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STEF: It is my pleasure to introduce our two presenters today. The first one is Greg Pronevitz, executive director of the Massachusetts Library System. He serves as the founding director of the former regional library system in Northeast Massachusetts for twelve years. Our second presenter today is Esme Green. She is the director of the Goodnow Public Library. Esme has served in public libraries in three different regions and networks. We've asked the two presenters to give us a little bit different perspective: Greg from the system-level perspective and Esme from the library perspective. I'm going to turn it over to them. Thanks!

GREG: This is Greg. I wanted to clarify that introduction. I think I confused Stef with it. I've been the director of MLS since its founding in July of 2010. Previous to that, I was the founding director of one of our predecessor regions, the Northeast Massachusetts Regional Library System, and I worked there for twelve years.

What I'm going to do is provide some background. After the background, and as we go through this presentation, Esme will be jumping in and talking about the impact on libraries of the things that I'm talking about from the system perspective. We'll talk about services that have been enhanced, and services that have been reduced or lost. Then I'm going to be talking about cost efficiencies and deliverables of the previous regime and the current setup. At the end, I'll talk about what led up to the reorganization that we went through, provide some perspective on the process, and then some of the challenges and opportunities that we have now.

LIBRARY LANDSCAPE

I'll start out with the library landscape in Massachusetts. We have a state agency called the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, which is like a state library in many states; but without the library. They provide [services such as] as funding for the Massachusetts library system. They fund the libraries for the blind. They fund state aid for libraries. They support our automated networks, which are shared ILSs that I'll talk about later. They provide funding for the Library for the Commonwealth—which is the Boston Public library—which provides some state-funded services out of their library.

We've gone through a lot of funding fluctuations over the years. Our peak funding for the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners was in 2001, when it was getting \$34 million in state appropriations. We are just coming out of the low point, last year, of \$21 million.

The Boston Public Library as the Library for the Commonwealth—their current statewide projects are focused on doing digitization for [free for] libraries with their own staff and grant-funded project staff. Then there's a small, annual upkeep cost for participation. They also provide access to what they call their "e-card." Any contract they have for electronic content that the vendor will allow—Massachusetts residents can log in, get a card online and start using those services instantly. It's a really nice service; but, it's not statewide, because you have to log in to get a separate card for it.

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Their past role was mostly based on having a large research collection, being the largest library in the state. They helped found a 24/7 reference service for the state that has since had to go away. They do interlibrary loan and document delivery, too.

The nine networks in Massachusetts are shared, integrated library systems with about 400 participating libraries. They generate 58 million circulations and 6.3 million ILL transactions. Their total budget is about \$12 million and of that, only about 15 percent comes from the state. Most of it is local library funding. The state support for that used to be higher, but it's just been diminishing over time.

The MLS. Until 1997, there were three regions in Massachusetts: Western, Central and Eastern. The Western region was founded about fifty years ago, and it has a long, cherished history. The Central region was founded after that, and then the Eastern region came last. Now, in 1997, it was decided to break those three regions into six. The only breakup really took place in Eastern Massachusetts, where it was broken up into four parts: Northeast, Metro West, Southeast, and Boston.

Now we have 1,700 members in MLS. Then we merged in 2010, due to the economic crisis that I'll be talking about that we're all [still] facing the results from. We have 1,700 members now: 372 publics, 140 academic, 240 special, and over 1,000 schools; and our current budget is about \$7 million. The networks have about 400 members. Three hundred twenty are public, forty-three are academic, twenty-nine are K-12 and four are special. They are the major driver of research here in Massachusetts, and they are very successful at it.

MLS RESOURCE SHARING

I wanted to talk about the service area of priorities that you had listed in your message to me, Stef, and one of them was resource sharing. I want to put that in perspective, for you. In Massachusetts, MLS is responsible for several aspects of resource sharing, [including] the physical delivery of 14 million items a year. We have two mediated interlibrary loan centers at public libraries. Collectively, we handle 26,000 requests a year. The Boston Public Library—we have a contract with them as a Journal Article Document Delivery Center. They forwarded 600 requests last year. We have a shared, automated system, an ILS called MassCat, which is a Koha system. It's mostly for small libraries that can't afford the nine mainstream networks. We have seventy libraries on that, and we subsidize the cost for a library to join that, but they do pay a part.

NETWORK RESOURCE SHARING AND TECHNOLOGY

The network resource sharing and technology role in the state is [composed of] nine shared ILSs, as I mentioned: three Evergreens, two SirsiDynix, two Millennium, one Polaris, and one Endeavor. We also have what we call a Statewide Virtual Catalog, which is currently a SirsiDynix ERes system. We are contracting now [from] Autographics to upgrade that to a new system that will be compatible with more libraries [and] will allow us to put MassCat into the virtual catalog and a number of academic libraries that can't participate now because its resource is not compatible—and that allows direct patron-initiated loans between the nine systems.

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Their networks also provide Internet connectivity for ILS use. Many libraries also have their own cable access for public access. Some networks provide websites and digital library services for their libraries, too.

MLS is involved in technology in a direct way in one new BTOP project in Massachusetts, which is wiring about 120 library locations in Western Massachusetts. We're taking responsibility for thirty-five. The C.W. Morris Network, which covers that territory, is handling the other seventy-five. So, we've got some Gates grant funding in collaboration with the Board of Library Commissioners to do a lot of training and preparation for that technology. We're looking forward to the implementation in June.

ONLINE CONTENT

The Board of Library Commissioners and MLS jointly provide access to statewide online content: a large Gale collection, the *Boston Globe* through ProQuest, and the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. This was a joint procurement last July, and possibly a five-year contract with these vendors. Because of this joint procurement, we've been able to increase content at costs very similar to what we were paying for separate contracts in the past. We provide geolocation to all of these titles; so anyone in the state that comes in from a Massachusetts IP address can get in, and the libraries have links that allow them to count their users that come to the library site.

Eight networks also have shared OverDrive platforms. I think they're investing \$1 million a year in this, altogether, with 400 libraries. This is member funded. There's no state funding on the back. Some networks also have shared online content besides e-books: Novelist, other EBSCO titles, Facts on File, Learning Express. Again, member funded—not state funded.

We are planning a new statewide e-book platform now. There's a statewide planning committee that has asked MLS to manage the implementation of this new project. The pilot project is fifty libraries that we will launch this year. It's going to be funded by MLS and MBLC. The biggest challenge will be putting together a funding partner, so all libraries in Massachusetts can contribute to the content [and] so that we can buy enough content to make it meaningful.

TRAINING AND ADVISORY AREAS

Next I'm going to talk about training and advisory areas. We call it advisory; other places call it consulting. Networks support their own services with training and advisory services. MBLC has a big construction grant program, and they provide their own consultants for that. They have the preservation consultants, and they have the trustees, friends, and library boards' major consulting efforts. MLS provides general training, general support, and some overlap with trustees, friends, boards, and e-books. As you know, e-books is the hottest topic around. Before I go into this, let me ask Esme if she has anything [she'd like to say about] the impact of what we've talked about so far.

ESME: Yes, Greg. One [question on the] the time line of how the schools can work. There were a few things I wanted to comment on. I'm not sure how it works in Wisconsin, but in Massachusetts we have a very clear line between the networks and the regions. They're very different, and have very different responsibilities. I just wanted to point out that the networks are member supported. The libraries supply the budget to them. [With] the regions—the money

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comes down from the states. It creates a very different dynamic in the relationship between the two, and I'll talk a little bit more later about how that is impacting our future plans with reorganization in the state. I think that's good for now.

GREG: Thanks. So, I wanted to talk about what services have been enhanced with validation of the six regions into the Massachusetts Library System. Physical delivery is enhanced, in many cases. We now offer what we're calling a semi-automated sorting in most of the networks, and it's [noted on] the slide as Sort to Light. What this does is it allows libraries to avoid putting a label on items that are being shipped within their own network.

A delivery company scans the bar code that's on each book, and a little light lights up over the tote where that is supposed to be sorted, and it allows them to sort without a label. And we will be saving a lot of labor in libraries [by not] printing and processing labels. A lot of paper for the labels. Printers will be needed less in the future. The busiest libraries in the state also get their holds and returns [of] branch materials sorted into separate totes because the Sort to Light allows that kind of differentiation automatically, and we are now adding stops to deliveries. It's necessary because we're busy.

In the six region environment [in the past], many of the regions were really stretched with the cost of library delivery, and it was really difficult for them to make enhancements, because it was such a stress on their budget. Now, delivery is a big part of our budget; but because it's less of a percentage than it used to be, it's a little easier to handle changes like that.

I have to confess that the libraries in Western Massachusetts, where library delivery was done by in-house staff, do not feel that delivery is enhanced. They also have not been implemented on Sort to Light yet. They recently switched to Evergreen,[but] haven't implemented them on Sort to Light yet, because the network isn't ready. When they're ready, we will; and we think [that] will make things better for them.

ESME: By and large, most of the other librarians I spoke to, in preparing for this, did really feel that the physical delivery component under MLS just worked a lot better. I mean, I understand why the Western part that haven't gotten Sort to Light yet wouldn't see the benefits yet, but I think most everyone else I spoke to did think there wasn't something there.

GREG: Online content. Because of the stress—that some regions have focuses on one thing or another—some regions were unable to provide any additional online content beyond what the state provided. Now the state agency and MLS have joined forces, and everyone has access to the same online content at a very reasonable cost.

Collaborative purchasing is being enhanced. This isn't a result of MLS. This is a result of just a new partnership that we've made with the Massachusetts Higher Education Collaborative. They are an organization that is dedicated to collaborative purchasing. We used to let one of our regions run the collaborative purchasing, but we don't do collaborative purchasing for online content, yet. It's looking at library materials and supplies. So, this organization has increased our buying power, and we will move onto the electronic content and collaborative purchasing soon;

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but we're not ready yet. But MHEC, our partner, has discounts that were not available to libraries in the past that are now available if you start using them.

MassCat or shared interlibrary system. We've been able to reduce the costs for joining MassCat, so we're hoping that, that will enhance resource sharing. [Joining] the virtual catalog has nothing to do with the merger of the review systems. It's just the new virtual catalog is finally here, and that will be compatible with it. MassCat used to be a five-region project, with a government structure that included input for five regions. Our decision-making is really streamlined now with one organization.

I talked about the BTOP grant. This is something that's enhanced, and again, we probably can't attribute this enhancement program to the merger because I think the Western region would have taken much longer with the partners that are there, now. So, maybe we should cross this off as an enhancement of the merger.

Virtual CE is another enhancement. Now we've been able to focus on it. The six regions were starting to dip their toes into it. It was a really high priority when we formed MLS. About 10 percent of our training attendees are virtual trainees now, and we're hoping that number will continue to grow.

We have access to Lynda.com, which is a software training organization. We contract with individual trainers who will do a webinar for us and let us sometimes record it, too. We're about to offer LYRASIS content at LYRASIS member rates, and we have some of our own content.

BiblioTemps is a service that ended with a merger, but was relaunched about seven months ago. It is a library temporary agency, where MLS hires people on our payroll, we contract with libraries, and they work for the library under a contract with MLS so they don't have to put temporary employees on their own payroll. It's working mostly within the public libraries, and it's filling a lot of acting director positions at this point. It's something that was available in one region in the past, with some use outside of that region. Now it's available statewide.

SERVICE REDUCTIONS

The next [slide lists] the service reductions or eliminations. Mediated ILL service has been reduced. We went from six centers to two centers, and our budget was cut significantly. The service reduction is in libraries in Eastern Massachusetts, because we needed to cut costs. Eastern Massachusetts regions used to cover the cost for return postage for out of state ILL, and they used to cover the cost for fees for borrowing from libraries that charged fees.

In order to reduce the cost and make this equivalent statewide, we had to implement that structure statewide, so libraries in Eastern Massachusetts have lost some service. Because of that, volume is down. We're now discussing consolidating the two ILL centers that we have, and taking that work inhouse to be more efficient and agile, especially in light of the transition to e-content in libraries. We used to be able to do resource sharing with e-content, or joint licensing with e-content to supplement the resource sharing.

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Continuing education is now done less frequently. It's done in new locations, because four regional offices were closed. But we do try to get it out into the libraries as much as possible. I think that libraries also have staffing pressure after they've been in a crisis that makes it harder for them to attend CE. We are providing more variety statewide, but it's not always where people want it. And members seem to like statewide events; so we're adding a spring meeting. We had a spring meeting last year that people really enjoyed, so we're having another one this year. I think it may become a tradition. We have an annual fall meeting, too.

Advisory services have declined. Libraries want a vocal, focused contact person. They want somebody vocal to talk to, and we don't have that over there. People rely on their colleagues from past regions. They call them. And we hire by skill, not by location.

ESME: And we're willing to travel.

GREG: Yes. They are willing to travel, and they're mandated to travel. When we hire an advisor in MLS, they are statewide employees. They are available to any library in the state for advice and training.

We are planning to name contact people who are academic libraries, and a contact person for special libraries to kind of get a focus on that and put a face on it for special librarians and academic librarians. We are seeing this "public library-centric," so everybody's going to be seen as a public library person. We do have people who are focused on youth services, technology, and schools that people know about already. We're trying to address that.

We used to offer a semiannual library leadership program that we haven't been able to reintroduce. We're hoping to get some LSTA funding for that, and we can relaunch that next year.

Digitization. A couple of regions used to be heavily involved in that. It's not a core service of MLS; so, as I mentioned before, the Boston Public Library as Library for the Commonwealth is now taking that on, and actually doing a really good job.

Local databases—the members really miss having access to local newspapers that were provided to their regions in the past. It's sorely missed, and we don't have funding provided, at this point.

EFFICIENCY

Now we'll talk about efficiency. I grabbed all the budgets, or what I could find, from the former organizations. I looked at some records from our state agency. There are very few apples to apples comparisons, but I was able to find comparisons in certain service areas that I think are meaningful for this discussion.

If we look at the regional budgets (the six regions in 2009) and the MLS budget in 2012—the numbers that we're going to be talking about—we had an overall budget reduction of 31 percent. It was about \$3 million that we lost. Our personnel costs are 70 percent less. Our operations and facilities costs have gone down 52 percent.

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Another service that was lost in the merger was what we call "regional reference centers." Each region had a regional reference center, and this is a legacy of the past where a strong library in each region would be the place where you would refer the tough reference questions. Sometimes they would provide electronic content, too. Those all closed in 2010, and because of that, our contracting library cost for reference and ILS interest was farmed out 66 percent. Our administrative costs have been reduced 34 percent. On the positive side, we've increased funding for online content by 46 percent, and I think it would be even higher to manage today.

Our return on investment is up. We funded the six-region model in 2009. Our value, when we calculated what it would cost for libraries to buy our services on their own was \$107 million; and a lot of that is in delivery and cooperative purchasing. Net worth. The regions invest \$10 million for a \$10.60 return on investment. MLS's return on investment with a \$7 million budget was \$15.00 per dollar invested.

Services and deliverables. Delivery volume is up slightly. Costs have been reduced a bit, but the level of service has been improved.

Training and advisory services. MLS has twelve librarians or librarian equivalents. The six regions have twenty-two. The number of training events and training attendees are both down by about 57 percent. The budget that we spend on training is down 61 percent; so it's kind of analogous to the downtrend.

In advising—this is an area where our statistics, I don't think, are reliable; but with the statistics that we have, contact hours are down 54 percent, and the budget is down 21 percent.

Online content. Investment is up 46% with uniform content statewide, and they have actually been able to boost the content a bit.

Mediated ILL center services. The volume is down 36 percent; the budget is down 55 percent, and libraries have entailed some new costs and new efforts to do the return shipping.

Not related to MLS, but related to the networks. The shared ILSs—the state is now investing heavily in Evergreen development for three networks that switched to Evergreen over the past two years. But network support, in general, has diminished. In the past, the Board of Library Commissioners would help with migration [of] a new ILS shared network; but now the help is more focused on, typically, development.

THE LEAD UP

We'll jump to the lead up. In 2009, we had a statewide forum on the future of library services, and I think this is very similar to the process that you're going through now. At that meeting, we had a huge brainstorming session, and I think the three items that rose to the top as a result of that meeting, for future consideration, were the need for a statewide library card, the need for a user-friendly, statewide look and feel for library services, and to look at the nine-network arrangement and seek efficiency from that.

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The budgetary crisis that came after the 2008 downturn, I think, contributed to the [cutting] off at the pass of the discussions that were part of that conference. Some very severe budget cuts were handed down to the state agency, and they had to make a decision about how to absorb more than \$3 million in cuts in a way that would not diminish library services seriously. The decision was made that the bulk of those cuts would come out of the regional budgets, and a lot of the cuts came from the Library for the Commonwealth—funding at the Boston Public Library.

[This] started us on the path [of] making a decision about how to move ahead. It was, necessarily, a rushed process, mandated by the state budget time line. I remember we learned about this in September of 2009—that we would need to make these cuts by July, 2010. A planning process began with the executive boards of the regional library systems [and] the regional administrators. That led to a statewide forum of the boards of the regional library systems, the staffs of the regional library systems, and the Board of Library Commissioners.

We made a decision at that meeting to merge into a single entity. The mandate that came down from the state, when we were asked to merge, was *no more than two*. To go from six to either one or two. I wouldn't say it was [a] consensus. I would say it was that the votes for a single system, instead of two systems, won out. We ended up with the decision to go with one system, which is clearly the most efficient way to do it. I am not sure that we could have been successful if we didn't ever overcome that.

After that meeting, a transition team was appointed. Each region was asked to send forth two or three representatives to the transition team to actually plan the details of the merger. The regional administrators also participated on the transition team, and the Board of Library Commissioners participated.

I think that our process was rushed. This transition team was representative of the regions, and because of the strong affiliation with the past regions, that the merger of organizations was really critical to our success to get buy-in from everyone. If there was less affinity with the former organizations, we could have simply just closed the formal organizations and started over; but because of the strong affinity, we needed to have the merger.

I did some of the preliminary calling to the core consultants to help us with the merger. One that was recommended that we weren't able to engage because of the rushed schedule—she asked about our situation. When I told her we were merging six organizations, she said, "Hold onto your hat. Merging two is difficult enough."

The suggestions that I have for any process of consolidating services is to have a facilitator with strong merger experience, to be ready for a very complex process, and be ready to deal with a very strong emotional component. It can't be said more strongly—there's a strong emotional component here that can't be avoided.

The financial complexities, and the proper disposition of assets, and the recognition of liabilities is really challenging. I think another piece of the puzzle that we looked at very closely is the existing and planned compensation packages for outgoing and incoming staff. That the equity in that situation should be examined carefully.

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Obtaining buy-in from all stakeholders is also essential to success in reaching consensus on core services. Having experienced legal counsel is also really important if there is any kind of corporate reorganization going on.

RESULTS

The results of our merger are we had six organizations. We have two surviving corporations. The Western Massachusetts Regional Library System still exists. It's dormant. Their members would not agree to it at all. They would agree to letting it go dormant. The Massachusetts Library System is a new name for one of the existing other regions [where] we simply changed its name, and it absorbed the other organizations of the state. The Boston region was part of the Boston Public Library, so it was not changed. They just simply stopped delivering services.

We now have two offices that are 100 miles apart. Two mediated interlibrary loan centers. The reduction in force—we currently have about 17.3. We use to have about 45. And six of those were drivers—maybe 6.5 were drivers whose work has been outsourced, and that was an emotional experience, too. That took place a year after the merger; so it was reopening the old wounds of reducing the force.

Because we're so far apart (some of our former staff members, and staff members that we've fired since then) telecommuting [has become] a necessity. You can't ask people to drive sixty or seventy miles to work every day, and we want them to be on the road with the members more than we want them to be in our office. The advisors do spend a lot of time telecommuting from home with the modern world.

We have an executive board that can be up to fifteen, and we have six advisory committees and several ad hoc task forces that review projects.

LESSONS LEARNED

Hire an acting director to run the new organization as it's being formed. We didn't do that. If you have a choice and you're doing a merger, hire somebody to run it as it's being put together.

The transition team hired opening-day staff and the executive director. There were many vacancies, still, that needed to be filled, and we were able to operate with some temporary staff until we could hire those positions. [Regardless], you need a group of hiring professionals who will make the decisions that are right for the future of the organization when you're making choices who to hire. We did give priority to existing staff.

The continuity of benefits is another thing to watch out for if you're merging organizations. Make sure that no one's health insurance expires before the person who's buying the health insurance ..., and that goes along with other benefits, too.

Give a lot of thought to compensation equity, and how that would be seen by the staff, by the board, and by the members. I know you have a lot more organizations than we did, and I know you're not considering any specific configuration for the future; but if you are doing a merger—if you can get away with it, also consider closing the organizations and opening a new one,

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perhaps, letting one of the former organizations live on in a new life. But merging brings on a flood of paperwork that you might not understand [and] a flood of electronic records that you might not understand. Our first audit took more than a year, because of the merger.

The assets and liabilities we [analyzed] carefully, and I think having an acting director who can help make decisions about financial commitments of the former organizations can be beneficial to you in the future. We had some leases that were cancelled [00:44:54] and that can be avoided if somebody takes charge of it.

CHALLENGES

The challenges that I see. Right now there's a perception in some areas that *my area is underserved*. The fact of the matter is all areas are served less than they used to be. Our services are really being delivered in a way that's pretty similar to the way they used to be delivered. The training locations have changed, the people have changed, but the percentage of services of each area are pretty level to where they were if you take it proportionately.

We have a challenge involving all of our constituencies, partly because we're seen as public library-centric, especially with academics. They don't feel as much a part; so we need to recognize that.

Crossing the old regional lines is, at some points, a challenge of getting the libraries in one region to talk to another region. We're finding it's a real eye-opener when that happens, and we've come to encourage that.

We're faced with communications challenges, too; getting people's attention. We don't send out a lot of statewide e-mail messages, because we want people to read the ones that we do send out. So, some people feel there should be more. Most people feel there should be less e-mail.

I think a challenge that we're facing, that all organizations like ours are facing now (and it's not a result of the merger or not a result of what we've got) is just the change with electronic content, [which] is so important. We need to have libraries recognize the needed change, and work with us to do that in a sensible way.

OPPORTUNITIES

There are many opportunities. I think that we're able now to provide leadership with a statewide focus. Our decision making is streamlined statewide, now. We only have one organization to talk to instead of six. Our relationships with stakeholders throughout the nine networks is now streamlined. It is very rare for the six regional folks and the nine network folks to get together at any one time, [and it is also very rare for there to be any] consensus on their actions that were important. We did make some important decisions, but it was tough. Now we can meet as ten organizations instead of fifteen.

Our budget planning is more focused. Our statewide advocacy and visibility is more focused. We're going to be forming a new statewide brand and communications plan now that we're kind of settled in. Because we only have seventeen people now, our ability to help libraries directly is

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diminished, and we see our role as connector between other folks with expertise as really important. We're going to be taking that very seriously.

The statewide e-book platform that I mentioned earlier—we are able to support that with funding and staff, and we are orienting staffs to put [outsourcing?? 00:48:18] on that role. That would have been very challenging to put on with other organizations. We have more capacity to take on projects now (although other projects will have to be diminished) but we can balance everything.

The virtual catalog expansion will be helping all libraries. We're hoping to create more ILL efficiency with self service and consolidation, expanding collaborative purchasing to reach out into the e-content more.

Libraries now have a wider range of training opportunities, although it's in limited locations. But if a library asks for training in their area, and we're able to deliver it; we'll do it as soon as possible. Some contracted training can't be duplicated at facility level. Our own training can.

And I think that libraries now have a wider access to different advisory skills. In the past, a region might have three or four of them, but two advisors handling the region. Now they have access to ten advisors and all of their skills. We need to help enhance the familiarity with us. I'm going to put up our thank you screen and turn it over to Esme, now.

ESME: Thank you, Greg. As we were going along, I thought it would be better if Greg could get out his [complete] message, and then I could go back and walk through some of the things that he was talking about.

I did work in three different regions. I'll give you my perspective, first. I spoke to a lot of different colleagues when preparing for this. I spoke to contacts at large, urban libraries; very small rural; and some medium-sized suburban libraries. The attitudes toward the transition to MLS from the six regions really had a great range of reactions.

Some themes came out. I think probably the one you're most interested in is how the process was handled and lessons learned, which Greg went over from his perspective. I think it was very useful for you to know how it was dealt [with] by former regional office staff and librarians in the field. It really varied, because I think some regional administrators handled the transition better than others; so some people had a better experience than others.

The thing that I heard from some people was that they felt that they were locked out of that process. They wanted to help with the transition, but it was really handled at the executive administrator's level, and the in-house staff wasn't really asked for their input. I think they felt very isolated, and for some people, they were really planning [for] the demise of their organization. That's going to be tough and emotional for anybody; so I think it was exacerbated by the fact that it had to be done quickly, and that it was being done, in many cases, by your boss.

So, I think Greg is right when he says you should hire an acting director and a transitional team, and those people should be people outside of those regional offices. It's too sticky, otherwise,

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and it makes an emotional situation even more intense. They really felt that they had no way to shape the process. That's one side of the spectrum.

The other side was that yes, the process could have been handled better, and we've certainly learned from it. Some people thought it should have been sooner. Some people thought it should have been even [quicker]. They thought that there was a duplication of effort. It cost a lot. They needed to save the money. The other thing is that people do miss the local touch. Unfortunately, I think it's a casualty of the situation. When you're in a situation where you need to reorganize and streamline, you're going to win some and you're going to lose some. You really do have to provide the best service [you] can with the budget that you have.

If we were doing it again, I think in particular if you're looking in Massachusetts, the western part of the state (which has the longest-existing region and also is the most rural and smallest populated) is part of our state, and so when people have greater distances to go [and] they have smaller towns, they already feel like having that local touch is more important.

I would say [that] if you could identify areas where you're going to have trouble and it's going to be more difficult; start a conversation with them at the very beginning and find out what their concerns are. See what's going to be problematic and try to address that head-on. But you need to be up front and realistic. You need to let them know *this is going to happen and you're not going to get everything you want*. You shouldn't sugarcoat it, but you should be up front about the fact that things will change.

One person I was talking to said all of the staff in four regions got placed. [But if there was anyone with a handful of people who didn't], obviously, you're trying to reduce your costs, and that's going to happen. I think Greg alluded earlier to the drivers in the west who lost their jobs, and I think that hit people really hard.

For some people, the only trauma or bad feelings they had about it was they had colleagues in the offices, and they felt bad for them. I think most people understand that there is a larger picture at stake, and that they took the long view, and there are going to be some hard things about it; but that the good outweighs the bad.

The training and advisors is a big topic that came up with the people I spoke to. For me, personally, I think the advisors are great. I personally feel that I have access to a lot more expertise than I used to have. I know that some more seasoned directors don't feel that way. They feel like they have more expertise than some of the advisors, and so, they revert to calling their colleagues or former coworkers when they have questions about things.

I know that a lot of people do the same thing. A lot of people feel more comfortable just calling someone they know rather than looking at the advisor's expertise and reaching out to that person. And I would say in terms of communications, with what Greg said earlier, about how it could be a challenge in trying to reach everyone in the system—I think maybe that branding is great, because I think that there are a lot of services that MLS is providing that not everyone's really aware of. It's not really evident to them. It is a new organization (and people don't always know what libraries have to offer) and I want them to really understand that [correctly]. I think that

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that's a really opportunity for them to let people know that [00:56:25] is back, and what they can do, and that the advisors are friendly people who want to help them and do have expertise.

I think it's true that the workshops are often far away. People say that they see a similar list of workshops being offered; or if they can see something, it's 100 miles away, and they can't go to it. I know that online training with webinars is not always as engaging; but I think we still have to look for opportunities to learn and improve where [we] can. And it's true what Greg says. When I first started (I had been a director in this town for not quite two years) I really wanted to help on various subjects. I think I even mentioned it casually, and the next thing I knew, those workshops were being offered. So, I think the response is excellent.

The other thing is I think the delivery is big. I think in Massachusetts, predictably, they didn't think the delivery was as great. I'll give you an example. A woman I talked to said, "There were a few mistakes in my bins today, but that meant they came to me and it was meant for another librarian. In the old days, our drivers would sort the bins on the truck on their way to the next destination. If there's anything in that bin to go in there, they would be able to hand it over that minute." I think that's an example of superlative service, but that is not scalable. I think at the scale we're at, with the Sort to Light, that more people are getting much better delivery service than [they] used to.

Finally, my other theme that I personally am interested in is the networks. We have the nine networks in Massachusetts, and we feel that they are very siloed, and that they're doing a lot of duplication of effort; and that the kind of streamlining that the regions went through would be a huge benefit to library patrons across the state, as well as to the library staff across the state.

[However], the way that would work is very different from the regions, because as I mentioned earlier, the member libraries are the ones who pay the fees that support the networks; and so, we can't have this top-down decision that this needs to happen. The member libraries, themselves, have to instigate it; and that makes it even a little more touchy, because there's not really a centralized way for us to talk about it, or organize each other. So, it really has to be a grass roots thing, and I think there are different feelings about different networks. Some networks are really great, and people want their network to stay. Other people would like their network to change, but they don't really know how to go about doing it.

Everyone I spoke to (even the people who really hated what happened with the regions) feel that we really need to unify; but that we should do it very carefully. One of the reasons we want it is we would like a statewide library card and with all those different ILSs, that's going to be very tough. We want a statewide e-book platform, because if anything, it would equalize the resources. That would be it. We've got Minuteman [Library Network], which is western Boston suburbs. Very wealthy. Resource rich. High volume of transactions.

We put a lot of money into our e-book platform, but out in the west of the state they've got six times the geographical location and like one-tenth the funding (Greg can be more precise about this). And so, if we can equalize who can have access to e-books, I think we'd all win in that situation. Some people think that the library networks should get out of the database business and into the e-book business, and into the statewide library part of this mix.

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The takeaway lesson is if we were to tackle that, it's got to be in a less heated, gun to your head type of way, and we really want to break down the barriers between the networks. I feel like the regional streamlining really took us halfway there, but to really get there completely means that we need to work on the networks, too. I believe that is all I have to say, but I'll be answer any questions.

GREG: That's our presentation. Stef, we're ready for questions, if you have any.

STEF: Yes, they've been rolling in as you've been talking. I'm going to just step back for a couple of minutes here to a couple of specific questions. One is about the ILS consortiums, or I think what you're referring to as networks. *It does appear from your slide, earlier, Greg, that these are multitype. Are all of them multitype, and are they obligated to be multitype, or is that their own network decision?*

GREG: They are not mandated to do anything. I think one of them is entirely academic. I don't have a legible slide for you to read [about] this, that you could read on the screen. Can you read that? So, if you look at FLO, they're entirely academic, but they're very small. The next highest academic number is NOBLE, which has twelve academic locations, nonacademic libraries, and seventeen public libraries. So, you can see the number of members and the number of sites of each of those member types listed. Schools is very low. One network, SAILS, has twenty-four schools. These are all self-directed organizations that make decisions based on their local needs, so there's no mandate.

STEF: That's helpful. I think that answers that question. One of the questions was just to clarify—and I think that this is true—*the regions (not the networks) but the regions went from three to six to one? So, they actually increased at one point in time, and then decreased to one. Is that correct?*

GREG: Yes. There was a movement in the mid-nineties. I think the reason for that was to take some of the control out of Boston and move it into the other parts of the Eastern region. It was a very Boston-centric organization; so that region got broken up into four. The Central and Western regions did not change, except that they became multitype, and their funding was increased significantly with that change. Just to clarify, the funding for regional library services, with the exception of MassCat—there's no charge for a library.

ESME: That's right.

GREG: So, it's unusual in that way.

STEF: Let's talk about some board questions. *What role did the local library boards play during this consolidation, if any; and what do they think of the redesigned organization?*

GREG: They were not involved. It was the boards of the regional library systems that were on the transition team. The library boards, themselves, do not get involved in statewide library services [01:05:12]; except that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners—that most

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of the commissioners are former library trustees or current library trustees [01:05:29], so they have that perspective. But they were not the nitty-gritty players nor the ultimate decision makers on state funding.

ESME: When I was talking to one group, they said that they were invited to meetings. Library staff had been invited to meetings. In the Northeast region, they had attended them because they really cared about what was going to happen and wanted to help out, too. I think in that way, there were certain flatline library staff or actual in-library staff who were involved in some of the discussions.

GREG: But not boards. The public library boards were really not involved.

STEF: Talking a little bit more about governance. *How were the former regions governed? Did they have their own boards?*

GREG: Yes. They were all (except for Boston) not-for-profit corporations that got funding through a formula in state budgetary language, and they were each governed as a not-for-profit corporation by an independent board, and the regions were governed by usually twelve-member boards with one lay representative, who was often a library trustee or a former librarian.

STEF: And the staff of the regions? From what I'm hearing, they were employees of the not-for-profit corporation. They weren't state employees?

GREG: Exactly.

STEF: And now are they state employees?

GREG: No. They're employees of MLS, which is a not-for-profit corporation.

STEF: So you're still at the not-for-profit corporation. *What is the relationship between your organization and the Massachusetts Board of Commissioners, if any?*

GREG: They fund us. We report to them monthly. They have a monthly meeting, and I usually [01:07:43] usually forward them updates. They appoint a liaison to our executive board, and that, until recently, has been the director of the Board of Library Commissioners. He's retiring, so he's going to be moving away from that role. So, we had a very close relationship with them.

We do have independents, as in not-for-profit corporations. They don't direct how we do things. There are certain services that we're required to provide by our contract with them. But we have a very collaborate relationship with them. When we were formed, we met with them regularly to originate roles so that we wouldn't do a lot of overlap or [01:08:38] a little bit. But we're trying to avoid that, and we're trying to find our own place in things and work together when that's important.

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STEF: I think based on what you just said, you report to that board, not to the State Library Commission.

GREG: The executive director of MLS reports to the MLS Executive Committee, not to the MLS Executive Board. But we make a report, once a month, to the Board of Library Commissioners. It's a very brief report—just major activities. And then they ask questions about things that they're concerned about.

STEF: Back to that Board of Commissioners for a sec. *It appears from the MLS website that they are all appointed by the governor. What is the nomination process, and are there any structures in place to ensure representation by the various areas of the state?*

GREG: The library commissioners are appointed by the governor. I don't even know what the terms are. They can go six years, and they can be reappointed. And if their term expires, they stay on until they're replaced, as often they are [01:09:57]. I think it's a self-nominating process. That somebody would go to their state representative, or senator, or someone they knew in government and say, "I'm interested in being appointed." And then that would lead to the governor considering that recommendation. I think the Board of Library Commissioners, themselves, have approached the state and have said, "We want representation from all parts of the state." They want that.

I was at a meeting once in Western, Massachusetts when they had no representative on the board. Their state rep said, "We're looking for somebody to represent Western Massachusetts on the board. Let me know if you're interested." Eventually, two people from Western Massachusetts were approved to the board. So, it's kind of a political process. There's a lot of ethical hoops to jump through. There's apparently a very strong vetting process for this, and there is a political angle to it, too. And I've never been involved in it, so I only know what I hear.

STEF: That was the Board of Commissioners. Can you talk a little bit about your own board? How are they appointed?

GREG: The board was appointed by the transition team. They appointed several directors from each region to join our fifteen-member board. The bylaws state that the board shall ascribe to be representative of geographies and library types and sizes without a mandate for one or the other, and the board just tried to do that. And the board selects its new representatives itself. What they do is annually they put out a call for interest, and they ask people to write a nomination or get nominations. You could nominate yourself or have someone nominate you. Then they would make a decision, and [select people] based on this nomination and the geographic area they're likely to take into consideration.

STEF: This question may be more for Esme. *What has been the reaction of the public? Have they noticed the changes? Has there been positive feedback? Negative feedback? Or was this really more of an impact on the libraries themselves, and the library staff?*

ESME: I think the library staff are more aware of it. I think indirectly people might [be more aware of it], especially in places where they might get better service without really knowing

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why. They're delivering maybe faster interlibrary loans, or they may have access to more databases, but I really doubt that anyone knows what those reasons are.

GREG: MLS doesn't have a real public relations campaign to reach out to end users. We are considering it with e-content and derivatives. We're going to go through a branding process soon. Those questions will be asked and answered at that time. We're not sure how to go with it now.

STEF: Thank you. That's helpful. If people have more questions, please keep them coming. There's a question if we can go back to the sorting, the delivery sorting. *Can you briefly explain what you mean by how that's being sorted?*

GREG: Yes.

ESME: Magic.

GREG: What happens is we have a policy in the state, now, that all new library materials must be bar-coded, top front left corner of each item. And we've had that policy for about three or four years, now, in anticipation. When we were looking at delivery, even before the merger, we were thinking about trying to automate the sorting to be more efficient, because when library delivery was growing so quickly, it was a real burden on everyone to pay the costs for the increase in shipping; so we were looking for any efficiency we could [find].

We went through a huge RFI process the year before the merger to look at automated sorting systems and delivery services to try and find a way to keep the costs down. When MLS was formed, we went through a big RFP process. We decided to remain with the status quo for one year. It was in-house, sort of, in one region. The in-house sorting would contract with delivery in another region and outsource to the [01:15:34] or the regions.

We did an RFP to replace those, and we were hoping that we would be able to reduce costs by considering automation for sorting. We evaluated a lot of responses, and the automated sorting that you've seen in many libraries did not work on our scale in a way that we could save money. But one lender prefers this Sort to Light model, which is based on an industrial standard and a fulfillment company's software called [Fit to Light 01:16:16]. It's where an order filler at Amazon's warehouse is looking to fill an order. They scan their order, and a little light lights up with the bins that they're supposed to pull items from so they can fill the order. And with this, we're kind of doing the opposite. We're sorting to light.

What happens is there's a connection between the ILS of a given... There's nine networks on the sort site. And when the sorter picks up a book and they scan it, it sends a message to the ILS, which responds with a [01:17:01] message that says, "Here's my destination." And it lights a little review light up over the tote that it's supposed to be sorted into. And the sorter drops it into that tote.

It eliminates the need to put a shipping label when you [01:17:20]. And we did this because we calculated that a circulation clerk spends one-third less time if they don't need to put the label. We expect that we're going to save 900 miles of label paper per year, with all of our shipping.

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Then the presence of this computer-operator process—sorting holds and returns, and branch materials separately—is pretty easy, so we're saving our top 10 percent of libraries (in terms of volume) that additional sorting and processing the holds first.

ESME: Great. So when our bins come in, the ones that are coming into fulfill a hold are in one bin, and the ones that are coming home to be reshelved go in another one; but before they were mixed, and you were constantly shipping between two [01:18:16]. Much better.

GREG: So, this system—actually on day one of this new contract (it's about a \$2.7 million contract on day one) is \$100,000 less than we paid the year before. So, we did actually save money right away by consolidating this. Does that makes sense?

STEF: I think so. And I know there's a video on your website. Be sure to send the link out so people can see that in action. I have one more question that came in. *How do you handle net lending and net borrowing?*

GREG: We don't recognize it in any way right now. In the past, all the regions had a net lender reimbursement formula that was a small amount of money that would go to net lenders for each net lend. By 2010, only one region had that still; but you could net by other budgetary priorities. When MLS opened, it completely disappeared. There used to be a state formula for that, too; but that was also eaten up by other budgetary priorities. So, we're not recognizing it at all.

STEF: Another question has come in. *When the regional systems were in place, did the members receive any IT support?*

GREG: In the western part of the state, they did provide broadband access to thirty-five libraries that didn't have their own natural broadband, and that was done with some state funding. The region provided the consultant to make it work. The state provided the funding to make it connect to a satellite or whatever method they cooked up. MLS is continuing that role; so, it hasn't stopped. I think that in the west, computer specialists would help libraries with more than that, too. We're trying to actually empower libraries to manage their own technology, now. We are not able to provide any kind of equitable IT support to seventeen public libraries.

ESME: But the networks do. Most of the networking, though, with the ILSs and network connections are supported by the networks. That's usually where we get our IT support for our local town or community.

STEF: Do the networks provide desktop support, as well?

GREG: Some of them have contracts for that. That's not part of the network service. Some of them were [01:21:39]. Although we won't go on site or do a remote fix for things, sometimes people will call us and say they have an issue and ask for advice; and we will give that advice. But we don't do any hands-on technical work. We're trying to deepen [01:22:00].

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STEF: I have two questions that have come in. *What costs, if any, have been shifted to the members?*

GREG: Well, let's say if Sudbury Library borrows a book from an academic library in New York, and the library charges a ten dollar fee, Sudbury Library has to cover that cost either from the library or recover it from the patron and charge it to them. Sudbury Library will usually get an item by mail from the academic library, and then Sudbury Library is responsible for returning that item to that library, by UPS, or by whatever network the library prefers.

In the past, in the four Eastern Massachusetts regions, they would simply drop the book back into delivery to the ILL center. We would cover the shipping costs of that. And the ten dollar fee used to be covered by the regional ILS in here. So, those are new fees and [01:23:42]. The other indirect cost is some of the regions provided some online content to their members. The OCLC WorldCat is one example of two regions. Now the libraries need to pay for that themselves, and other local databases are no longer covered. They cover them in statewide databases; so if they wanted to review something that was available before, they could let them in.

ESME: Like the local newspapers. I think when people were talking—they'd love to get those back. In my library, we just buy it ourselves, just to have it. It's a small library, and we don't have the money [01:24:38]. It's a little bit difficult to get.

GREG: But basically the loss has been less overall service, because our budget is so much smaller. It's not a real cost. It's just a guest service, and so they dumped it. Look elsewhere or do without.

STEF: Thank you. I think that clarifies. The next question is, *Who manages your payroll and human resources?*

GREG: We have a business manager who manages basically HR, and she has several people who work in her department who support that manager. Some of them are involved with payroll. And we use Paychex to do our paychecks.

STEF: I think that is all the questions that have been asked. The one question that I do have is will you be willing to share your slides with us so that we can share those with the people involved in the process?

GREG: I will e-mail them to you shortly.

STEF: Perfect. Thank you very much, Greg. Thank you, Esme. For those of you still on with us, two quick reminders. One is we have a second webinar next Wednesday at one o'clock. We'll be hearing from Illinois. The other reminder is for those of you who are public libraries on the webinar, please fill out the surveys that have gone out to you. You have until the 25th to complete those surveys. That will influence a big part of the process. Thank you all for attending. Thanks, Greg and Esme, for a great presentation. And hope to see you all next week.

[End]