



## Consultants' Report on Massachusetts Library Delivery Services

Library delivery services have changed a great deal over the past few years. The growing volume that patron-placed holds have resulted in puts demands on contracting transportation companies as well as regional delivery drivers and trucks. Massachusetts' six regional libraries began looking at methods of improving efficiency and holding down delivery costs. One recent step was to contract with two consultants to study library delivery services and make recommendations to improve services and allow handling of even higher volumes in the future.

The consultants worked with the regions and others (automated networks, libraries, MBLC, and delivery companies) for several months. Representatives from all of the regions, automated networks, and MBLC met to review the consultants' findings. The decisions discussed at that meeting follow.

To begin the study, Consultants Lori Ayre of the Galecia Group and Melissa Stockton of Quipu Group visited libraries and sort facilities in each region and met with representatives of each of the automated networks. Each delivery and sort operation was evaluated and data from regions, networks and individual libraries reviewed.

The consultants took a system view of Massachusetts' library delivery services and provided specific recommendations for establishing an efficient sorting and delivery operation for the entire state that will improve delivery service, save money, and reduce staff workload in individual libraries.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Establish an Automated, Central Sort Operation**

The consultants recommended establishing an automated, central sort operation for the whole state in Woburn. The recommended system would be equipped with an automated storage and retrieval system to reduce staffing requirements and ensure optimized staging of incoming and outgoing delivery totes. The sorting machinery shall separate holds from returns from media, and provide tote check-in capability at the libraries. In anticipation of ongoing delivery volume increases, the sorter shall be designed to sort all Massachusetts library material within 10 hours so that operation time can be increased as needed while still meeting the demand of overnight delivery. WMRLS shall continue to provide in-house courier service without on-board sorting while other regions would continue to use contract couriers for library delivery and for service from the state sorting center to WMRLS

headquarters.

The envisioned system positions Massachusetts to provide 99.9% sorting accuracy, guarantee next day turnaround for libraries receiving daily delivery, expand resource sharing and delivery services to new libraries, handle greater volume with ease, reduce library staff workload, and save \$2.5 million over a 10-year period. As follow-up a working group will be established to further investigate such a sort operation to determine all relevant costs, benefits, and implementation issues.

### **Reduce Time, Space, and Workload at Libraries with Standardization of Labeling and Packaging Requirements**

Other recommendations focus on reducing the time, space, and workload required at each library while improving services to library users: automation of routine tasks, standardization of labeling and packaging procedures, forging cooperative and supportive relationships between regional delivery services and networks, and selecting appropriate tools and service providers for each task.

### **Assist libraries with ergonomic issues**

This recommendation includes showcasing good practices, holding workshops, and defining best practices. A working group should look at Lean (see What is Lean? at <http://www.lean.org/WhatsLean/>) and determine how to incorporate these principles.

As follow-up, a working group will be established to develop offline standard delivery code system and labeling and there will be a recommendation on the placement of and recommended location for external library barcodes on items in delivery.

**Note:** This document has been revised and reprinted with the permission of Greg Pronevitz, Regional Administrator, Northeast Massachusetts Regional Library System.