

Comments about the proposed SHARE Membership Termination Policy

While I understand SHARE would like to have several months notice on the closure of a library, I wonder if that's always possible. If a library has made the decision to close its doors, it's likely something that has come up due to budgetary reasons, and decisions like this likely happen with little notice to those in the library--powers that be rarely consult with those who do the actual work. I think it's more appropriate to prorate fees for late notice. By requiring the payment of a full year, you're essentially requiring payment for services not rendered, especially considering the contract for the new fiscal year would like not have been signed. And if you do require the full payment, why can't the fees come out of the one-year's payment, since the library is not getting service for that fee anyway.

Also, while I agree that SHARE should be compensated for its time to remove the library from the database, I think there needs to be a set fee for this. Base it on library size or collection if necessary, but as members, we should be aware of all fees that could be assessed, and leaving it as vague as "paying IHLS for the staff time used to remove their account" is not sufficient, especially when you consider the comment I made earlier about closing because of lack of funds. I feel like it's the library's right to have all information available (including possible fees) when making the difficult decision to close a library. Same goes for the fees accrued for transferring records to a new platform and those fees that "may be charged" to clean up the database. Fees need to be specific.

--Tracy Pierceall, IEPA

If the document stands as is, at a minimum it needs to clarify what the fiscal year is. My fiscal year is not the same as IHLS. The FY dates should be specifically spelled out.

I agree with Tracy that requiring a January 1 official notice in order to withdraw from SHARE creates a difficult situation for libraries already facing tough times. If a school library's budget for SHARE is being cut, library staff is unlikely to have that information in time to give a January 1 written notice. In my opinion, libraries should be allowed to withdraw up until the contract for the upcoming membership year is signed.

As Tracy also said, this statement needs more information: "The member library is also responsible for paying IHLS for the staff time used to remove their account from the SHARE database."

--Rachel Miller, Forsyth Public Library

I find the vagueness of " paying IHLS for the staff time used to remove their account from the SHARE database" troublesome. I understand that the size of the library can impact on how much time is needed by SHARE staff to deal with a library leaving, but some idea of cost per hour could at least be added. I also agree that especially in the case of school libraries the budgeting process would not allow them to meet that deadline. Prorating the costs seems fair.

--Don Pippin, Philo Public Library District

I agree wholeheartedly with Tracy's comments. This change sounds more than a bit one-sided. While I don't anticipate our library closing or altering our relationship with SHARE, I can

certainly understand the challenges libraries are facing amidst declining tax revenues and increased costs of doing business and maintaining real property. While unfortunate, if a library gives notice within 6 months of ceasing to be a SHARE member, there should be no more fees assessed, except for a defined charge to export records. After that time, a one-year penalty membership payment should cover all costs associated with those duties. Based on what I have learned of the workings of Illinois Heartland since the merger of the 4 legacy library systems, there is a lot of fat that could be cut to balance its own bottom line, including far more generous pay and benefits than those available to most member libraries. It seems disingenuous to levy such a harsh penalty on libraries struggling to exist for the mere offense of attempting to be accountable to its community

--Rick Balsamello, Westville Public Library

NOTE: I am on the Executive Council. I can't "unknow" what I know, but I am seeking for myself here, not the Council.

Based on the discussion I was party to, the final sentence, the "fees may be charged" portion, was an attempt to use wording that would allow for special circumstances to be taken into consideration - and I think that one of those specific circumstances is financial exigency. While I understand that there are times when exactitude is desirable, I think that policies are not ALWAYS that place. I think that one reason that policies are often vague in certain areas is to allow for some circumstantial wiggle room for decisions to be made. If you include a prescriptive list of exemptions, on the other hand, what happens when you need a new one? While you want to review policies frequently to make sure they are still relevant, do you really want to have to edit them constantly?

I do agree that some kind of general cost estimate could be included, but again, specificity may not be exactly what you want. A statement that gives some indication of what the costs would be based upon might be better. For example, will costs be based on # of records that need to be deleted, estimated staff time at some kind of prevailing rate, or some combination - that is just an example, not necessarily a suggestion. At any rate, a suggestion that the library be in contact with IHLS as soon as possible to work out this information would not be amiss.

On the subject of the advance notification, I do see that circumstances may not always allow for January 1 notifications. But I would argue that having NO date would put IHLS and other member libraries in an equally difficult position, as shared costs might have to be revised right up until June 30th or even later. If you were another member that was in a position of creating your budget for the coming year, you might not be nearly as keen on allowing last-minute changes that could significantly affect your cost estimate. And while I cannot speak for the practices of all of the legacy systems, I believe that prior notification was standard policy in LTLS - and the notification window was longer, as you had to give a full year's notice if you were pulling out for whatever reason. I understand that every agency has to be accountable to its own community - but accountability extends to the larger body as well when you agree to participate in a shared activity like an automation system, and I honestly think this policy is simply an attempt to recognize that an individual library's actions in such a group can have larger effects that should not be overlooked. The departure of a larger library on short notice could have

significant affects on the costs shared by smaller agencies who might be in a more tenuous position to deal with those changes.

Very good point about the fiscal year issue. I believe that the intention was to go on the IHLS fiscal year, but it is not stated and it should be, one way or another.

--Scott Drone-Silvers, Lake Land Community College

What would be the deadline for libraries with ILL items to have them returned by? What would be the timeframe for staff if the withdrawing library does not wish to export their records? Would that charge be a one time fee or a per item fee?

--Sandy West, Rend Lake Community College

1. I agree that the fiscal year needs to be clarified. I assume the policy is referring to IHLS's fiscal year, but the way it is worded could also mean the member library's fiscal year.

2. If a member is required to pay SHARE fees due to late notice those fees should then apply to "the staff time used to remove their account from the SHARE database."

3. If a member is able to give proper notice, then I would like to see the associated fees be more defined. Maybe not an exact amount, but a percentage or level for various size libraries. Maybe the fee structure for joining SHARE could be edited for the purpose of withdrawing from SHARE? For instance, to join SHARE "the transitional member library will pay the fees charged by the ILS providers, plus 10% to offset the cost of SHARE staff time involved in the process." Also, a library that is withdrawing may have already paid SHARE fees for a year of service. Would it be possible for that fee to cover costs of staff time to remove their account?

4. What exactly is involved in removing an account? I would like to have an understanding of the amount of work involved. Not to put in the policy, but just as background information to determine if the proposed fees are proportionate to the amount of work. If the work is minimal and we are talking about an hourly rate for the staff resulting in a minor fee, then maybe a vague policy is okay. On the other hand, if the work is substantial and may result in a large fee, then a more defined policy would be helpful to a Library Director who may need leverage to fight to stay with SHARE. If I was in that position, I would want concrete numbers to take to my board. The way the policy is written now, it may turn out that it costs more to withdraw from SHARE than to stay. How would we know?

--Lacey Wright, Barclay Public Library District