

Summary Report

Effingham County Libraries Transition from Live Oak Public Library to Statesboro Regional Public Libraries

**Prepared by
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April 4, 2026**

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Overview

Activities

To best serve the interests of Effingham County library users, I have investigated the facets involved in separating the management and governance of the public libraries in the county from Live Oak Public Library(LOPL) to Statesboro Regional Public Libraries (SRPL). I have communicated with the Effingham County Board of Trustees, have visited the County, have had virtual meetings with the LOPL administrative team and had meetings with every department at Georgia Public Library Service. I have consulted with my professional peers to seek their input from their experience in Georgia's public libraries. I sought contacts for SRPL to ease some of their workload. I participated in a meeting with OverDrive, an online audio/ebook provider, to get their perspectives on how this switch will impact our customers.

I have found that the Effingham County Library Board of Trustees is highly motivated with highly informed participants who are working to best meet the needs of a growing Effingham County. Managing expenses while securing a substantive voice in library governance of the libraries is a key priority for the Trustees. It has been a pleasure to work with this Board.

After meeting with SRPL Director, Caroline Johnson, I drafted a checklist of activities that must be addressed for a smooth transition of library services. A few of the items required immediate attention, such as filing for e-rate which pays for library internet access with federal and state funds and has firm timelines that must be met regardless of proposed organizational changes. Caroline took immediate action on that. I have served as a sounding board and researcher to SRPL in

an effort to minimize the impact on their staff prior to them having the funding and staffing to support the additional work.

Fact Finding

Prior to accepting this role, I read the information that LOPL had shared on their website regarding the proposed dissolution of their agreement with Effingham County. I saw that LOPL made assertions that deviate significantly from established precedents for library system transitions in Georgia. They claim ownership of 89.79% of the materials on the shelves at the South Effingham (Rincon) Branch and at Springfield Branch. I studied the math that they shared and could not make sense of their numbers. I consulted with another multi-system library director in Georgia who also could make no sense of the numbers presented. The state of Georgia, through Georgia Public Library Service, awards a per capita of \$.70 to single county or regional library systems based on county populations. In FY26, the allocation of state materials funding based on Effingham's population was 16.39% (\$49,978) of the total state funding for materials for LOPL (\$324,319). The intent of state law is that every public library in Georgia has quality library services and materials. There is no intention that this funding be applied to the system in a manner that is not equitable to the member counties based on population size. Of course, LOPL purchased more materials than what state funding covers. However, with Effingham's support of LOPL with close to \$1M in FY26, it is unreasonable to expect that some of that funding does not apply to materials purchasing, or at the very least frees up funds from other expenses that then went towards materials funding. Thus, based on the past history of counties changing regional library affiliations, and on the intent of how funding is collected and allocated, it is most reasonable that Effingham county libraries maintain ownership of the materials assigned to their collection prior to the dissolution of their membership in LOPL.

I have advised the Effingham County Board to contact Julie Walker, State Librarian and Vice Chancellor for Libraries and Archives to request her decision regarding ownership of library materials, furnishings and IT equipment. According to O.C.G.A. § 20-5-48:

Upon dissolution or significant structural change within the system, such property shall be divided on a pro rata basis according to the proportion of financial costs of property borne by the involved parties. The library system board of trustees shall furnish the financial and statistical information considered by the parties attempting to reach agreement. ***If the parties are unable to reach a mutually agreeable solution, the final decision of property ownership shall be made by the Office of Public Library Services of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia or its designee.***

I shared inventory reports with the County Manager's office. The inventory includes items that are cataloged in PINES. I had verbal assurance from Alissa Landram at LOPL, that the Springfield library's local history collection would stay in Effingham County. I shared an inventory of IT materials that had been purchased by LOPL for use in Effingham branches using state and federal grant funds.

In the course of navigating the many details of breaking from LOPL to join SRPL, I did have two meetings with LOPL Director Lola DeWitt, one of which included her management team. I had further meetings with the PINES team regarding their requirements to move the records for patrons and library materials from one system to the other. I also had several bits of correspondence with LOPL to try to gather information on resources that are unique to LOPL. I also sought to gather employee information regarding staffing at the Rincon and Springfield branches. I found them to be less cooperative than they

could have been. I also had to reiterate to LOPL that I was not a decision maker for Effingham County. I was simply working to smooth the transition and to lighten any potential obligations of SRPL for work that would have to be done before they assume Effingham County libraries into their regional system.

In support of the effort to make the transition as seamless as possible, I prepared draft documents for the Memorandum of Understanding between Effingham County and SRPL. I prepared a draft of a new Constitution and Bylaws for the Effingham County Library Board of Trustees. I also drafted a letter to Julie Walker regarding the ownership of library materials, furnishings and IT equipment and requested her intervention to protect the State/Federally funded internet access contracts.

I contacted every department at Georgia Public Library Service to check on the impact that switching systems might have on required reporting and documentation of GPLS supported programs. This involved the state grants department, the statistics department, the PINES support team and the Children's Services office.

I worked to encourage a smooth Summer Reading program, including assuring that Effingham libraries have funding support for summer reading activities. I also encouraged Caroline Johnson to contact the schools to assure continuation of the student PLAY cards. As I write this, it is unclear if the schools plan on supporting this program, but if they do, SRPL is prepared to assume its responsibilities in implementing this program again.

I know that this transition could go smoothly if LOPL was more willing to cooperate, release ownership of materials and had been willing to suggest that existing branch staff move their employment to SRPL. Instead, they have claimed ownership not to 90% of the total LOPL collection, but to nearly 90% of the items actually on the shelves in Effingham branches which would effectively give ownership to Effingham of 1/100 of the total LOPL collection. LOPL has let staffing levels drop to the point that they cut library hours. This is unfortunate. If anything, these actions confirm the decision of the Effingham Library Board to join a system that better protects the interests of Effingham County.

The checklists that I have prepared and the documents that I have worked on are all in an effort to smooth the transition and are an effort to assure continuity of service. The reality is that the transition involves challenges, such as staffing, assuring ownership of the collection and building furnishings. It will involve some level of customer education to explain why some online resources are no longer available to them. Staff and community leaders must be prepared with diplomatic language to reassure library customers. Caroline Johnson, director at SRPL is working with one of the most popular online resources, Libby by Overdrive, to assure that impact on the customer is minimized.

Attached are action steps that must be completed to assure that services to customers suffer the fewest interruptions. This list is prioritized loosely, in that everything on the list has to happen. However, some tasks are definitely organized with a first this, then this. The director of SRPL has been working from this list since early March to address the things that must happen immediately, including arranging for Summer Reading Activities.

Action Steps for the County

- Sign a memorandum of understanding with SRPL
- Charter a County Library Board that is in alignment with the Constitution and Bylaws of SRPL
- Select members of a County Library Board of Trustees
 - Point of consideration- Does Effingham want representatives from the municipalities (Guyton?) within the County? If so, they must contribute to the funding of the library.
- Assist in the positive messaging about the changes in the library
- Update Georgia Department of Community Affairs Service Delivery Strategy for Library Services
 - List current funding source(s)
 - Change name of agency providing services to Effingham County from LOPL to SRPL
- Provide SRPL with key contacts for facilities maintenance including landscaping, janitorial services, sanitation, facilities maintenance, utilities, etc.
- Send letter to State Librarian requesting decision on ownership of library resources including library books, audio content, magazines, journals, historical collection, IT equipment, grant funded items and a continuance of Internet connectivity until a new USAC approved Internet contract can be implemented by SRPL.

Time is of the essence in coordinating the date of the dissolution and the date of joining SRPL. No state or Federal funding can flow to libraries in an unaffiliated county unless that County establishes itself as a single county system with its own Board of Trustees and Library Director on board.

Action Steps for the Statesboro Regional Public Libraries

Priority 1

Board

- Create new constitution and bylaws for local Effingham Board- can be simultaneous to existing local Board
- Create new MOU with SRPL

Collection

- Must learn final decision on what stays with the collection
- Protect the local history collection

Finance

- Prepare interim budget in the event of May 1 transition
- Prepare budget presentation for Effingham County
- Participate in Effingham budget process
- Track the fund balance with LOPL and make sure that it is returned to Effingham County
- Maintain records for Effingham County funds from LOPL's books

Staffing

- Establish a staffing model for branch
- Communicate with existing library staff, particularly the part-time staff; explain the differences in employers

Information Technology/Telecommunication

- File for E-rate for those branches
- Contract with provider (would it be better to offer to reimburse Live Oak??)
 - Preferred outcome is that GPLS disallow LOPL from cancelling services that are paid with state/federal funds
- Inventory IT equipment and assess for age and condition
- Verify all telecommunications equipment and contracts are in place

Circulation Services

Card Management

- Order additional library cards and distribute to Effingham branches
- PINES suggests that Effingham libraries start issuing new cards as soon as reasonably possible in advance of the split
- Develop a flyer explaining what services will no longer be available to customers
- Train staffing on policies that differ with SRPL such as maximum fines (\$5 LOPL; \$10 SRPL)
- Identify contact for PLAY card at Effingham
- Identify contact for PLAY card at Georgia Cyber Academy
- Initiate MOU for PLAY cards with schools and Georgia CyberAcademy
 - Use sample Contract shared by PINES

PINES

- Answer questions that Terran sent
- Keep PINES informed of changes to open & close dates related to transition & potential temporary closures

Libby/OverDrive

- Talk to OverDrive rep about the transition and determine what is possible to smooth transition
- Inform Beth McIntyre regarding GADD access
- Develop flyer to inform customers on how to "add library" (GDD) to their Libby/OverDrive app

Programming

SRP

- Identify contact information for the school system
- Book entertainers
- Schedule events and special readers such as firemen, Mayors, etc
- Book facility for large crowd attendance for big event in Rincon
- Create the Beanstack challenge for SRP
- Publicize to community and schools

Facilities

- Have gas bill changed to Effingham County instead of LOPL

Priority 2

Board

- Create new constitution and bylaws for Statesboro Regional Public Libraries that includes Effingham County

Collection

- Continue subscriptions to local county news sources Effingham Herald, Effingham Magazine

Communications

- Develop a communications plan

Facilities

- Hand off keys and codes to any equipment
- Build out contact list for building maintenance issues

Finance

- Establish banking for branch deposits; can send deposits to HQ until this is done

IT

- Contracts for copy machines
- Inform PINES of new IP addresses
- Passwords for servers, computers, etc. as needed by IT

Circulation Services

- Update STAT contracts for new branches
- Inform PINES on new service hours and policies for branches
- PINES team, Tiffany, will update OCLC holdings statements once transition has occurred
- Inform online vendors of new enrollees with PLAY Cards
- Inform PINES of PLAY Cards affected by the change
- LOPL must terminate existing agreement with schools as SRPL initiates new agreement with schools

Programming

- Confirm DECAL for Summertime free meals
- Buy SRP prizes; invoices to Effingham County
- Work with GPLS and Beanstack to transition customer reading records for 1000 Books before Kindergarten

Staffing

- Recruit and hire staff
- Schedule a training day with staff- PINES will work to accommodate since we may have lots of new hires
- Orient staff
- Hire existing staff effective the date of the switchover; enroll in TRS and SHBP as appropriate
- If applicable, complete any Personnel Action forms for GPLS regarding state paid positions

Communications

- Update SRPL website with new branch information and maps
- Update SRPL logo

Finance

- Set up new payment system for branches

IT

- Transfer ownership of grant funded(State/Federal) materials on GPLS rosters

Priority 3

FY26 Annual Report

- Anticipate that LOPL will report for Effingham libraries for FY26; be prepared to share data for any time after the transition
- Update constitution and bylaws; send to GPLS asap
- Meet with Whitney Payne & LOPL rep to set expectations

Collection

- Assess collection with knowledge that no books have been acquired since December 2025
 - Inventory Reports are attached to this report
- Assess community to potentially add online resources

Unique Online Resources No Longer Available

There are online resources for cardholders in Effingham County as part of LOPL that will not be available to cardholders as part of SRPL. These are resources that the regional library pays for for use throughout the entire system. All public library cardholders in Georgia have access to Galileo. According to the Galileo website, “Participating institutions may access more than 100 databases indexing thousands of periodicals and scholarly journals. Over 10,000 journal titles are provided in full-text. Other resources include encyclopedias, business directories, and government publications.”

Here is a list of databases that LOPL has offered beyond those in Galileo. I recommend that SRPL survey the community and determine which of these resources that the community feels are valuable enough to add to the SRPL collection of online resources. I suggest that SRPL and Effingham agree to a communications plan to address any concerns that library customers may express in losing access to resources that they love. A long term goal will be to see which resources are most valued by the community and work to add those to the SRPL collection.

Digital Resources that LOPL provides in addition to state provided resources are:

- ABCMouse - Home Access
- A to Z Databases
- Gale Biography in Context
- Hoopla
- Kanopy
- LOTE4Kids
- Newsbank: Savannah Morning News, The Savannah Tribune (2008–present), African American Newspapers (1827–present), and Early American Newspapers
- The New York Times digital all access

- [Tumblebook Library](#)
- [Tutor.com](#)
- [Value Line](#)
- [World Book Online](#)

Talking Points

The decision for Effingham County libraries to leave Live Oak Public Library is one of governance. As part of LOPL, the voice of Effingham carried little weight with having only two votes on a 12 member Regional Board of Library Trustees, in a three county system. As part of Statesboro Regional Public Libraries all of the counties have equal representation on the governing Library Board.

Statesboro Regional Public Libraries operate with a much lower administrative overhead than does LOPL, more efficiently spending the dollars that rural counties have to allocate to library services. Those dollars can focus on resources, things that library users can use, rather than on administration.

Statesboro Regional participates in GADD, Georgia Download Destination, a statewide digital consortium, that increases the number downloadable ebooks and audiobooks in the Libby collection that is available to Effingham library customers than was provided by LOPL.

The decision to join Statesboro Regional Public Libraries is one that will bring some changes, but will ultimately set a path for development of library services in a manner that best reflects the needs of a growing county. It is not an ending. It is a new beginning. Will there be bumps in the road? Yes. Will they be smoothed over as quickly as possible? Yes.

Suggested language for letter to State Librarian

[Your Name]
[Your Address]
[City, State, Zip Code]
[Email Address]

[Date]

Julie Walker
State Librarian and Vice Chancellor for Libraries and Archives
Georgia Public Library Service
2872 Woodcock Boulevard
Suite 250
Atlanta, GA 30341

Dear Ms. Walker,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to seek your assistance in resolving the ongoing dispute between the Effingham County Board of Commissioners and Live Oak Public Library regarding the ownership of library resources.

According to the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (OCGA) § 20-5-48, “upon dissolution or significant structural change within the system, such property shall be divided on a pro rata basis according to the proportion of financial costs of property borne by the involved parties. If the parties are unable to reach a mutually agreeable solution, the final decision of property ownership shall be made by the Office of Public Library Services (GPLS) of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia or its designee.

Effingham County maintains that it owns the materials collection, IT equipment, and all furnishings associated with the library. Attached is a record of state & federal grant funded equipment. The budget allocations provided by documentation from the GPLS Finance Director indicate that since 2019 the state materials funding allocated on behalf of the residents of Effingham County ranged from 14.35%(FY19) increasing annually to 16.39%(FY26) of the total state materials funding for Live Oak Public Library. Additionally, Effingham County has been part of Live Oak Public Library system for over 80 years, contributing to its overall annual budget proportional to its population. Effingham County owns and maintains its two buildings, insuring them, paying for utilities and grounds maintenance. **[Attach documentation of County's annual support of LOPL FY19-FY26]**

Additionally, we request that Internet connectivity remain in place until a new contract approved by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) can be initiated. It is important to note that this connectivity is subsidized by both state and federal funds, and its continuity is essential for the community we serve.

We would greatly appreciate your prompt attention to this matter and hope for a swift resolution.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

See attachments:

Effingham's annual payment to LOPL FY19-FY26

Collection Report from PINES dated March 9, 2026

Report on State Funding to LOPL on behalf of Effingham's population

Report on items registered as grant purchases GEER; Lib Tech