



To the Mayor and Members of the City Council

April 6, 2021

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SUBJECT: END OF METROPAC CONSORTIUM

The purpose of this report is to provide information on changes to Fort Worth's library services to six other cities in Tarrant County, referred to as the MetrOPAC consortium.

Background

In 1991, the Fort Worth Public Library (FWPL) signed an agreement with the Haltom City Library to share material resources. This included sharing books and an online catalog, allowing residents to borrow from each other's libraries, and using library trucks to move material between locations. From 1993 to 2002, Keller, Watauga, Richland Hills, Benbrook, and Burleson also joined. Fort Worth holds all current contracts, and provides the trucks, couriers, support staff, and supplies needed to provide this service.

With the new contract period approaching at the end of FY20, FWPL staff reviewed the 30-year old consortium model and determined that the structure was not effective given Fort Worth's growth and service costs. Staff proposed moving to a service provider model like those offered in other departments, such as water and wastewater, animal care and control, and radio communication services. This would be a different structure but would be a better use of Fort Worth taxpayer dollars. FWPL offered a one-year extension for FY21 on the consortium model to allow the six cities to evaluate the proposed service provider model. Benbrook decided to leave at the end of FY20. The other cities signed the extension, but have all since decided not to sign on to the new structure and instead to form their own independent consortium.

Financials

	FY2020	FY2016-2020
FWPL portion:	\$764,015 (89%)	\$3,895,977 (89%)
6 cities portion:	<u>\$98,842 (11%)</u>	<u>\$482,982 (11%)</u>
Total cost:	\$862,857	\$4,378,959

Based on the number of locations, the six cities comprise about **29%** of the totality of MetrOPAC, while Fort Worth comprises 71%. As can be seen above, the six cities pay well below that amount. While costs have risen every year, FWPL has not passed on these costs to the other cities. This gap has resulted in FWPL paying approximately \$110,000 per year that proportionally should have been covered by the MetrOPAC cities. Since 2016, Fort Worth has subsidized over half a million dollars for the consortium.

Currently, the online library catalog and one full-time position (two positions prior to FY2020) are paid for out of a special technology revenue fund that was intended to be self-sustaining but is not. The fund will be depleted by the end of FY22, or by FY24 if the position is funded separately. The bulk of the fund pays for the library catalog, which manages 1.3 million items and almost 200,000 patron records. The library cannot function without this system. Library leadership is working with Planning & Data Analytics and Financial Management Services on a solution as part of the FY22 budget process.



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Service Change Impacts

After the MetrOPAC consortium ends on September 30, 2021, Fort Worth residents will be able to continue to use any library in other cities that participate in the TexShare program offered by the Texas State Library. Fort Worth residents will need to obtain a TexShare card to use other libraries that participate in the program. FWPL also participates in the Texas State Library's Inter-Library Loan program, which provides users access to materials that the FWPL does not own. In addition, any student up to 18 years old is eligible for a free Fort Worth Public Library card, regardless of their city of residence.

Library staff are evaluating items that are only owned by MetrOPAC libraries to determine material purchasing needs and will have no problem bridging the gap.

One of the underserved areas in Fort Worth prior to August 2020 was around the new Golden Triangle Library. Residents of Fort Worth in that area had the benefit of using the Keller Public Library as part of the MetrOPAC agreement. Now that Golden Triangle Library is open, even in a limited capacity, Fort Worth residents are using the Keller library less often.

Fort Worth residents using the Keller library

From February 2020 to February 2021	-46%
From July 2020 to February 2021	-36%

It is no longer necessary for Fort Worth to have an agreement with Keller in order to bridge the gap. The Golden Triangle Library was built specifically for this reason and is already showing a positive impact.

Other areas of Fort Worth have benefitted from having a MetrOPAC library near them. In FY19, Fort Worth residents checked out 202,480 Burleson library items, representing 6% of total items checked out across the city. When open in the future, the far southwest library in District 6 will be able to serve Fort Worth residents who have been using the Burleson library. FWPL was hoping MetrOPAC would continue, albeit with a non-subsidized structure, until more Fort Worth library locations can open.

Communication

Changes for residents will begin in June and the public communication plan will roll out in May. Library staff has briefed the Library Advisory Board and will work with Communications, Council members, and Advisory Board members to ensure the public is well informed of the change and has the information they need.

If you have any questions on this report, please contact Manya Shorr, Director, Fort Worth Public Library, at 817-392-7706 or manya.shorr@fortworthtexas.gov.

David Cooke
City Manager