

MINUTES
MORE Executive Committee
Friday, August 1, 2025

Present/Attending: Tiffany Meyer (EL), Leann French (DR), Karen Furo-Bonnstetter (WO), Joleen Sterk (ME), John Thompson (IF).

Also Present: Lori Roholt, Jackee Johnson, Cecelia Cole, Joanne Gardner, Olivia Moris (AL).

Absent: None.

CALL TO ORDER:

Meyer (EL) called the meeting to order at 10:01 am.

ESTABLISH A QUORUM:

Meyer (EL) established a quorum was present.

**CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE WITH
OPEN MEETING LAW:**

Certification of compliance with open meeting law was confirmed.

AGENDA:

Sterk (ME) moved to approve the agenda. Furo-Bonnstetter (WO) seconded. Motion carried.

MINUTES:

French (DR) moved to approve the Executive Committee minutes from June 20, 2025. Furo-Bonnstetter (WO) seconded. Motion carried.

**DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION ON
POSSIBLE LETTER TO PHILLIPS PUBLIC LIBRARY:**

Meyer (EL) inquired about how the committee felt about writing a letter to the Phillips Public Library. In the past few months, there have been mixed viewpoints discussed and what to include in a letter and whether a letter should even be sent.

French (DR) leans towards not sending a letter because of unintended consequences for the library and the director personally. There is also concern about a precedent being set. It is difficult to predict what the consequences may be.

Meyer (EL) noted that the February 7, 2025, MORE Executive Committee minutes provides some highlights of discussion. The intention is to support the library director at Phillips. Although what Phillips is doing is not best practice, it is legal. The library director was in favor of a letter to the library board. MORE has not sent a letter to a library in its history. We need to be careful of the precedent we set. It was inquired about Cole where the director stands today on the notion of a letter to the library board. Cole noted that the director has not waivered in her stance. The thoughts are that a letter could not hurt while acknowledging that there is the possibility a letter might reignite the situation. The director feels it is important to keep this topic at the forefront and remind the board that the practice is not considered best practice. It is a good reminder that this is an issue at the system level. The director is in favor of continuing efforts and thinks the extra pressure would be worthwhile.

Sterk (ME) inquired how much effort has been put into education of the library board regarding the American Library Association (ALA) and standards on labeling. Cole responded that the director has shared all kinds of standards. She will reiterate to the director to continue to bring up points and keep the conversation going.

Meyer (EL) inquired that if the idea of a letter is concerned about setting a precedent as well as unprecedented consequences, is there something other than a letter to keep the issue on the library board's radar? Is there something that can be done to support the director? Furo-Bonnstetter (WO) noted that if the MORE Directors Council is not reaching out to other libraries, will it appear as an interference by the Phillips library board? People have a way of entrenching if they feel they are being singled out or attacked. The goal is not to have them double down on their stance on labeling.

The possibility was aired to submit a public comment on the policy at upcoming library board meetings. We would need to check with the library's policy on public comments. It also should be kept short and not occur too frequently.

Moris (AL) noted that one thing that makes IFLS Library System wonderful, is that all the libraries have their own autonomy. Moris has concerns that everyone jumping on this does feel like interference. It is not another library's place to tell Phillips how to run their library. Moris feels the best interest would be not to get involved, especially if the community is already talking about it.

Sterk (ME) inquired if at any point the integrity of the MORE system is held to account if not meeting professional standards. Is there any obligation to do so? Moris (AL) commented that it would require the system to check every library in the system so that they are complying. Moris does not think this falls on MORE. It is an individual library concern. Roholt noted it is a MORE concern because the materials are being shared among the system. There is less concern about materials that are within a local library. Placement of materials within the library is purely a local library decision. Moris (AL) added that a library director can address the patron that each library makes their own decision on if and whether materials contain labeling.

When asked about where the library director and Phillips community currently stand, Cole responded that she is not sure. Over the last four years the public has spoken in support of removing the labels. There has also been some concern noted about materials on a shelf in the first place. It has been a complicated situation for the director for a number of years.

Roholt stated that MORE recently adopted an amendment to the MORE policy. It was unique in that it was written as a recommendation and not a requirement. Roholt is tasked with enforcing policy, but written as a recommendation, it does not contain the enforcement piece. Library directors should be bringing MORE policy decisions to their library boards.

It was asked if a blanket letter or note to all library boards stating the newly adopted policy and reiteration of MORE could be effective. It could include a link to the updated policy and the piece added at the March Directors Council meeting. The second page of the policy addresses loaning within MORE. Furo-Bonnstetter (WO) thought it made sense that every library board within MORE would receive the same letter and information. Trustee training for IFLS on this would also be beneficial. French (DR) noted that the ALA interpretation on labeling is a long read. An executive summary and examples would be helpful for trustees.

Meyer inquired if Cole thought sending a letter to all libraries would be effective and keep things moving forward in Phillips. Cole shared that in being brutally honest, she is balancing feelings as an individual and librarian and as a system employee. Cole completely understands the rationale from the system level. She is not sure it does enough to address the blatant discrimination. Cole talked to the person who filed the original complaint and with folks with children in the LGBTQ community. It is a really tough issue to stand by and not do something. Cole is feeling stuck and frustrated. She fully supports additional training for trustees. Cole also supports a letter to all library boards addressing training on labelling. The Intellectual Freedom Working Group has worked hard on training resources for labelling.

Sterk (ME) expressed appreciation for Cole's input. Sterk noted that if MORE does nothing, what does it say about the organization? Phillips library board has the responsibility as being a part of a larger organization and mindful of best practices. Meyer (EL) reminded the committee that consequences are not enforceable. It gets tricky, even with the ALA guidance. Moris (AL) noted that MORE has standards, but not laws they are not complying with. We are choosing to hold Phillips to it and not everyone else.

It was noted that the final decision in the revised policy was the recommendation related to labelling was "strongly advise," but not listed as a "must." This left a level of local control.

French (DR) noted that if the Phillips library board does not see themselves or recognize the value of the consortium, little will change their mind.

Meyer (EL) had a conversation with the director, and she was glad to still offer the LGBTQ materials and had a conversation with the youth in the community who did not express concern about the stickers. They know the materials are there and this has been communicated clearly with the youth in the community.

The committee discussed the sending of the circulation policy change and ALA guidelines to all libraries. Would it be appropriate for someone to talk about? A suggestion was to include a video clip with the best practices and recommendations related to labelling. Roholt shared that Leah Langby along with input from colleagues, put together a page on the IFLS website regarding rating and labelling. Although it is not targeted at trustees or community members, it is a good explainer of wayfinding and differentiation.

It was questioned what would have happened if the director declined to put labels on the materials. Cole responded that the director's understanding is that the board would have removed the materials from the shelves altogether. If that happened, there would be more legal ground to stand on. The fact that they were not removed and instead moved and labelled makes the situation murkier.

The committee discussed with the library director reviewing their collection development policy and what that looks like for removing books. What authority does the library board have in considering materials? Cole noted that do have a policy, but the director views it as inadequate and does not support her the way other libraries policies do. Events of a challenge and reconsideration of materials are not included in Phillips Collection Development policy.

Meyer (EL) feels it is an overstep if a letter was just sent to the Phillips Library Board. She would be more in favor of having MORE send a notice to all libraries encouraging the directors to share with their boards. Some special educational pieces could accompany the letter. Meyer thought this might be a good next step.

Since the Directors Council is the governing body over MORE, they would need to approve it. The Directors Council is the decision-making body of MORE.

Furo-Bonnstetter (WO) made a motion that the MORE Directors Council draft a letter to all IFLS library boards in the most positive wording possible about prejudicial labeling. Motion fails due to a lack of a second.

Meyer inquired about the lack of agreement to draft a letter. Moris (AL) noted that there are too many variables. If you are doing this for only this policy, it is being singled out and not directly addressing it. Moris does not feel it is necessary or helpful in the long run. She agrees with Cole and feels for the director who came to the directors for support offered as a collective. French added that her library does their own processing of materials. When a new policy or procedure is adopted, it is not brought up to the board. The work is done invisibly. Her trustees would question why this is happening.

Meyer (EL) thought about concerns being raised as what this says about MORE as an organization if they do nothing. Moris' (AL) view is that MORE is acting. They have been meeting, discussing, and deciding not to reach out directly. French (DR) agreed that sometimes choosing not to interfere is an action.

Thompson (IF) noted that in terms of broader policy context, statewide there is a policy of the month club. There are resources on our website about policies. We could additionally create a 15 minute spinet video on Intellectual Freedom and Collection Development and share out to directors to share out with their boards. It would be viewed as an educational piece. Educational pieces could also be included in This Week At MORE (TWAM). We will not know if this will have a direct impact on the Phillips library board, but it would be more subtle than a letter to the individual library boards. Relying on covering in trustee training is that those that need the training may not attend.

Libraries could be encouraged to adopt a more comprehensive collection development policy. This would be more proactive rather than reactive when issues are raised.

Cole noted that the latest reiteration of the collection development policy was quite extensive related to labeling. We can continue to push our most recent reiteration of that policy. When working with boards, some of these components are already imbedded. This may be why some boards may question labeling. It is important to know the whys and consequences. Cole will continue to provide resources and more enhanced training.

French (DR) moved to recommend NOT writing a letter specifically to the Phillips Public Library Board. Furo-Bonnstetter (WO) seconded. Motion carried. (Serk (ME) opposed.)

Thompson (IF) can have an internal conversation with Cole to plan out what to do next.

Meyer (EL) felt bad for the director of Phillips that the committee was at odds. Meyer appreciated the conversations and input. She also thanked Cole and the Intellectual Freedom Working Group for working on this. French (EL) understood the dual situation facing Cole. She thanked Cole for helping the director and the situation. She noted that the library still has the materials in the library which is a small win. It also created a conversation that otherwise would not be had. Serk (ME) appreciated what was shared about unintended consequences. She echoed appreciation to Cole and others on the work being done. The director has the support of the MORE directors and IFLS. Cole appreciated the discussion and input today. It is a tough situation and is complicated in weighing the options moving forward. There is no best solution. The discussions help her think about it in a different way too.

ADJOURN:

The meeting adjourned at 11:17 am.
Joanne Gardner, Recorder