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# NTLP

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North Texas Library Partners

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 North Texas Library Partners

March 29, 2013

Dear Partner Libraries of NTLP,

It is with regret that the NTLP Board of Directors announces the imminent closing of NTLP.

When the TSLAC announced that funding for the State Library Systems program would not continue past August 31, 2012, the NTLP Board and the staff decided that the independent nonprofit could continue serving libraries and anticipated that the organization would be funded through membership fees, fees for services, donations, sponsorships, grants, and contracts. This decision was reinforced through a vote of the NTRLS membership.

With the change, NTLP reduced its staff to about one-third of the previous level. NTLP's office space had already been reduced to about one-third of the original space during a recent move.

From 1974 through 2012, the State Library Systems program enabled an increase in the number of Texas public libraries and an enhancement in personnel skills and library services. This set a new standard for public libraries across the state and enabled the standard to be met without charge to Texas public library communities. In an ironic twist to the original plan, then, few library communities were prepared to absorb the cost to continue receiving such services when State funding ended.

In its first year without government funding, NTLP has grown to 80 member libraries, a figure which exceeds any previous NTRLS membership number and includes 15 libraries from the former NETLS and CTLS areas. However, \$80,000 total revenue from membership fees represents only about 25% of NTLP's minimum annual operating budget for the current level of service, and many libraries could not pay the cost of membership nor the cost of individual services. During this fiscal year NTLP received \$85,000 in grants from TSLAC, but those funds are committed to specific programs and not available to support general operations. NTLP has been seeking support from donors and sponsors but to date no funds have come from those sources.

By mid-March NTLP Board and staff had already recognized that a crisis point was coming, and we were anticipating staff salary cuts in order to continue operations to the end of the fiscal year. Recent developments, however, have made it futile to attempt to carry on.

Beginning in 1999 TSLAC required that all Regional Library Systems maintain a cash reserve equal to a certain percentage of the annual administrative costs. Since the closing of NTRLS, TSLAC has been in communications with NTLP regarding a requirement to return the cash reserve funds to the State. NTLP and TSLAC disagree on the amount of the cash reserve (by an order of magnitude), but variations in recordkeeping and staff changes over 15 years have made it challenging to document our position.

On Monday March 25, NTLP received a letter from the Texas Attorney General's office supporting TSLAC's position on the cash reserve issue. The Board plans to contest the amount, but it will mean diverting staff time to researching and documenting the history of the cash reserve. This development, when we were already facing a financial crisis with no solid funding base sufficient to carry us into the

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#### Board of Directors

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Dana Wood, Treasurer

next fiscal year, led the NTLP Board of Directors to advise an immediate and orderly shutdown of the organization since it would no longer be able to serve its mission.

Libraries that joined NTLP since January 1, 2013 will have their membership fees refunded in full but continue to be recognized as Partner Libraries of NTLP. NTLP is asking our Commercial Partners to continue to make vendor discounts available to our Partner Libraries through at least September 30, 2013. The NTLP website and other online resources will continue to be available as long as funding permits. Other existing NTLP commitments will be met to the extent possible, but no new services are possible at this time, since NTLP staff must focus on the shutdown process.

NTLP staff will release further information about the shutdown process and the plans for specific projects – including scheduled training events, support for NTLC (the ILS consortium), support for North Texas Libraries on the Go (the Overdrive Consortium), and development of Geodesity (the eBook Platform) - as we work out the details.

Both the Board and the staff are sad to have to accept this decision, which we know will adversely affect so many libraries. We continue to believe in the value of nonprofit support for libraries and for collaborative library projects, and we hope that sometime in the future such efforts may be funded at a level that makes them viable. It is clear that such services cannot depend solely on funding from cash-strapped public libraries.

Thank you to all of you who have supported NTLP and NTRLS during its nearly-40-year history.

Sincerely,

Ken Haas, Chair  
NTLP Board of Directors

Cc: NTLP Board of Directors  
Carolyn Brewer, NTLP Executive Director

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