

## ***START UP AND IMPLEMENTATION CONSORTIUM PLAN***

### ***FOR***

### ***FOUR LIBRARY PARTNERS***

**F. Mason and Associates**

## **Part One: Background and Analysis**

Arlington Public Library contracted with F. Mason and Associates on behalf of the four libraries of Arlington, Grand Prairie, Kennedale, and Mansfield, Texas to work with a study planning team to prepare a feasibility study for establishing a shared cooperative structure among the four libraries. This report discusses the following: background data gathered from the activities of the four libraries; identifies feasible structural alternatives for a cooperative enterprise; makes recommendations regarding governance, administration and services; and proposes an implementation plan for developing the cooperative structure over time. The report is organized into three parts: Background and Analysis, Recommendations for a Consortium Structure and an Implementation Schedule.

### **National Library Network, Cooperatives and Consortium Organizations**

Libraries have organized and operated cooperative structures in most U.S. states. In Texas, however, state library priorities were to establish regional cooperative systems, funded with federal and state monies, which until their recent dissolution, provided services to support regional cooperation among libraries. In other states, however, many cooperative bodies have been formed and continue to operate successfully, some of which were first created as early as the 1930's. The American Library Association of Specialized & Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA), has financed studies of these library networks, cooperatives and consortia (afterward referred to as "cooperatives") nationally at various intervals since 1977. The most

recent study, a comprehensive study of 204 cooperatives was conducted in 2005<sup>1</sup> and updated in 2009<sup>2</sup>

Principal characteristics of a library cooperative, as summarized in the 2005 study, defines a cooperative as inter-institutional (participants come from more than one jurisdiction), which are not for-profit entities, that serve libraries (especially public libraries), are created by verbal or written agreements, and assist libraries in cooperative activities beyond the scope of traditional (local) loan services; and offer resource sharing as a primary activity.<sup>3</sup>

Historically, many of the cooperative structures came into existence because states, through their respective State Library agencies, developed state plans for resource sharing and, in many cases, provided federal (LSCA, LSTA) and state dollars to support cooperative activities among libraries. The top five states with the largest number of cooperative structures include California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, and New York. Since 2009, however, there have been dramatic changes in regional cooperation as states, such as Colorado and Texas have discontinued funding and support for the regional cooperative systems.

Service priorities provided by cooperatives vary by size of the cooperative staff, and since 2009, on changing national economic conditions. The 2005 study of 204 cooperative organizations found that more than 75 percent reported providing these services:

- Resource sharing (reciprocal borrowing, collective collection development, etc.)
- Communication among member libraries (directories, newsletters, etc.)
- General professional development
- General consulting/technical assistance

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<sup>1</sup> Library Networks, Cooperatives and Consortia: A National Survey. ALA, ASCLA. December 3, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> The Condition of U.S. Libraries: Cooperative Trends, 1999-2009. ALA. Office for Research and Statistics. 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Library Networks, Cooperatives & Consortia: A National Survey, 2007. pp. 11-13.

The 2005 survey found that smaller cooperatives, those with fewer than 3 staff members, ranked the top service priorities as follows:

- Cooperative purchasing and group discounts; courier and document delivery services
- Resource Sharing
- General professional development, education and training
- Automation, networking and other technology services, and
- Resource Sharing.

Respondents from these organizations felt that in the future, due to the changing environment, service priorities of purchasing and group discounts and automation and networking would become more important.<sup>4</sup>

To summarize, the evolving definition of a library cooperative structure is characterized as a cooperative structure created by and among libraries, not necessarily formalized as a legal entity, but frequently based on verbal and/or written agreements among the participants. The cooperatives offer resource sharing and extending the scope of traditional (local) loan services as important activities.<sup>5</sup>

## **Background Data about the Proposed Cooperative Region**

The proposed cooperative region, composed of the Arlington, Grand Prairie, Mansfield and Kennedale libraries, covers 224 square miles between Dallas and Fort Worth. The participating libraries serve different sized populations. Two are multi-branch systems, while two represent a single outlet. According to the Texas State Library and Archives, Arlington has an assigned population of 365,438, Grand Prairie 175,396, Mansfield 56,368 and Kennedale 6,763. The cities in 2011 had a combined service area

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<sup>4</sup> "Library Networks, Cooperatives and Consortia: A National Survey. December 2007. Office of Research and Statistics. American Library Association, 39.

<sup>5</sup> Library Networks, Cooperatives and Consortia: A National Survey. December 2007. Office of Research and Statistics. American Library Association, 11-13..

population of approximately 605,000 persons<sup>6</sup> The four libraries differ in their breath of coverage, with Arlington serving 60% of the total service population, Grand Prairie, 29%, Mansfield, 9% and Kennedale, 1%. The area has added significantly in population since 2001. Mansfield and Grand Prairie experienced the highest rates of growth during this period.<sup>7</sup> Two of the cities are located in Tarrant County, Grand Prairie is located partly in Dallas, Ellis, Johnson and Tarrant Counties and Mansfield is located in Tarrant, Johnson and Ellis Counties. A majority of residents in the proposed Consortium area live in four school districts: Arlington, Grand Prairie, Kennedale and Mansfield. The U.S. 2010 Census Data results found that for each city more than 25% of the households in each city had children under 18 present. For each city the percentage of households was: Mansfield 50%, Grand Prairie 41%, and Arlington and Kennedale, 28%.<sup>8</sup>

Statistics from the 2011 Texas Public Library statistical summary illustrate differences in service transactions levels among the libraries. Circulation per capita varies significantly between the libraries. Arlington has the highest at 6.55 items circulated per capita, Mansfield at 4.53, Kennedale at 2.44 and Grand Prairie at 2.12. Per capita expenditures also vary. Expenditure per capita for materials were \$2.80 at Kennedale, and \$2.00 at Arlington. Mansfield spent \$1.33 and \$1.10 per capita at Grand Prairie.

### **Facilitating Conditions and Challenges in the Creation of a Consortium Structure for Resource Sharing**

The potential Consortium libraries are relatively young library systems. The region is also transitioning from being composed of rural, separate municipalities to more of a suburban character where city boundaries abut one another and municipal lines are blurred as suburbs fill in previously vacant land. Inward migration into the four cities has resulted in brisk population increases over the past decade. Formerly a sizable workforce was engaged in agricultural occupations, however the workforce has become more mobile, working in a variety of mid-cities industries and

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<sup>6</sup> [www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com)

<sup>7</sup> [www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com)

<sup>8</sup> [www.txsdca.utsa.edu](http://www.txsdca.utsa.edu)

occupations and traveling between cities where they work and cities where they live. Library users, to some extent, already expect to be able to access the libraries in the different municipalities. As a result as the population grows and becomes increasingly mobile in their work and economic pursuits, better intra-city cooperation is needed to serve the information needs of the public.

School district boundaries overlap city boundaries and further complicate the service delivery picture. Mansfield Independent School District, for example, spans 90 square miles and serves portions of all of the four municipalities. These conditions tend to create confusion in the minds of residents seeking library and information services. Responding to the regionalization of the area, a number of the municipalities have already created cooperative services for police, fire, and public service with varying levels of success. Creating shared services among libraries is a logical step.

Each library is pressed to make the most of its local resources. A collaborative effort to serve the over 600,000 citizens currently served by these four libraries offers each library a greater opportunity to satisfy the information needs of their patrons. Whether it is proximity to an outlet or specialized collections or services, each member has something to offer the population in the service area. The Consortium is the best and most appropriate mechanism to help libraries to gain access to the electronic resources through contracted, licensed access. A Consortium will help to ease access to one another's collections and also to provide access to other regional, state and out-of-state resources and materials.

Technological innovation continues to drive rapid changes in public library service delivery capabilities. The proposed Consortium libraries all have lean staffs. No individual library can address all of the training and planning needs for keeping technologically current, nor bear the costs of implementing technological and electronic resources alone. Establishing a Consortium will help support staff training and continuing education programs to assist staff in delivering quality services to their patrons.

Previous research studies noted above which have been conducted by the American Library Association illustrate that there is already an established

track record of many consortia and networks which have been successfully operating for decades. The research on library networks and consortia shows that the factors important for establishing a successful resources sharing network are the following: joint interest, realistic expectations and willingness of libraries to work together. These factors are present among the four libraries in this project.

Various factors contribute to the declines in funding for library services and changing circulation patterns for library users. School library and information services have been negatively affected by budgetary cuts, increasing pressure on the public libraries to provide additional services to school-age patrons. As these changes occur public libraries are experiencing an increase in demands from children for juvenile and young adult fiction to meet school-related projects and required reading assignments. Again, resource sharing is a proven method of extending needed services to the school-age population.

As a result of downward trending funding patterns, public libraries have lost ground in terms of expenditures for collection items. This has made it more difficult for these libraries to meet the needs of their clientele. The Texas State Library Annual Report<sup>9</sup> 2006-2011 statistics indicate a downward trend in collection expenditures. For instance, the four prospective libraries spent an average of \$1.60 per person for collection expenditures in 2011. The largest and smallest libraries have the higher per capita collection expenditures. Between 2006-2011, however the per capita expenditure for collections declined from \$2.43 per capita to \$1.60 per capita.

The Texas State Library Annual Report<sup>10</sup> statistics for the same period also indicate a downward trend in circulation per capita. The circulation statistics for the four libraries show that the average circulation per capita has declined from 4.74 items per capita in 2006 to 3.91 items per capita in 2011.

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<sup>9</sup> [www.tsl.state.tx.us](http://www.tsl.state.tx.us)

<sup>10</sup> [www.tsl.state.tx.us](http://www.tsl.state.tx.us)

As funding levels have decreased libraries report increased user demand for materials in alternative, multiple formats. User service expectations are changing as library patrons move to adopt a variety of mobile devices to access information materials. Current user transaction statistics from the Overdrive e book lending utility for the four area libraries show a growing demand for electronic resources. Thus as the number of physical items owned declines on a per capita basis, averaging 1.73 items per capita in 2011 and 1.75 items in 2006, user demand for electronic resources is on the increase. Resource sharing through a Consortium is a proven method of improving patron access to materials and more desirable as funding declines and usage demands for these materials grow. Electronic resources are easily shared once jurisdictional and user authentication issues are addressed. Resource sharing, cooperative leasing and purchasing agreements become feasible and allow libraries to increase availability of materials to their customers while holding down costs to do so.

Librarians also understand that as their area grows in population and sophistication, the business and economic climate will become more diversified and will stimulate new information needs arguing for access to larger numbers of titles and a greater diversity of materials. Some of the libraries in the proposed consortium area are already limited in terms of building and service space and expansion is not an option at this time. Resource sharing offers a means to meet user demands for materials without incurring significant capital costs for buildings and space expansion to store and provide materials.

Each participating library has already invested significant capital in creating a stand-alone online automated system. These platforms provide users with direct access to the collections whether the user is at home, work or elsewhere. Adopting a strong resource sharing strategy based on the single online platform has the potential to offer an advantageous vendor pricing structure that reduces the overall maintenance and operational costs of the system, providing a better return on investment for the libraries as well as a service enhancement.

In summary, as tax rates have been suppressed, library budgets have declined and staff numbers have declined or remained the same, in many

cases. The pace of area growth remains steady and user demands for library materials are diversifying. Though there are some disparities in expenditures and circulations per-capita levels, each library has something unique to bring to the formation of a consortium. Creating a consortium for resource sharing is a financially conservative strategy and represents possible avenue for increasing both availability of materials along with a higher return on investments to taxpayers for materials expenditures.

### **Challenges to Consortia Creation**

While there are definite facilitating conditions for supporting development of a cooperative library structure, there are also challenges. Statewide, Texas has not developed a variety of library cooperative structures, beyond the federal and state-funded regional systems discussed above. Therefore there has been no local or regional “road map” to follow that would facilitate libraries creating cooperative structures. Other barriers have existed. Until recently, State legislation has not been enabling for consortium creation. With the exception of short term (maximum of three years) Library Services and Technology (LSTA) Cooperation grants, there has been little or no state incentive money in terms of federal or state library support dollars available to develop these types of cooperative efforts.

There also remain the problems of adequate local resources to support cooperative structure development and resistance to cooperative efforts. Lean staffing in participant libraries and lean annual budgets make cooperation more difficult as does the lack of a state plan for library service.

A technical roadblock to creating a transparent resource sharing service to the population of this region is that the libraries do not all operate on the same automation platform. Arlington and Mansfield share the same automated library system, while Grand Prairie and Kennedale contract with two other automation vendors.

Workarounds, however, are possible. There exist options for interoperability between the Polaris system and the SirsiDynix system in Grand Prairie and the Evergreen system in Kennedale. While not insurmountable issues, the participating libraries will have to account for the differing platforms and made adjustments in order to provide more seamless resource sharing across platforms. The participating libraries will have to consider how to span across the platforms, or some of the libraries may have to migrate to a different platform. In all cases, the libraries may need to consider revising their policies so that local policies and procedures related to lending, borrowing, imposing fines, etc. are coordinated across the Consortium.

## **Part Two: Establishing a Consortium: Key Recommendations**

This section discusses key components critical to defining a consortium model for the four mid-cities libraries. These issues include defining the type of organizational model; outlining a basic service mission for the consortium, discussing an administrative and governance structure, specifying the components of a start-up consortium service plan and outlining an implementation plan.

### **Developing a Successful Consortium Model**

Since no statewide plan for cooperative structures exists in Texas, the four libraries envision their cooperative structure as a blueprint for other libraries to follow in establishing a cooperative structure.

Previous research on cooperatives has identified several key factors that define successful cooperative structures. Information gathered from the Study Planning Team indicates the libraries have many of the characteristics identified as needed for a successful cooperative relationship:

- Realistic expectations among participants
- A level of financial and organizational commitment from participants
- An agreement within a group of participants that outlines specific tasks to be performed and specific guidelines to be adhered to

It is the intent of the group to develop another of the key success factors which is defined as “a system that provides immediate access through computer and communications to databases that originate . . . in the information community.”

This study examined a number of types of organizational structures that could be considered as a model for a consortium to carry out the desired services. The options are the following: two types of structures established by agreement, and two structures established as independent organizations.

*Established by Agreement:*

*A services contracted consortium model:*

Participating libraries would enter into an agreement with one library which would serve as service provider. Arlington, for example, might become the contracting agency which would provide specified services under a contract with the other libraries. Decisions would largely be managed by the contracting agency. The Fort Worth Metropac is an example of this type of consortium structure.

Advantages and Disadvantages

- **Time Efficiency:** The contracted model could lead to a quickly established program of shared services without the expenses and complications of creating a non-profit or district.
- **Cost Efficiency:** The advantage would be the contracting library submitting a budget for contracted services each year based on known operation costs. This model is likely to be the most “cost-efficient” since budgeting, staffing and supervision would be integrated into duties of staff managed by the contracting library.
- **Service Efficiency:** This type of model could be very efficient assuming the contracting agency provides adequate operational support and staff training - particularly in providing quality service delivery to outsourcing partners.
- **Reciprocity:** The disadvantages of a contracted consortium would be that it hinders efforts to develop a true reciprocity among the libraries. There may be resistance to signing a contract with a library to “manage” cooperation as that might be seen as spending local tax

dollars out of the local jurisdiction to the benefit of the contracting library agency.

- **Funding:** Funding would be subject to budgeting priorities of the contracting agency. The cooperative membership may be subject to changes in funding requirements out of their control to continue to participate in the consortium.
- **Resource sharing:** Sharing that could be accomplished by moving to a joint decision-making structure for collection development would be difficult.
- **Public Awareness and Stakeholder Relations:** A focus on shared services between the libraries promotes discussions with decision makers and stakeholders about the benefits of cooperation both in terms of improved efficiency in the use of collection funds and opportunities for improved services to users.

*A federated services consortium model:*

The consortium would be created through written agreement, among libraries, or between cities with an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with each library agreeing through a contract to participate in the management, funding and coordination of its services with the other libraries. Each library would participate in decision making. The Parker County Library Association (PCLA) is an example of this type of consortium.

- **Time Efficiency:** The disadvantage of this model is the need for more coordination and decision-making efforts on the part of each of the participating libraries through boards, committees and taskforces.
- **Cost Efficiency:** Expenses for staffing the Consortium may be higher than for the contracted model. Also more effort and expense would be necessary to conduct ongoing operational and satisfaction

surveys which would be important to maintain service quality and good relations between partners.

- **Service Efficiency:** Could be effective if driven efficiently by the participating libraries decision making. Ability to provide services may be limited by finances and the voluntary staff contributions of the members.
- **Reciprocity:** An advantage of a federated service model where the libraries participated through a joint agreement would be to retain the autonomy of each of the participation libraries while facilitating cooperation on the resource sharing issues desired by the four libraries. That advantage would be the shared decision making which would facilitate continued input and satisfaction with services provided.
- **Funding:** Libraries would set their level of funding and participation upon mutual agreement. Ability of partners to participate each year would be subject to local funding priorities which could create uncertain future operating conditions. Sanctions for failure to maintain agreed upon funding levels would be necessary.
- **Resource sharing:** Collective decision making would permit exploration of extending resource sharing to joint collection development, purchasing, etc.
- **Public Awareness and Stakeholder Relations:** May be less than contracted model, since libraries maintain control over internal operational decisions.

*Established as an Independent nonprofit model:*

A consortium would be established as a non-profit, IRS defined 501(c)(3) organization. This type of structure was adopted by the former North Texas Regional Library System which converted from a state-supported system to an independent non-profit.

- **Time Efficiency:** The disadvantage of this model would be the set up costs and up-front operational decisions regarding by-laws, office operations, staffing, administration, funding, etc.
- **Cost Efficiency:** A stand-alone Consortium structure will be more costly, at least initially. It will require in-house financial management functions, administrative overhead, equipment, etc., that will be more costly than outsourced or contracted services. While the Consortium may be able to borrow space initially, if the Consortium grows, adding staff and programs, then space and equipment cost will rise along with personnel costs. This model could be deemed more cost efficient by the participating libraries which would control costs through budgeting control and deliver only services most desired by members. Once established, cost would be controlled by budget decisions carried out by “members” of the Consortium. The Consortium would submit an annual budget for proposed contracted services each year based on known operation costs.
- **Reciprocity:** Ongoing evaluation and quality decision-making would be critical to operations to ensure service satisfaction among members.
- **Funding:** Necessary to define “member” as those who might pay a combination of membership dues and service fees for services received. Libraries would be able to set their level of funding and participation based on services desired. The disadvantage would be the ability of the Consortium to keep membership fees within the ability of the member libraries to pay, and deliver sufficient services at price points attractive to members that would cover operating costs. The ability of the partners to participate may vary as local funding levels change which could create uncertain future operating conditions.
- **Resource sharing:** The advantage would be the ability of the Consortium to contract with new participating libraries over time.

- Public Awareness and Stakeholder Relations: Resistance from local library stakeholders may occur for the same reason as for the contracted model. A stand-alone Consortium, if properly funded, would play a vital role in Consortium economic development.

### *A Legally Established Library District:*

The libraries would establish a District as defined under Texas State Local Government Code chapter 336 as an independent entity with a defined service area and taxing authority funded by either sales or property tax. Abilene, Benbrook and Forest Hill library systems utilize this form of service.

While on the face of it, the best option for establishing a stable cooperative among the libraries, the method of establishing a district in Texas largely precludes adopting this type of structure, at least in the immediate future. A library district requires an election to establish. More importantly, since a number of the libraries have reached the “sales tax cap” for funding the district with sales tax funds, the only option would be establishing the district to collect ad valorem taxes on property. The Opinion of the Texas Attorney General, conveyed to the State Librarian Peggy Rudd on May 12, 2008, was that a legally established library district would have the statutory authority to “call an election to approve a sales tax or an ad valorem tax on property. . . .” but . . . “no provision of the Texas Constitution expressly authorizes a library district to impose an ad valorem tax.” Thus, creating a library district based on ad valorem property tax funding is not currently feasible in Texas without a change in the Texas State Constitution.<sup>11</sup>

## **Service Plan Principles**

This section proposes general principles for establishing a Consortium service plan. The possible Consortium services are discussed in the implementation section of the report.

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<sup>11</sup> Letter of the Attorney General of Texas to Peggy Rudd, May 12, 2008.8 pages.

The participating libraries are just beginning to establish a tradition of cooperation among institutions or across jurisdictional lines. It will be important that the Consortium avoid over-promising on what it can deliver, and develop realistic plans suited to local funding, resources and the political environment in order to build trust and confidence. Generally, the participating libraries should propose a cooperative structure focused on practical services that directly benefit local library users through the sharing of their joint resources, both print and electronic.

The Consortium region is growing and user expectations are high. The Consortium should have an important role assisting librarians in responding to increased public expectations of all age groups for information services and electronic access.

A suggested mission and values statement for a proposed Consortium could be developed along the lines of the following:

“The Consortium is jointly operated and managed by the participating libraries to share joint library resources that benefit library users; provides library members with cost-effective services and offers the widest possible access to all types of library materials, and other forms of information, giving access to electronic information and training while maintaining respect for each library’s autonomy.”

The Consortium mission statement should emphasize its cooperative programs and mutual benefit to member libraries along these lines to:

- Share digital and print collections
- Enhance and promote library and information services in Arlington, Grand Prairie, Kennedale and Mansfield.
- Jointly operate a shared automated system to the equitable benefit of each of the consortium members.

- Encourage inter-library cooperation among all libraries, including materials, facilities, services and local experts.
- Reduce barriers and provide library users with in-person loans, document delivery and interlibrary loans at any one of the four participating libraries.
- Assist the member training and education needs in order to keep all parties informed and current.
- Cooperate with local, state, Consortium and national organizations interested in the promotion of library affairs.

### **Administration and Governance Structure**

Initially, it is desirable that the consortium operate as a federated structure, with each library maintaining its autonomy and operations with a structure to define how to finance selected shared services. It is recommended the Consortium establish the administrative center through the Arlington Public Library and that at least initially, the Consortium serve only public library participants. At a later time, the Consortium could consider becoming multi-type, serving academic, school or special libraries. Initially, the Consortium would not depend on integrating all participating libraries into a single automated system, but once established this should be retained as a mid-term goal of the consortium.

The federated system model allows individual libraries to retain their governance and funding autonomy through their municipalities; and retain independence over their internal operations. Through meetings and then agreement, the libraries would create protocols, policies and procedures to establish a joint service platform accessible to users in each of the participating libraries. The mission is to deliver quality library service to residents in all member libraries through resource sharing between and among the participating libraries that enhances access to the shared pool of jointly owned materials.

The Consortium administrative structure should be managed internally by consortium members, should have a minimal structure and should be driven by the mutual goal of cooperation among the members. An initial governance and staffing structure could be developed along these lines:

*Executive Council of Library Administrators* whose role would be administrative control and oversight with power to create Standing Committees as necessary. The Council would be composed of the Directors of the participating libraries and would oversee planning, progress and operations of the Consortium. This committee should meet monthly.

*Coordinator.* Initially, the Consortium may be operated by a staff member contracted from a participating library to serve as the coordinator. It may also be necessary to contract for a set number of hours from a part time IT/technical support staff person. Once established, the Consortium may consider hiring a paid staff member to perform duties delegated by the Council of Library Administrators. The coordinator would carry out administrative duties and execute the program of services. This position may or may not be a full-time initially.

*A Technical/Automation Committee* whose role would be oversight and policy management of the automated system related issues including upgrades, new software evaluation and other technical and procedural issues related to resource sharing objectives among the participants.

Once established and running, the member libraries may wish to create a *Consortium Board* composed of member institution representatives whose role would be policy direction. This board should set policy, determine goals and direction for the Consortium, hire staff, set fees for products and service and control the budget. It would meet quarterly as needed.

The Consortium could also establish temporary committee structures, called task forces rather than standing committees in its initial set up. The task force structure allows the Consortium to easily create temporary task forces to focus on important issues and Consortium initiatives. Task forces, once their assignments are completed, could be dissolved. Using task forces also means the Consortium can avoid some of the cumbersome process of creating and maintaining formal committees. This permits the Consortium to be more responsive to member needs.

### **Creating An Effective Agreement among Participating Libraries**

When creating a network, having a clear understanding of each member's responsibilities and obligations is essential as a part of the formation of the consortium. The Agreement should contain the following elements:

- Term of agreement – will it be a single or multi-year agreement?
- Server. Ownership and management of server – which member will host the server? Who has financial responsibility for housing, maintenance, upgrading and replacement of the server and network hardware? If costs are shared by members how will the costs be assigned? Are there other maintenance and support issues including service interruptions, telecommunications issues and technological innovations to be considered?
- Services. What services will be available to members? Will technical support be required? How will cooperative purchasing of equipment and resources be handled? Will automation software upgrades and added features be considered?
- Data issues. Who will own records? How will bibliographic records be created and maintained?. How will confidentiality of patron data be established?

- Initial members. Admission of other members.
- Membership issues. What will be the procedure for withdrawal from the consortium? What policies will be developed to deal with agreement breaches?
- Liability and insurance. How much will be required? How will costs be apportioned?

### Strategies for Creating A Uniform Automated Platform

There is a product in development for Evergreen, the ILS used in Kennedale, which would allow for either mediated or unmediated ILL requests across disparate systems. This product is called Fulfillment, and is under development by Equinox Software. According to information on the company's website, Fulfillment will work with Evergreen, SirsiDynix Symphony, Polaris, Aleph, Koha, and Ill Millennium. This system uses the Next Generation Discovery Interface (NGDI) , a web-based union catalog that will enable patrons and staff to search for items and place and manage requests.

Fulfillment is currently in beta testing and version 1.0-RC1 should be available by spring/summer 2013, although the Fulfillment development blog was last updated on September 26, 2012. An unresolved problem exists in that Kennedale is currently not on their own Evergreen system. For Fulfillment to be implemented, Kennedale's records would still be located on the Evergreen group's server. As a result, there would be no way to isolate the Kennedale records for Consortium participation.

Additionally, there are other ILS-agnostic systems available. TLC has an ILL product that is used by the State Library of Louisiana and known there as Loan Shark. Also, a product used as the platform for the Texas State Library interlibrary loan system, OCLC's Navigator could serve as a workaround solution for patrons from Grand Prairie to order materials from other members of the consortium.

Arlington and Mansfield are currently using the Polaris Library System. Polaris Library Systems has provided quotes for a number of opportunities for Grand Prairie and Kennedale to migrate to the Polaris System. Having all members of the consortium operating on the same platform offers the greatest option for full transparency and maximum efficiency.

The easiest migration would involve Kennedale who is currently a part of the North Texas Library Consortium. Their ILS is Evergreen.

### **Additional Issues Related to Creating a Merged Automated System**

There are a variety of issues related to merging two or more libraries onto a common automation platform. Included are the following:

- ***Required***

1. Each member database must be made up of standard MARC records.
2. Each member agrees to use the same MARC tag fields for data.
3. Each member that does local cataloging will follow established consortium cataloging conventions.
4. Each member must have a separate range of patron barcode numbers.
5. Each member must have a separate range of material barcode numbers.
6. Each member must agree to collect a set of statistics agreed upon by the consortium.
7. Procedures for collecting fines/lost materials fees for other member libraries.

- ***Optional***

1. Standard policies

- Circulation
- Fines/overdues
- Reserves
- Replacement
- 2. Labeling of materials
  - Materials codes
  - Ref/R or Juv/J, etc.
  - Other local labeling issues

## Finances and Cost Sharing

The costs of migration would be the responsibility of the individual library. Costs are estimated for the libraries depending on a number of options that might be pursued. The Polaris migration for Kennedale could cost between \$10,000 and \$17,000 depending on the level of training provided by Polaris. Kennedale currently pays about \$730 for annual support. The Polaris annual maintenance is estimated at \$540. Because of their size, Kennedale is eligible to seek grant funding from the Tocker Family Foundation of Austin, Texas.

The Grand Prairie migration would be more costly. The Polaris quote amounts to approximately \$81,400. Grand Prairie currently pays \$13,847 for maintenance. Polaris quoted annual maintenance cost would be about \$7,245.

The most straightforward method of covering the cost of the Consortium operational costs is for each of the Consortium members to divide and share annually the Consortium cost elements among themselves.

Additionally, each member of the Consortium should expect to participate in the ongoing costs of the data server at the consortium's central data site (currently Arlington) as well as some portion of the cost of the delivery service.

Another option for the entire consortium is the Polaris Virtual Private Cloud environment. Though a preliminary quote has been provided, many

issues would need to be dealt with including Arlington first moving to “the cloud”. The value of moving to this option is that many of the maintenance and security functions currently managed on the local level would be moved to Polaris. Some aspects of system administration would be lifted from the local libraries.

As the Consortium grows and matures, the services offered will become more diverse and complex to manage. Purchasing, licensing and funding for these various services will demand additional staff time. This impact on staff, primarily at the central data site, points out the need to create and fund a system administrator position. Though not an immediate need, the time will come soon to define such a position and calculate the cost and how each member will share in the funding of the position.

## **User Education and Community Relations**

As a new venture, the Consortium must present a positive image of bringing service improvement to the region. One method of establishing a positive image is to educate local users and to work to enlist the active support of local business and community groups. It will also be important for existing members to personally promote the Consortium to other libraries.

Consortium libraries must make the most of all types of area information resources. It will be important to link Consortium libraries to local organizations and agencies which are information providers such as newspapers, economic development councils and bookstores.

## **Part Three: Implementation**

In order to be successful, the consortium must offer an effective service program that is mutually beneficial for the users of the participating libraries. Potential participants believe cooperation will increase the amount and diversity of available materials and believe the differences in service populations between and among libraries does not necessarily assume resources will drain from the largest to the smallest libraries, but that resource sharing will balance user demands due to the different collection building profiles among the participating libraries.

An implementation plan is presented below. There are two phases of implementation which span the time period 2013-2020. The first phase focuses most on the development of various resource sharing initiatives; the second with further development and formalization of the structure of the consortium. Each initiative contains broad goals to be achieved within the timeframe, as well as specific activities that will assist in achieving the goals. Due to the longer time frame of this plan, the activities should not be thought of as an exhaustive list, but rather as suggestions that are applicable to the environment in which this plan has been written.

### **RECOMMENDED PHASE I GOALS: 2013-2016**

#### **Strategic Directions for Phase I**

- Ensure that cooperation among participating libraries provides easy patron borrowing privileges for print and audio visual materials, as well as access to shared digital resources and online learning services.
- Until a shared automation system can be achieved, strengthen and simplify the interlibrary loan program for users to obtain requested materials quickly through simplified lending procedures.
- Provide training for local library staff concerning Consortium resource sharing policies and procedures and user services.

- Extend resource sharing through strengthening delivery services among participating Consortium members
- Develop professional and interpersonal exchanges and networking opportunities for participation by staff members from Consortium libraries, including face-to face-contact at professional meetings and social occasions since experience from other consortiums has found that positive contact between staff groups enhances library staff member commitment to resource sharing activities and broadens their skills.

**Goal I:1** *Establish agreement among libraries for resource sharing and implement initiatives that promote shared services and collections.*

**Activities:**

Develop and sign interlocal agreements between participating libraries specifying services and costs to be shared, including reciprocal borrowing for print and audiovisual materials, sharing of online resources, and where applicable, sharing of the ILS system.
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Develop a plan for providing access to shared digital resources and online learning services and for allocating costs between libraries with APL as fiscal agent.
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Develop a process for streamlined ILL procedures between consortium members that may make use of the OCLC Navigator system but provide express delivery to Consortium members.
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Begin the process of investigating, projecting costs and possible timelines (dependent on future budget allocations) for adopting same ILS platform.
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**Goal I: 2** *Train participating library staff regarding Consortium goals, services and procedures.*

**Activities:**

Designate responsibilities for training development and delivery by one or more of staff from participating libraries.
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Develop training materials and procedures for training staff from
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Consortium libraries.
Update staff training as Consortium programs evolve and change.
Intensify staff knowledge of the special collection features of the Consortium participating libraries.
Establish regular networking and information sharing meetings between Consortium library staff involved in specific programs of service (i.e. catalogers, customer service staff, youth services staff, etc.)

**Goal 1:3** *Supplement direct sharing with other cooperative programs to enhance services provided by the Consortium*

**Activities:**

Develop courier/delivery services between Consortium libraries, either through a member's courier service or with a commercial courier
Research opportunities for cost saving and added value through shared/purchase and services contracts for members for materials and services
Consider contracting with Consortium libraries in order to outsource certain services to other participating libraries.

**Goal 1:3** *Develop a Marketing Program to Inform Consortium Users services and benefits of the Consortium.*

Name the consortium in order to recognize the value that each library adds to the initiative.
Develop and print a brochure and develop library web site information that explains the Consortium cooperative program.
Develop a newsletter, press releases, social media and other materials.
Update the marketing plan directed at current and potential users of Consortium services.
Evaluate Consortium service user needs.
Produce evaluation and information about Consortium activities and benefits to serve as a "model" for other Texas libraries considering adopting a cooperative structure.

**Goal 1:4** *Exploit all available electronic means to deliver shared digital services appropriate for all Consortium members*

Establish joint purchase agreements for digital resources such as full-text databases, downloadable content or online learning services with a negotiated discount.
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Examine methods to enhance electronic interchange among libraries for sharing.
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Develop a plan for a joint gateway to digital services that could be shared by all libraries to provide patron access to these services.
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## RECOMMENDED PHASE II GOALS- 2017-2020

### *Key Strategic Directions for Phase II*

- Further develop formal operating procedures and policies for the Consortium operations.
- Stabilize funding and cost-efficient operations for the Consortium.
- Take steps to deepen and extend access to local information resources through enhanced local collection building. Ensure the Consortium programs supplement rather than duplicate or compete with, already existing information materials and resources.
- Consider providing centralized processing and acquisitions services for Consortium libraries.
- Change the structure of the Consortium to serve additional libraries in the region.

**Goal II:1** *Consider restructuring the Consortium as a formal organization with a stable funding source and dedicated staff.*

#### **Activities:**

Identify/establish a Consortium office location with supporting equipment, communications and staff.
Ensure Consortium staff has electronic tools to communicate with members and deliver program services
Add staff with appropriate skills to execute the Consortium program of services
Consider formalizing the Consortium as a 501(c)(3) organization.
Consider funding options including obtaining funding from county sources to provide services to unserved populations of the Counties/region or establishing a membership fee system, and or a Consortium services payment charge schedule.
Formalize the relationship with the hosting library.

Develop policy directions for future Consortium programs and grant funding proposals for cooperative Consortium projects.
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**Goal II:2** *Manage and operate a staff continuing education and training program to extend, enhance and encourage Consortium library and information personnel and staff at all levels.*

**Activities:**

Identify training resources already in the area and build on strengths
Develop a Continuing Education needs assessment from members
Develop training sessions using the resources of Consortium library staff members.
Assist members in writing and managing grants for technology and programming
Identify and link member needs to technical skills, program, expertise and support on contract basis.

**Goal II:3** *Become a multi-type cooperative agency*

**Activities:**

Extend resource sharing to school and or academic libraries in the region and transition Consortium to a multi-type structure.
Establish resource sharing protocols, policies and procedures for resource sharing among and between Consortium members and multitype participating libraries
Educate staff regarding collection strengths and features of the multitype libraries.

**Goal II:4** *Support the development of Consortium libraries as effective gateways to improve and facilitate access to other library collections and resources*

Investigate shared digitization projects that provide access to local history information for all Consortium libraries.
Integrate local non-library information providers and find ways to link their resources to Consortium using electronic means
Provide links between the local Consortium resources and the resources provided by other Texas or national consortia.
Begin cooperative selection and collection building among participating libraries