Libraries will shuffle staff around to get computer conversion completed

The Library Boards of Trustees of Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's Counties have decided to close each public library branch in their county on a rotating basis to free up people to help get the half a million dollar computer system on line.

Regional Director Katharine Hurrey said the computer system is essential to the start-up of the automated circulation system, and cannot be used until conversion of records is completed.

Each title must be converted to a computer record, and this costly and time-consuming task has up until now been done by the staff of the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association.

Since July, Hurrey said, the SMRLA staff has spent over 1,000 hours on the conversions. Now, because of state budget cuts, SMRLA staff have been furloughed 22 days this fiscal year and are no longer able to make any progress.

The tri-county libraries have a contract for an automated system, which will handle the millions of costly and labor-intensive transactions more efficiently.

During the week that the branch is closed, staff from that branch will spend the week working on the database for the system.

When the computer system is fully in place, hurrey said, library users will be able to tell the location of a book owned by SMRLA or any of the three Southern Maryland counties.

"Conversion estimates ran over $150,000," Hurrey said. "Because of budget limitations to the counties, SMRLA staff undertook conversion to save money. now that SMRLA is experiencing crippling budget cuts, county staff will assist in the completion."