

# Area libraries to bolt from WOLF, form new network

BY RALPH R. ECHTINAW  
STAFF WRITER

Ticked off because of what they claim are poor service and unequal representation, seven libraries in Wayne and Oakland counties have picked up their football and gone home, so to speak.

The libraries—in Farmington, Rochester, Southfield, Birmingham, Bloomfield Township, and Canton and Independence townships—are forming their own library cooperative called Metro Net.

The seceding libraries will stay with WOLF until Metro Net goes on line, probably in October 1993. Service is not expected to be interrupted.

The 14-year-old WOLF provides all kinds of library services

to all the libraries in Wayne and Oakland counties except Detroit, Highland Park, Troy and Dearborn. The main benefit to library users is that they can check out books throughout the system, as opposed to just books in their home library. WOLF also does computerized tracking of books, orders books for its members and provides computer terminals to libraries.

Metro Net will theoretically be cheaper to run than WOLF and more responsive to the individual needs of member libraries, largely because representation on the Metro Net board will be based on population.

Among the raps on WOLF is that libraries serving large populations don't get any more say on

the nine-member WOLF board (one vote) than little libraries serving a couple thousand people. In a sense, the little libraries (if they band together) can control WOLF policy and often do, said Southfield library director Doug Zykowski. The 16 big libraries in WOLF's 58-library system don't like that because their state aid makes up half of WOLF's state aid. Zykowski called it "taxation without representation."

At a pow wow Wednesday, WOLF officials offered the dissatisfied libraries an additional representative on the WOLF board and help in getting their computers interconnected.

But, that's not enough, Zykowski said. "The WOLF offers didn't carry enough substance.

Both sides agreed to start thinking about coexisting with each other. We think the dispute process should be avoided."

The participants agreed to meet again Oct. 26, but only to work out ways that WOLF and Metro Net might cooperate.

Other large libraries may ultimately join Metro Net, but just the seven mentioned above possess the computer power necessary to do so.

West Bloomfield's library is staying in WOLF for now, director Clara Bohrer said, but mainly because it doesn't yet have a good enough computer system to go with Metro Net. Bohrer is sympathetic to the other libraries' complaints. "We are not opposed to the formation of Metro Net," she

said. "If WOLF were providing relevant services, these people wouldn't be leaving."

Canton library director Jean Tabor agreed. "Those of us joining Metro Net don't need all of WOLF services like the computer networking and consulting services for buying and program-

ming," she said. "Yet, we ultimately pay for those services. We want a cooperative that is scaled down."

Metro Net will ostensibly be scaled down at least in terms of the money sucked up from member libraries.

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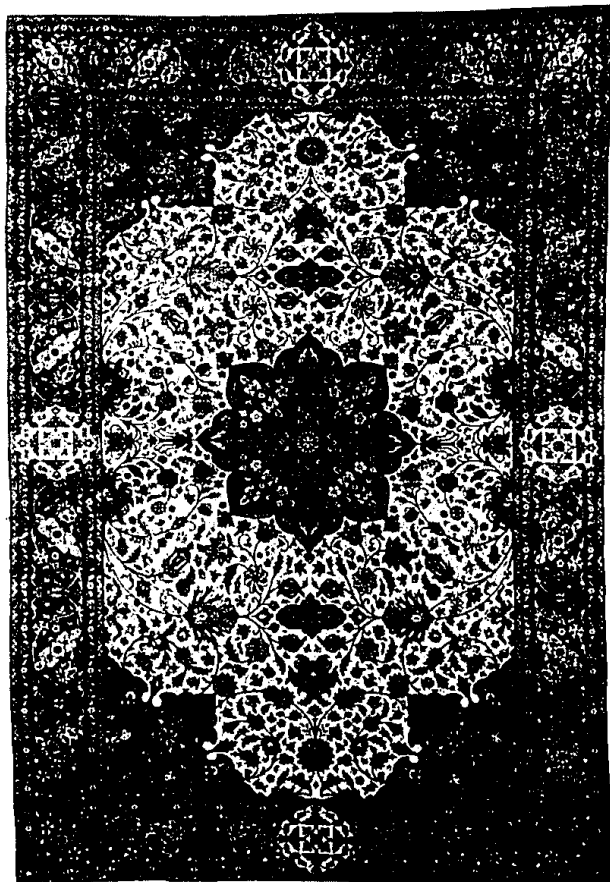
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