

COUNTY FUNDING OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Legislative changes during the past two decades have made the role of Wisconsin's counties even more vital to the development of our state's public libraries.

- In 1998, Governor Thompson signed SB 269 which became law as **1997 Act 150**. This law amended Wis. Stat. 43.12 so that municipal libraries within a county could receive payment for services provided to residents of the county not living in a municipality served by a library.
- In 2006, Governor Doyle signed SB 272 which became known as **2005 Act 420**. This law, which further amended Wis. Stat. 43.12, extended county library funding requirements to libraries in adjacent counties.
- In 2014, Governor Walker signed AB 288 which became law as **2013 Act 157**. Consolidated county libraries that choose to bill adjacent counties for service to nonresidents may be billed, in turn, by libraries across county lines, but only for services to residents of the consolidated library county who live in municipalities without a brick and mortar branch library. Counties with consolidated libraries that do not bill adjacent counties may not be billed in return.

While these laws address some of the persistent challenges associated with seamless, equitably funded library services, they only established a minimum payment of 70% of the actual cost of service.

Payments Timeline

Year 1: January-December, public library circulates its materials to nonresidents in home and adjacent counties.

Year 2: In January, WVLS calculates the number of circulations to nonresidents in home and adjacent counties for each public library. Each public library reports the data in its annual report.

In March, WVLS calculates each library's cost per circulation from public library annual report data. The cost per circulation amount is derived from the library's total expenditures (minus capital) divided by total circulations. Cost per circulation information is shared with public library directors and reported annually in the *WVLS Statistics Booklet*.

By July 1, each public library director generates "cost per circ" invoices based on circulations to nonresidents the previous year, and submits to clerk in their home and to clerks in adjacent counties.

Between July-August, county library boards are notified of invoices received from home libraries (Act 150), and from libraries in adjacent counties (Act 420).

County library boards develop a library budget that includes reimbursements to home and adjacent public libraries, and submit/present it to county boards for approval.

By November, county boards pass/approve budgets for the next year.

Year 3: By March 1, county clerks submit checks for reimbursement to home and adjacent county libraries.

Question: How is the county payment made? Is the county payment check made out to the library or to the municipality? Can the library deposit the check in its own bank account?

Answer: By Wis. Stat. 43.12(2) and (3), the county payment must either be made directly to the library, or to the library system which then pays the library. The check must then be deposited with the municipality in a fund under library board control. Wisconsin libraries are not allowed to maintain custody of government appropriated funds.

Question: The county must make payment to libraries in adjacent counties for service to its residents not living in a municipality that supports a library. Why aren't the incoming reimbursements sent to the county rather than the libraries?

Answer: The library is presenting the bills for providing the service, not the county.

Question: How are circulations to people living in municipalities that directly supports a library addressed?

Answer: There is no legal requirement for this type of reimbursement for cross-county library service.