquarters for resources for RPLS) and the Decatur Public Library. The money was not given to these libraries, but each library was permitted to invoice RPLS for this amount of books. Each library was restricted with respect to subjects covered by these acquisitions and they were added with the further condition that they were on "Permanent Loan" from RPLS.

The "Permanent Loan" program provided for RPL an easing of their resources inasmuch as staff time required to select, order, catalog and process \$30,000 worth of books could be devoted to other programs. Moreover, RPL was by this time experiencing increased space problems as a result of its growing collections and the Permanent Loan program greatly eased their storage problem.

On the other hand, the staff time to select, order, catalog and process \$15,000 in additional materials now had to be accommodated by Decatur Public Library, so that the proposed cataloger answered needs of DPL.

The "Permanent Loan Fund" since then has varied from \$15,000 to \$7,500 annually depending on RPL budgets. The fund has benefitted RPL since these acquisitions have been based on known needs of patrons whereas, since RPL offered no public service other than bookmobile (which tended to be recreational reading), their acquisition for Inter Library Loan and reference resources lacked this practical guidance. It has also benefitted the regional inter-Library loan program in other ways inasmuch as Lincoln Library and DPL have in their respective areas been able to build collections in strength.

Of course RPL also continued a broad acquisitions program and to a certain extent the variations in the Permanent Loan Funds were to protect this program. However, when RPL discontinued its bookmobile service to surrounding communities, it also discontinued its acquisition program (except in the field of Library Science which relates to their consultant services). At the same time it dispersed to regional libraries much of its book stock and sold the remainder (except for Library Science books and some reference materials).

The only acquisitions currently made to support Inter-Library Loan are those in the Permanent Loan program - which is now scheduled to be phased out.

I have discussed the course of action proposed by Mr. Plotzke in his letter. He repeated that his budgetary situation required that he take these steps. RPLS has had no increase in its funding since 1978 and has been invading its reserves. This last legislature did vote a 5% increase in regional library funding but this amounted to only about \$40,000 and leaves RPLS still in straitened financial circumstances.

I suggested that a possible solution to the reciprocal borrowing problem would be for Rolling Prairie to pass through the cost of the Cataloger to those libraries whose patrons were using borrowing privileges at DPL. This presents certain political problems, of course, inasmuch as RPLS board approval would be required and these board members are preponderantly from smaller libraries.

I also suggested that RPLS may wish to return to the original system or a variant of it and pay for each reciprocal borrowing based on a percentage of unit circulation cost in DPL (which currently is about \$2.25) and pass these costs through.

He informed that net lenders (i.e., libraries who lend more than their patrons borrow) do have a system of payment in regional libraries around Chicago but that the payment is only 25 or 30 cents for the net difference. He noted that the \$10,000 he was proposing toward the cataloger's salary was more generous. He did not feel that my proposal of \$1 - \$1.25 was acceptable in light of the practice around Chicago. It was my contention that 30¢ might be defensible where all libraries were lending partners and all libraries benefitted from reciprocal borrowing, but that in the Decatur area Decatur residents did not use other libraries, that DPL was not only a net lender, but practically speaking the only lender in reciprocal borrowing, and hence did not benefit at all from the reciprocal borrowing program. In that light I felt that my proposal was reasonable and generous.

Mr. Plotzke also informed that the State Library in response to criticism of reciprocal borrowing had recently appointed a committee to examine the problem.

My last suggestion to Mr. Plotzke, and one I confessed to no enthusiasm for, was to limit reciprocal borrowing to the general non-fiction collection, excluding new books and fiction. This would insure that patrons from other communities with serious needs would have access to our collections but would not use DPL for entertainment materials and would reduce the reciprocal borrowing to a level commensurate with his proposed funding.

Mr. Plotzke felt that this would also be undesirable and he cautioned that reciprocal borrowing was a condition of DPL remaining an affiliate in good standing and that remaining an RPL member in good standing was a prerequisite for continuing to receive the per capita grant. I did not respond to this as I do not contemplate that the Board would refuse to participate in reciprocal borrowing. The question is how to fund the non-reciprocated borrowing that is currently going on.

RWD