

Westchester Public Library Board of Trustees

Minutes

February 27, 2025

A special meeting of the Westchester Public Library Board of Trustees was held at the Baugher Center located at 100 W. Indiana Ave, Chesterton, Indiana on Thursday, February 27, 2025. It was called to order by Rondi Wightman, Board President at 7:00 p.m.

Board members present were: Michele Corazzo, Abbe Trent, Kathryn Cochran, Justin Martinson, Michael Livovich, Will Scharp and Rondi Wightman.

Board members absent: N/A

Also present at this meeting were: Library Director Heather Chaddock and Library Assistant Director Jessica Bartz. Library Attorney Lisa Baron was absent due to a conflicting engagement.

**NEW BUSINESS**

INDIANA DIGITAL LIBRARY – The Porter County Public Library System (PCPLS) recently sent an email to all of its non-resident patrons stating that, effective March 2025, certain services will be restricted to only its resident patrons due to budget constraints. This announcement has caused some confusion among Westchester Township residents, as they reside in both Porter County and Westchester Township. Director Chaddock confirmed with the Department of Local Government Finance that individual property tax contributions are separate for each of these library systems (Porter County residents in Districts 21-26 have a portion of their taxes given to WPL; residents of all other Districts in Porter County give property taxes to PCPLS) .

PCPLS's changes affect non-resident access to digital checkouts, material requests, and home delivery. Some WPL patrons mistakenly believed these services were also unavailable at WPL. It was clarified that WPL continues to offer digital checkouts (Libby, Hoopla, Kanopy), material requests, and home delivery.

In response to this announcement, and patron concern over losing access to PCPLS's ebook offerings, WPL leadership explored joining the Indiana Digital Library (IDL) consortium. This would significantly expand e-book access from 25,000 to over 200,000 titles at no additional cost, but it would also mean a loss of local control over Libby curation and policies. Director Chaddock recommended joining IDL, citing the benefits of broader access and reduced wait times. Discussion and feedback from the Board were invited before a final decision was made.

**BOARD DISCUSSION**

Justin Martinson asked if books in the WPL collection would be available to patrons of other Indiana libraries, and if they were checked out, would that then make them unavailable to WPL patrons. Director Chaddock confirmed that a check-out from a non-resident would render that book unavailable, but it was very likely that there would be other copies available due to the amount of libraries that are part of the IDL.

Will Scharp asked if a WPL patron reserving a title would be prioritized over non-WPL patrons already in line. Assistant Director Bartz confirmed that if WPL owned a copy of the title, the WPL patron would be given priority.

Abbe Trent inquired about the accessibility of the data for tracking availability of materials, noting differences between PCPLS and WPL's Libby apps. She wondered if WPL could monitor demand and availability. Director Chaddock stated that the data is easily accessible, as it is the same platform WPL currently uses for purchasing and analysis. She added that staff regularly generate reports to track wait times and identify needed purchases, and this functionality will remain available.

Abbe Trent asked if WPL could curate and sort IDL titles to highlight WPL's collection focus. She praised the improved curation, updating and general maintenance of the collection under Director Chaddock's tenure. Director Chaddock credited WPL staff for these efforts. Assistant Director Bartz noted that IDL does not allow for such customization and emphasized that it is one of the negative aspects of joining IDL.

Abbe Trent questioned what options were available to prevent patrons from losing their holds and reading history and whether PCPLS could share WPL patrons' histories. Director Chaddock said she would look into it and explore obtaining the data from OverDrive. Assistant Director Bartz noted that, based on discussions with OverDrive and IDL representatives, the data is expected to transfer, but would ensure that this was verified.

Michael Livovich asked if Director Chaddock recommended joining IDL. She confirmed she did, citing the value and breadth of the collection. Michael agreed, sharing that he utilized the IDL collection and was impressed with it and expressed his support for joining.

Michele Corazzo asked if the WPL collection overlaps with IDL and whether there are titles WPL has that IDL does not. Director Chaddock confirmed that there is overlap and that WPL may have some unique titles. She assured Michele that WPL's current collection will transfer when joining IDL.

Justin Martinson inquired about the previous consortium WPL belonged to and the issues experienced. Director Chaddock explained that while she couldn't recall the name of the consortium, the primary issues were negative user experiences/long wait times, and she reiterated that this was not expected to be a problem with IDL.

Abbe Trent asked if library staff would need to duplicate their collection curation work when transitioning to the new system. Director Chaddock confirmed that the work would transfer, and the new system would also allow staff to acquire additional copies of popular, newer titles, ensuring quicker access for patrons.

Director Chaddock asked if the Board was in favor of joining the Indiana Digital Library. The Board voiced their agreement.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Kim Baer, of 341 Brown Ct., Chesterton: Kim expressed initial concern and some confusion after receiving the email from PCPLS, which led her to post about it on Facebook. As a frequent audiobook listener, she found the email distressing. However, she stated that she appreciates the library's prompt response and thorough research on the matter and was very thankful for how quickly it was addressed.

John Sherrick, 320 S 17th St., Chesterton: John inquired whether the library would be required to purchase certain titles and if the IDL system removed a title, whether the library would also have to remove it. He also asked if the library would retain purchased titles if it decided to leave the system. Director Chaddock stated she was fairly certain that purchased books would remain with the library. She was unsure about title removals, but Assistant Director Bartz believed the library would have to follow IDL's decisions, describing it as an "all or nothing" situation. Abbe Trent added that IDL follows the Library Bill of Rights, making title removals unlikely unless legislative changes occurred.

Kim Baer: Kim inquired if Hoopla would still exist. Director Chaddock stated it definitely would still exist and reassured the attendees that Hoopla wasn't going anywhere.

Barb Homee of 109 Westchester Ave., Chesterton: Barb, an avid audiobook listener, expressed appreciation for the breadth of the IDL collection. She also thanked Heather and the Library for addressing the issue promptly.


Paige Fender, 320 S. 17th St., Chesterton: Paige asked about the timeline for the transition, given that patrons would lose their access to the PCPLS services at the beginning of March. Director Chaddock stated that IDL estimated a 2-3 week transition period, which is why she proposed holding a special meeting before the next regularly scheduled Board meeting, to expedite the process and minimize disruptions to patrons' reading experiences.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be on Thursday, March 13th, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. at the Thomas Branch, located at 200 W. Indiana Ave., Chesterton.

Kathryn Cochran made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Abbe Trent seconded the motion. Rondi Wightman adjourned the meeting at 7:31 p.m.



Rondi Wightman, President



Justin Martinson, Secretary



Michele Corazzo, Vice-President



Kathryn Cochran, Board Member



Abbe Trent, Treasurer



Michael Livovich, Board Member

Will Scharp, Board Member

Respectfully submitted,  
Carissa Domonkos, Minutes Recorder for Justin Martinson, Secretary