

Making Book:

Gambling on the future of our libraries

Executive summary of the KC Consensus white paper

Approved by the Consensus
Board of Directors April 2004.

Perhaps your picture of libraries is rooted in your experience as a child – the nice librarian, the smooth oak tables, the towering shelves of books. Nowadays, maybe you visit the nearest branch to pick up a novel, or perhaps you camp out for hours conducting research. Or maybe you rarely visit the library building, relying instead on online services supplied by your library or others. The American Library Association says the library “is the only institution in American society whose purpose is to guard against the tyrannies of ignorance and conformity, and its existence indicates the extent to which a democratic society values knowledge, truth, justice, books and culture.” That guardian may be in danger here, as changes in society outpace a system that was created when our world was a very different place.

Metro Kansas City has some excellent libraries, but the future holds challenges for even the most proficient library directors and the most loyal library patrons. Trends that are transforming libraries, technology in particular, demand a regional or state-wide (or even national) response. And libraries are among the most local of institutions, with the vast majority of their funding tied to the tax base within their geographic boundaries and subject to changes in each district’s tax capacity.

Kansas City Consensus commissioned this white paper to gather facts that citizens could later use to answer this question:

The geographical structure and funding systems for many metro Kansas City libraries were put in place years ago when people visited their local libraries on foot or horseback. Today, geographical boundaries are increasingly meaningless, as the public expects more, different, and seamless quality services. How should metro Kansas City libraries best be structured, organized and funded to optimize services and performance in the future?

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*I go into my library, and
all history unrolls before
me. I breathe the morn-
ing air of the world while
the scent of Eden's
roses yet lingered in it,
while it vibrated only to
the world's first brood of
nightingales, and to the
laugh of Eve. I see the
pyramids building; I
hear the shouting of the
armies of Alexander.*

Alexander Smith
Scottish poet

The white paper contains findings along with preliminary recommendations for action created by the Consensus board. The recommendations are intended to begin the conversation about what should be done, not end it. It is citizens who must determine what the facts mean, and it is citizens whose values should drive action.

The task is made somewhat more difficult by the lack of comparative research, particularly long-term longitudinal studies that would show the community and economic impact of libraries. When a task force of library leaders and leaders of federal agencies gathered to address the issue, they found that while research could help librarians better meet the needs of the future, the federal government devoted minimal funds to research, and what research was conducted was often isolated and uncoordinated.

What are the basic facts about metro Kansas City libraries?

The National Center for Education Statistics collects information from each library in the country, which is published annually. The following is from the report released in 2003, which is based on 2001 data.

Libraries operate within a decentralized structure and most libraries around the country are very small. Eighty-one percent of libraries have just one single direct service outlet. Only 19% have more than one, such as a branch library or bookmobile. In the five-county metro area we have seven library districts (also called libraries).

Library	Pop. served & (% total pop.)	# central libraries	# branch libraries
Mid-Continent Public Library	650,023 (43%)	0	30
Johnson County Library	358,110 (24%)	1	12
Kansas City Public Library	257,930 (17%)	1	9
Kansas City, Kansas, Public Lib.	151,206 (10%)	1	3
Olathe Public Library	92,962 (6%)	1	1
Bonner Springs City Library	6,768 (<1%)	1	0
North Kansas City Public Library	4,714 (<1%)	1	0

- Mid-Continent is a multijurisdictional library that serves three counties – Clay, Jackson & Platte – except for the territory of two other libraries, Kansas City and North Kansas City.

- Johnson County is a county library, serving all of Johnson County except for Olathe.
- Kansas City is a municipal library whose boundaries correspond to the 87 square miles of the Kansas City School District, although the two entities separated their administration in 1988.
- Kansas City, Kansas, is a municipal library serving all of Wyandotte County except Bonner Springs. It is governed by the board of the Kansas City, Kansas, School District; it receives no funds from the district and has no branches in schools.
- Olathe, Bonner Springs and North Kansas City are municipal libraries whose boundaries correspond to those of their cities.

Missouri libraries are independent taxing districts, which means that they can go directly to voters for tax increases and their budgets are separate from those of their jurisdictions. The mill levies for Kansas libraries are set by the jurisdictions within which the libraries operate.

Metro Kansas City libraries receive substantially more local funding and less state funding than the national average. Nationwide, libraries receive an average of 77% of their operating budgets from local sources; in the metro, the average is 90%. Nationwide, libraries receive an average of 13% from their states; in the metro, they receive an average of 1.5%. Only two libraries, Kansas City and Kansas City, Kansas, receive the national average 1% of funding from federal sources; the rest receive no funds. The remainder of library budgets is provided by other sources like grants and gifts.

Library	Per capita operating exp.	% spent on staff	% spent on collections
National average	\$27.64	64%	15%
Mid-Continent	38.83	61%	26%
Johnson County	41.93	64%	19%
Kansas City	51.82	57%	21%
Kansas City, Kansas	33.31	69%	14%
Olathe	26.28	64%	17%
Bonner Springs	32.46	58%	17%
North Kansas City	121.71	66%	14%

*Come and take choice
of all my library,
And so beguile thy
sorrow.*

*William Shakespeare
British dramatist*

*You become a reader
because you saw and
heard someone you
admired enjoying the
experience, someone
led you to the world of
books even before you
could read, let you taste
the magic of stories,
took you to the library,
and allowed you to stay
up later at night to read
in bed.*

Jim Trelease
*The New Read-Aloud
Handbook*

The national average for books and serial volumes per capita is 2.90. Metro libraries range from a high of 10.01 in Mid-Continent to a low of 2.18 in Olathe. The national average for circulation per capita is 6.40. Metro libraries range from a high of 21.23 in North Kansas City to a low of 6.01 in Kansas City, Kansas.

Which trends will have an impact on libraries?

► **Technology.** Patrons want traditional, book-based library services as well as expensive new technology, both hardware and online services such as historical collections in digital form. In just three years, from 1998-2001, the number of public terminals available at U.S. libraries skyrocketed from 24,028 to 122,584, and the annual use of electronic resources went from 20 million to almost 200 million. Electronic use is almost twice as expensive as traditional services. The latest data show that the cost per electronic use is almost twice as expensive as traditional services, an average of \$.94 for electronic use and just \$.50 per circulation for books and periodicals.

Keeping up with even basic technology is expensive, and technology changes the role that geography plays in library services. State and federal governments have stepped in to help assure that technology is available to all libraries, and libraries are seeking other sources of funding like grants and gifts to pay for services that tax dollars once covered.

While many expected the Internet to reduce the importance of library buildings, the reverse has been true. A simultaneous trend has led to communities using library buildings as the focus of community revitalization and civic life.

It's not just the "stuff" of libraries that is changing. The people are changing, as well.

► **Patrons.** In coming years, libraries will serve a changing group of patrons. Trends will include more elderly, more immigrants, and the 60 million members of Generation Y, born between 1980-1999, and the most immense generational group since the 72 million Baby Boomers.

► **Librarians.** Some expect the coming wave of librarian retirements to have a major impact on libraries, which devote an average of 60% of their budgets to staff salaries. New career opportunities for women and competition from private indus-

try may cause a shortage of people willing to work for traditionally low librarian salaries. Others say that library schools are graduating enough students to meet the demand.

How do we measure a library's quality?

This is more difficult than one might expect. There have been no national standards since the Carter administration, when the field switched its philosophy from librarians selecting high-quality materials and measuring inputs (size of the collection, etc.), to librarians giving patrons what they wanted and measuring outputs (circulation and visits, etc.).

With the demise of national standards, states have developed their own. Because so many libraries are small, single-outlet districts, the standards are often written as minimums. Missouri's standards were adopted in 1999; it comes with no certification or rating process and state funding is not withheld if a library fails to meet the standards. Kansas adopted its standards in 2000. While the Kansas state library doesn't use a certification or rating process and does not enforce penalties, its regional systems do require that libraries meet the standards in order to be eligible for a grant.

The one comparative tool available is the HAPLR Index, compiled by Thomas Hennen. It uses data submitted to the federal government by each state and published annually. The HAPLR Index includes 15 factors related to traditional library services, focusing on circulation, staffing, materials, reference service, and funding levels. Each library is provided a score, with a theoretical minimum of 1 and a maximum of 1,000.

The scores for the seven libraries in the metro area for 2003 (using data from FY 2001) were:

Library	Score
Johnson County Library	869
Olathe Public Library	770
North Kansas City Public Library	750
Bonner Springs City Library	694
Kansas City Public Library	693
Mid-Continent Public Library	692
Kansas City, Kansas, Public Library	582

In my early days, I tried not to give librarians any trouble, which was where I made my primary mistake. Librarians like to be given trouble, they exist for it, they are geared to it. For the location of a missed volume, an uncatalogued item, your good librarian has a ferret's nose. Give her a scent and she jumps the leash, her eyes bright with battle.

Catherine Drinker Bowen
U.S. biographer

A book is a fragile creature, it suffers the wear of time, it fears rodents, the elements and clumsy hands...so the librarian protects the books not only against mankind but also against nature and devotes his life to this war with the forces of oblivion.

Umberto Eco
On librarians of the year 1327 in his book, *The Name of the Rose*

Hennen ranks libraries in a “top ten list” of those serving population groups of different sizes. In 2000, Mid-Continent Public Library ranked 8th among U.S. libraries serving 500,000 or more, and in 1999, Johnson County Library ranked first among those serving 250,000-499,999. The Johnson County library ranked 2nd in 2000 and 2002, and 3rd in 2003. No Index was released in 2001.

The HAPLR Index also provides a weighted average and rankings for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. In 2003, Kansas ranked 8th with a score of 634 and Missouri ranked 13th with a score of 572.

How are our public libraries funded?

The great majority of funds for public libraries (an average of 77% nationally and 90% in metro Kansas City) are raised locally. In the metro, local funds come from the property tax, which means that a library’s funding is closely tied to the tax capacity available within its boundaries.

Cities with high property values and/or a lot of commercial property have a high tax capacity. Basically, this means they have a large pool of tax dollars to use to pay the bills for municipal services, so they can take a low percentage of each taxpayer’s assets. Municipalities with low property values or less commercial development are in the opposite situation. They have a smaller pool of tax dollars available to them, and their bills are often higher because they must pay for services not needed in newer or more affluent communities, like demolition of dangerous buildings and social services for low-income residents.

A comparison: Wyandotte County had an average mill rate of 168.188 in 2001, while Johnson County had an average mill rate of 101.167. The tax bill for the owner of a \$136,500 home would be \$2,640 in Wyandotte County and \$1,588 in Johnson County, a difference of \$1,052.

Another factor in determining tax capacity is the jurisdiction’s use of tax incentives intended to lure businesses or keep them from leaving. Tax incentives reduce the tax dollars available to libraries and others that rely on them.

State funds are sometimes used to help level out inequities in funds available to libraries. Because Missouri and Kansas provide so few funds locally, an average of just 1.5% compared to the national average of 13%, state funding has little impact. But, while libraries could certainly use additional state funds, the lack

of state funding may have insulated local libraries somewhat from the drastic cut-backs in state funding that occurred elsewhere due to the recession.

What is the right size for a library?

Andrew Carnegie did more than provide access to books when he endowed more than a thousand libraries to towns around the country in the early 1900s. He also determined that the size of area served by U.S. libraries would be smaller and the structure more decentralized than their European counterparts. Municipal libraries – many very small – are still the most common type of library in the U.S. today.

Municipal libraries comprise more than half of all libraries but serve only one-third of the U.S. population. Other types of libraries, like county/parish, city/county, and special districts, take in a larger geographic area and are considered wider units of service.

A recent study found that wider units of service provide more cost-effective service than smaller municipal libraries. Some states provide incentives for small libraries to merge, while others mandate county libraries or districts serving a larger population.

Missouri, which has 149 libraries, suggests in its implementation plan for library standards that when adequate funding is unavailable, small libraries should consider merging with another district or contracting for local service. Kansas, with 324 libraries, has superimposed a support system of seven regional library systems that provide services the small libraries couldn't otherwise afford. The average library in Missouri serves 32,165 persons and the average library in Kansas serves 6,735. The national average is 30,133.

In the metro area, five of the seven libraries are considered municipal:

- Olathe, North Kansas City and Bonner Springs are small districts whose boundaries exactly correspond to those of their municipality. All three would be obvious candidates for mergers, but leaders vigorously assert their right to serve communities that value having their own libraries.
- While the Kansas City, Kansas, Public Library is considered municipal, in fact it is as much a countywide district as its neighbor, Johnson County. Kansas City, Kansas, takes in all of Wyandotte County except for Bonner Springs, and Johnson County includes all of Johnson County except for Olathe.

*I've been drunk for
about a week now, and
I thought it might sober
me up to sit in a library.*

F. Scott Fitzgerald

U.S. author

An unnamed guest at one
of Gatsby's parties in *The
Great Gatsby*

Nothing sickens me more than the closed door of a library.

Barbara Tuchman
U.S. historian

- The Kansas City Public Library is the district that is most often discussed in terms of its potential for a merger. Kansas City is the oldest library in the metro, with extensive historical collections and a lot of depth. While it serves the region – in 2000-2001, 27% of its total circulation was to residents of other districts – it can only draw on taxes available within 87 square miles in Jackson County. Seventy-seven of those miles are within the city limits of Kansas City, Missouri, which equals 24% of the city’s area. While average family income is 70-75% of that of the rest of the metro, voters have chosen to tax themselves at a substantially higher rate, .50 instead of the typical .30-.35.

If Kansas City were to initiate a merger, it would likely be with Mid-Continent, which takes in the rest of Jackson County as well as Clay and Platte. But the reasons that Kansas City would favor a merger – low tax capacity and its historic (and expensive) role as a library serving the region – are the same reasons why Mid-Continent would likely consider Kansas City a liability. Short of a merger, other options for increasing the service area and tax capacity is to redraw the Kansas City district’s boundaries to take in all the area within the City of Kansas City or Jackson County, or to develop regional or state funding for some operations at the Central Library, like special collections, which serve a wide area.

Can collaboration make a difference?

Librarians tend to be collaborative by nature, and patrons expect to have access to any library’s resources, no matter where they live, so the culture promotes collaboration. Before the advent of computers, collaboration was mainly used to get books from one library to another. Today, librarians seek to share online card catalogs and databases, and state libraries try to assure that technology is widely available.

Librarians say that metro Kansas City libraries are even more collaborative than most, and their collaborative efforts have helped local libraries provide services that they might not have otherwise. Library directors identify additional opportunities for collaborative funding, specialized collections, and cooperative purchasing of databases and other technologically driven elements such as online catalogs and communications.

At the state level, the state libraries of Missouri and Kansas sponsor or co-

ordinate a variety of statewide collaborative efforts, along with traditional activities like continuing education, assistance with library planning, and collection of library statistics. Technology has modified the role of state libraries, which, in the past, did not often provide public library service directly. Now, Kansas and Missouri are among the 40 libraries that use state and federal funds for statewide technology services. Kansas coordinates a statewide library catalog, and an online information service, for example, and Missouri sponsors a regional network for online information services and a technology-services project.

What are some options for action?

It is the intention of Consensus to involve citizens in determining what should be done and in taking action. After a thorough review of the report, however, the Kansas City Consensus Board of Directors believed the public would find it useful if the board began to identify the most critical problems and the types of actions most likely to solve them. This interim step is intended to start discussion, not end it.

In this, as in all matters of public judgment, values come into play. Public judgment is reached when citizens have accepted the consequences of whatever actions they want to take. Public judgment is not volatile, and there is a high level of consistency with a citizen's views on one issue and his or her views on other issues. Public judgment requires moving away from individual opinion and toward a shared understanding about what is in our best interests as a public. Public judgment is informed but not driven by information. Instead, it is distinct in two ways: 1) it weighs alternatives and takes into account a variety of factors; and 2) it considers values, and emphasizes the normative, ethical side of questions rather than the factual, informational side.

Wider units of service

Metro Kansas City includes five libraries that are classified as municipal, a classification that typically indicates a small unit of service. A study by Thomas Hennen has confirmed the belief among library directors that wider units of service are more efficient, with smaller per-capita gaps in expenditures, than small units. The logical next step, then, would be to consider merging those municipal libraries with larger

I'm glad it happened in front of the library. I've always emphasized scholarship.

Doug Weaver
Former Kansas State
University football coach,
on being hanged in effigy.

When it's summer, people sit a lot. Or lie. Lie in the sense of recumbency. A good heavy book holds you down. It's an anchor that keeps you from getting up and having another gin and tonic. Many a person has been saved from summer alcoholism...by Dostoyevsky. Put The Idiot in your lap or over your face, and you know where you are going to be for the afternoon.

*Roy Blount, Jr.
U.S. humorist
From "Summertime and the Reading Is Heavy"*

libraries nearby.

There are three small municipal libraries in the five-county area: Olathe, Bonner Springs, and North Kansas City. Together, they serve less than 8% of the population. According to their HAPLR scores, the three libraries ranked 2-4th highest among the seven local libraries. Would it make economic sense to merge these small libraries with their larger neighbors? Yes, although their HAPLR scores indicate that, despite their size, they are providing service of a competitive quality. The board believes, however, that mergers should not be forced on these small libraries. If the small municipal libraries merge, it should be a merger initiated by them, not imposed upon them.

The Kansas City, Kansas, Public Library is also a municipal library, but its service area is wider than the classification would indicate. It, like the Johnson County Library, serves all of one county with the exception of a small municipality. Even though the Kansas City, Kansas, Public Library is a larger unit of service, it is ranked lowest of the seven local libraries. A merger is unlikely to help.

The last of the municipal libraries is the Kansas City Public Library. This, the oldest public library in the metro area, was established in the late 1800s when its 87-square-mile area consumed much of the developed portion of the City of Kansas City. That is no longer the case. The Kansas City Public Library serves the region—27% of its total circulation is to residents of other districts—and it manages the largest collection of historical materials of any library in the metro. It can collect taxes, however, only from a small area of the urban core, with a tax base that shrinks due to corporate relocations and tax abatements. Its patrons, who have a per capita income level that's about three-fourths that of the metro average, have voted to tax themselves at the highest rate in the five-county region. The value of fairness comes into play when considering what should be done.

While the Consensus board believes that the size and economic condition of the Kansas City Public Library's service area is a substantial threat to its future, it is not convinced that a merger with the Mid-Continent Public Library is the best way to solve the problem. Mid-Continent's structure, with 30 branches and no main library, was designed to complement that of Kansas City and the philosophies of the two districts seem quite different. And, given the economic liabilities facing the Kansas City Public Library, it is highly unlikely that the Mid-Continent board

would agree to include that library in its district, a necessary step for a merger unless it is initiated by state legislative action.

Instead, the Consensus board is intrigued by the Kansas City director's idea of expanding the size of the Kansas City Public Library to include all of the City of Kansas City. It appears to be a reasonable step that would increase the unit of service and provide access to a suburban tax base. This would require "trading" some branches between Kansas City and Mid-Continent, but it would allow the two libraries' administrative structures to remain distinct. The board suggests that an even better option would be to have the Kansas City Public Library serve all of Jackson County. States are more and more often mandating county libraries. This would give the Kansas City district a unit of service similar to the Johnson County and Kansas City, Kansas, libraries, although still smaller than Mid-Continent.

Another option is to increase the size of the Kansas City Public Library's taxing area without changing its boundaries. This option would allow regional support for regional and statewide resources held by the Central Library. That library houses an extensive historical collection, some of which dates from the 1870s, and other books and serial volumes that are long out of print. The collection is used by patrons throughout the region, but the cost is not shared. At least 50% of the use of the old Main Library can be attributed to out-of-district patrons, although figures aren't available that show what percentage used the special collections.

The board offers two options for sharing the responsibility for funding this resource. The first is to develop a regional taxing district and regional oversight board that would fund and govern the operations of the Central Library that pertain to regional historic and other special collections. The second would be for the State of Missouri to declare the Central Library a statewide resource, and provide state funding for special collections that are of value to residents statewide. In both cases, regional or state funding could also be made available to other libraries that provide regional or statewide services, but our focus here is on the extensive, and expensive, collections of the Kansas City Public Library.

No matter which option is used, there should be further study to assure that the action taken will be efficient and effective. Additional research may find even more appealing options.

*Knowledge unfits a
child to be a slave.*

Frederick Douglass
U.S. abolitionist

Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read.

Groucho Marx
U.S. comedian

State funding

The states of Missouri and Kansas provide a miniscule amount of funds to local libraries, an average of just 1.5% of their operating budgets compared to 13% nationwide, and the per capita expenditures of the two states on library services is significantly below the national average, as well. For years, governors and legislators in the two states have not viewed libraries as integral to the economic and educational health of their states, which we believe they are.

The state libraries have taken on new roles as providers or organizers of state-wide services, particularly in the area of technology, for which they should be applauded. But lawmakers must allow them to do more, particularly in terms of assuring that areas with a low tax capacity are not left behind. State funding – drawn from an extremely wide area – can be critical in increasing equity of funding to poor areas. The current level of funding is woefully insufficient to do the job.

We recognize that, given the status of the budgets of Missouri and Kansas, additional funding for anything is unlikely at the moment. We also recognize that, because local libraries receive so few funds from their states, they were less damaged by the recent recession than those where state budget cuts prompted reduced hours and branch closures. But the board asserts that libraries are more than just a local option. Libraries are a statewide resource, on par with our schools, that have a right to expect adequate support from state government. We define adequate as providing 10%, not 1.5%, of local libraries' budgets.

Regional tax for shared programs and services

Local taxpayers fund an average of 90% of the operating budgets of their public libraries through the property tax. The property tax is more geographically based than libraries themselves and it penalizes areas (typically urban and rural rather than suburban) with a low tax capacity. And, while the funds raised through property tax were sufficient to fund traditional services, it is insufficient to pay for the expensive new technology that patrons need and want, which costs almost twice as much per use as book-based services.

The states of Missouri and Kansas could legitimately be expected to provide additional funding to help solve the problem. Until that takes place, it is up to local citizens to step forward.

Most local libraries are very collaborative and have a long history of shared technological and other programs. A bi-state sales tax, or separate taxing mechanisms in Missouri and Kansas, would provide funds for technology and other regional programs and services. It would build upon a strength that already exists, and allow libraries to work together to meet needs that their patrons are likely to consider important. A regional tax would promote the economies of scale that come from shared databases and online journals, without requiring that libraries merge to achieve them. In addition, supplementing the property tax with a regional sales or other tax would lend stability to the funds available for local libraries.

There are a variety of ways to organize this tax. If local control is considered important, it could be set up so that funds would stay within the jurisdiction, but available to pay for shared regional programs and services. Or the funds could be combined and then used to pay for regional programs that library directors or an independent board of advisors agree are important. Library directors and other stakeholders would need to consider the most appropriate way to structure the tax and the use of its proceeds.

Voter approval for Kansas library mill levies

Missouri libraries can go directly to voters for approval of library mill levy increases, while Kansas libraries cannot. In Kansas, the jurisdiction within which the library operates sets the mill levy. While funds raised through the mill levy must go to the library, the jurisdiction can lower the mill levy if it chooses. Missouri's system gives citizens the opportunity to choose how much they are willing to spend and it allows libraries to make their case to the public directly, while the Kansas system does not. Citizens and libraries are better served by citizens having the opportunity to decide what they are willing to spend on their local libraries, rather than having that decision in the hands of others. Kansas, a populist state in so many other ways, should adopt the system used by Missouri and clear the way for direct communication between libraries and their patrons.

Additional research on library funding

While there are some benefits of having libraries funded almost totally through the property tax, there are also some significant disadvantages that suggest the method

The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them.

Mark Twain
U.S. author

*The true felicity of a lover
of books is in the luxurious
turning of page by page,
the surrender, not meanly
abject, but deliberate and
cautious, with your wits
about you, as you deliver
yourself into the keeping
of the book...This I call
reading.*

Edith Wharton

of funding libraries deserves scrutiny. Recommending the restructuring of how all libraries in Missouri and Kansas are funded was outside the scope of this report, which was intended to assure the health of libraries in metro Kansas City. We recommend that the state libraries of Missouri and Kansas, working with library directors and others, consider new options for funding their state's libraries. In particular, we urge the state libraries to look for options that reflect the changing role of geography in how people use libraries, and that provide relief for urban and rural communities with low tax capacity.

These recommendations are a beginning. There are a variety of ways to frame the problem, and many possible solutions. To assure that our libraries continue to serve as an integral part of our community, it is up to citizens to decide what matters, what they're willing to pay for the services they want, and, working with library professionals and others, how best to achieve the optimum results.

What are the next steps?

Libraries serve everyone in the region and on this issue, in particular, it is important to involve citizens in determining what should be done to assure that they have access to high-quality libraries well into the future.

Consensus's next step, therefore, will be to convene a citizen panel composed of 12 individuals from around the region. Members of the panel would roughly reflect the demographic and geographic make-up of the community, and would not include any current board or staff members from local libraries. In 3-5 meetings over three months, the panel will review this report and recommend to the Consensus board:

1. what actions should be taken immediately, by Consensus or others;
2. what additional data are needed before a recommendation for action can be developed; and
3. what additional citizen involvement is needed, through public forums or other means, before a recommendation for action can be developed.

Throughout the process, Consensus will continue to keep library directors and state librarians informed and will invite their feedback on recommendations for action.

A note on neutrality

Consensus prides itself on studies that are fair and neutral. It relies on the willingness of people in whichever field we are studying to trust us enough to be willing to help with interviews and data while we develop our findings. For two reasons, we took extra measures to assure others and ourselves that all points of view were fairly represented in this white paper.

The first reason is that library directors who spoke with us were taking a substantial risk. After all, the final result of this study could be recommendations that would be unpopular with their boards and patrons, not to mention themselves. To provide extra reassurance, we allowed interviewees to review the notes from their interviews and provide clarification.

The second reason is that a senior staff person with the Kansas City Public Library is a member of the Consensus board, which naturally raised questions about whom the report was intended to serve. To guard against bias, we provided the draft of the findings to everyone we interviewed and offered them the chance to provide data and quotes when they felt all points of view were not adequately represented.

About KC Consensus

Consensus puts the *public* in public policy. Since 1984, we have provided citizens with the neutral environment and the tools they need to understand, analyze, and address public policy issues that affect the Kansas City region.

Consensus currently directs KC Forums, a collaborative effort with the Center for the City at UMKC with funding from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. Through KC Forums, citizens come together to deliberate about important issues, to find common ground and to take action. For more information, go to **www.kcforums.org**.

Consensus also offers its services in public policy research, public communication and civic engagement to government, business and not-for-profit clients.

We all know that books burn—but we have the greater knowledge that books cannot be killed by fire.

Franklin D. Roosevelt
U.S. President

**For more
information
about Consensus
or this report:**

816.531.4507

kcconsensus.org

The full text of the
report is posted in
PDF format on the
website.

The Consensus Board of Directors

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Consensus

“We put the *public* in public policy”

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