



Evaluation of The 2013-2017 LSTA Five-Year Plan: State Library of Ohio

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Executive Summary

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) requires that all states evaluate their Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) program. As part of the evaluation of the 2013-2017 State Library of Ohio Plan, the State Library engaged The Bishoff Group to conduct the assessment. One method used in the evaluation was a survey of Ohio Librarians. The survey was designed to gather information and opinions on Ohio's LSTA Grant Program to Libraries, and statewide Library Services. The survey results will also be used to help the State Library evaluate the current use of LSTA funds, and assist the State Library in developing its new Five Year Plan for 2018-2022.

The State Library of Ohio Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) evaluation survey was conducted during October 2016. The survey was distributed to all Ohio library workers in all types of Ohio libraries allowing for the broadest response for each LSTA funded program. A total of 205 survey responses were received. The majority of the respondents were in administrative positions across all types of libraries.

Observations

While respondents indicated that they were aware or strongly aware of many of the LSTA-funded services offered by the State Library, many respondents have not utilized the variety of programs available.

Support for the LSTA competitive grant program, especially for the assistance from State Library staff, was strong from those that had applied for a grant. Those who indicated that they had not applied for a competitive grant cited lack of time, lack of match funding, sustainability concerns, and relevancy to their library's needs as reasons for not pursuing these grants.

The Ohio Digital Library, Ohio Web Library, and Serving Every Ohioan (SEO) were highly regarded programs among users in both qualitative and quantitative measures. Across all the programs there's a need for expanded marketing. The need was most evident for the State Library's Consulting Program. Those who have used the service were highly appreciative of it, but it was one of the least recognized programs discussed in the survey.

In addition to evaluating current LSTA-funded programs, the survey asked respondents about priorities in the establishment of new services. The top answers covered a variety of areas, including increased access to e-resources, promoting the value of libraries, emerging technologies, helping library users find information, and teaching information literacy skills.

Overall, the survey results showed appreciation for many of the LSTA funded programs as well as a need for further awareness-raising and promotion for many of the services offered by the State Library and closer monitoring and quality assurance for several specific programs. Specific recommendations are included further in this report.

The consultants wish to thank the staff of the State Library of Ohio for their assistance with the logistics associated with the survey.

Annex D: A-1 Progress towards Goals: Analysis of Goals/Objective/Activities & Targets

The State Library has made progress on all its goals and objectives. In a separately attached document the SLO has indicated which goals were achieved (A), partially achieved (PA) and not achieved. For those activities/targets which weren't achieved, it was only after discussion with appropriate audiences that the activity was either discontinued or the SLO determined not to proceed.

Annex E: Recommendations

General Recommendations:

Partnerships: Participants in the focus groups and stakeholder interviews asked that the State Library take the lead in facilitating partnerships among libraries, particularly between school and public libraries, and also with state agencies and statewide organizations. The goal would be to both increase recognition of the value of libraries and also to better meet the needs of Ohio residents.

Data usage and interpretation: The State Library has collected data about the statewide programs they manage and has worked with the competitive grant awardees in collecting data. The State Library and grantees utilize a standard evaluation form for all workshops that incorporates the IMLS evaluation questions. It is recommended that for specific programs such as Continuing Education, the State Library aggregate the data looking for trends and themes, allowing for future decision making beyond what statistical data might show. Additionally, the SLO should work with partners on consistency in data collection across years, for example the Ohio Web Library where there is significant inconsistency in data collection from year to year. SLO should also investigate the use of the Public Library Association's Project Outcome evaluations as one way to measure impact of funding. Finally, SLO should consider follow-up surveys after significant CE events to determine if attendees used what they learned. More local grants should be encouraged to use the surveys.

Naming/program branding: The SLO should review its name/program branding strategy, in light of the confusion expressed by Ohio librarians. While comments in this report focus on LSTA funded programs, when reviewing all SLO programs, several of the programs have similar names including Ohio Web Library, Ohio Digital Library, Ohio Digital Network (DPLA network), and Guiding Ohio Online. We recommend bringing in marketing/branding experts to assist with this effort to undertake a complete evaluation.

Program sustainability: SLO and its partners need to continue to explore strategies for ongoing funding of major statewide initiatives such as Ohio Web Library, Ohio Digital Library, Serving Every Ohioan, and others. Unlike some states, SLO and its partners are already well positioned because of the shared funding of many statewide programs. Continuing partnerships with the statewide networks is an important strategy that will need to continue into the future.

Competitive Grants

Focus of grants: Concern was expressed that the competitive grants seemed more focused on public libraries. Although this may not be the intent, the analysis of the number of grants and the amount of funding provided by type of library substantiates the perception. The four current topics chosen could be, and were addressed by different types of libraries. SLO should examine why more grants go to public libraries than other types of libraries and decide if changes in policies or procedures should be made.

Outcome/impact: The addition of surveys as part of the LSTA application and implementation process is to be commended. It is a very positive first step toward outcome/impact evaluation. However, for some programs, particularly for multi-session programs on state library priorities, libraries should be encouraged to conduct a later evaluation to ascertain if attitudes or behavior actually changed. The consultants recognize that undertaking this effort will cause the grant awardee to report after the conclusion of the grant. Consider setting aside a fund devoted to longer-term evaluation for selected projects that could either be available by application or assigned by SLO staff. Projects chosen could be those that would provide data that could be used to determine the value of a type of grant or used to demonstrate the value of library services.

Barriers to participation: In the three data gathering efforts, people expressed a concern about the required match for competitive grants. Only one person mentioned that “open” grants did not require a match. If more grants of higher quality are desired, more information about grants might be provided along with workshops on how to prepare a higher quality application.

Digitization State Library of Ohio

Goal setting: For the next LSTA plan, the State Library should develop impact targets as well as output targets. Along with the impact targets, more advanced evaluative measurements should be defined.

Usage data: The partners should undertake impact assessment through surveys and/or focus groups as part of their decision making regarding the future of Ohio Memory, collections to be digitized, and the strategic direction of Ohio Memory. Currently, only anecdotal evidence is used in decision making.

Digital planning: It is recommended that the State Library update their 2014 digitization plan. That plan should include not only collections to be digitized, but also plans for sustaining and growing the digital collections.

Digital preservation: The State Library and Ohio History Connection should develop a joint plan for preservation of the digital collections.

Digitization Centers

Funded as competitive grants, the Digitization Centers can play a key role as part of the implementation of the Ohio DPLA Service Hub program. The following recommendations are based on the data research and consultant interviews:

Goals of the project: The goals of the LSTA grants are still important to the Digitization Centers, including implementation of shareable metadata and development of shared policies. With the implementation of the Ohio DPLA Service Hub, the Digitization Centers will play a key role as host sites to those libraries and cultural heritage centers that do not have a platform for contribution to Ohio’s DPLA site. The Digitization Center Team, which includes the State Library and the four Centers, needs to continue work on implementation of shareable metadata best practices. They also need to continue to develop shareable policies on collection development, rights management, and digitization standards. The work that was done as part of the DPLA Planning lays the foundation from which the Digitization Centers can work.

Partnerships: One of the other Digitization Center project goals was support for digitization of collections held in their regions. At the point of this assessment, limited success has been realized due to the needed focus on implementation or upgrading of the digital labs. Those surveyed indicated that effort needs to be made promoting the program to other libraries and cultural heritage organizations. The Team needs to focus on promoting the program and having a consistent statewide approach, rather than a regional approach to minimize confusion. Leadership from the State Library is needed to move this forward.

Grow the collections: To grow digital collections across Ohio, consideration should be given to using LSTA funds for digitization grants. These grants will help bring libraries and cultural heritage organizations into the DPLA program. As a requirement of the grants, recipients should not only have to participate in DPLA, but also utilize either Ohio Memory as a host site or one of the Digitization Centers. Grants should also be available to sites that have their own digital platform.

KnowItNow

No recommendation as the program has been discontinued.

Library Programs and Development

Promotion and marketing: Develop a promotional program that focuses on the differences between the consulting programs including the strengths and benefits of the separate programs.

Evaluation and usage data: Track and report consistent information on usage of each of the programs. Implement an evaluation program. This program could be an email survey or phone interviews of a random selection of consultations. The focus on the evaluation can be on whether the consultant's recommendations were implemented as well as usefulness of the consultation. *WebJunction/Skillport:* Conduct an in-depth assessment of the effectiveness of WebJunction/Skillport to determine whether the SLO should continue to support the program. Based on the data, in conjunction with the Ohio library community, review how WebJunction and Skillport meet the needs of Ohio librarians and library workers.

Ohio Digital Library

eBook collection: The concerns and comments about the program focused mainly on wait times and selection of materials, which are concerns with eBook programs across the U.S. The ODL program manager, working with the ODL Advisory committee, should reach out to ODL participants to identify issues and develop a resolution to issues associated with wait times and selection of materials. Consider participation in national eBook discussions where these and other concerns are addressed.

Collection development policy: Develop an ODL collection development policy to address some of the concerns about the program which were noted in the survey.

Sustainability: Continued communication about the program's sustainability strategies is key for participant library commitment.

Ohio Web Library/Libraries Connect Ohio (LCO)

Collection usage: Overall collection usage is strong, with the K-12 community making the greatest use of the electronic resources with double-digit growth over the past three years. The LCO should address the decline in use by public libraries. While surveys and high level discussion of reasons for the decline may have been undertaken, it is recommended that the librarians be brought together to discuss how this decline may be addressed. It may be an issue of providing the appropriate databases, but there may be other issues that need to be addressed. This discussion needs to be undertaken before the next five-year contract is negotiated.

Data: Like other programs, data is collected and used for traditional library purposes, such as collection development, but it doesn't seem to be used for more advanced decision making. No data is collected regarding why use of the collection is declining. When reviewing multiple years of data, there is a lack of consistency from year to year beyond the data that is provided by the vendor—use of a particular database. Because of changed IMLS reporting requirements, what is reported in the SPR is inconsistent, such as whether it is a federal fiscal

year, a state fiscal year, or another time period (9 months). Reporting a consistent period is necessary for effective evaluation.

Financial sustainability: One of the activities in the 2013-2017 plan was the development of a financial plan for ongoing funding of the Ohio Web Library. The LCO should undertake development of this plan.

Transparency: Survey and focus group respondents reported that they didn't know who was on the vendor selection committee, or what the process was for the selection. In light of the databases being selected only every five years, this lack of awareness is understandable. The LCO should post on the site the members of the vendor selection committee and the process for the selection of the databases. Links from OhioLINK and INFOhio should be kept to the State Library's website.

Awareness that LSTA funds Ohio Web Library: Each partner needs to include information that LSTA funds support the Ohio Web Library.

Serving Every Ohioan (SEO)

Expanding the program: The State Library should continue to look for opportunities to bring public libraries into the SEO shared ILS program, reducing local library cost and increasing resource sharing.

Shared print collection: The SEO should discontinue filling ILL requests from the shared print collection, allowing SEO to redirect the SEO staff to other activities. The collection should be weeded and the remaining collection made available to public libraries who are interested in the collection. The remaining collection should be sold to a remainder dealer.

Statewide Resource Sharing: OLS: MORE

Goals and objectives: The State Library needs to explore options to support Statewide Resource Sharing, including a replacement for the now end-of-life OCLC VDX system.

Potential future approach: The relatively small and declining number of users, as well as the discontinuation of the VDX software product by OCLC, provide the State Library of Ohio with an opportunity to make changes in the program. Approaches could include moving libraries to consortia such as SEO or moving libraries to other regional ILS groups.

Talking Book Program/ Ohio Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled

Impact: This is the only program evaluated where the impact on the users was absolutely clear and staff stayed in close contact with users in order to be able to tailor the services to their needs. However, the most recent user survey was in 2012. The program should consider conducting another user survey.

Promotion: One staff member indicated that the major problem faced was informing potential users about the service. They estimate that only about 12% of those eligible to use the service are actually using it. The Program should consider increased outreach efforts to senior housing and other groups that work with targeted groups.

Youth Services

Names of programs: While the summer reading program is well known by librarians and by users, the survey, focus groups, and interviews showed less awareness of Choose to Read Ohio and Ohio Ready to Read. The promotional material prepared by SLO staff is very impressive and should produce wider support. Changing the names of the programs might help. For example, Choose to Read Ohio might be more clearly named

“Celebrating Ohio Authors,” and Ohio Ready to Read could use a name that includes the words “early literacy” so that people other than children’s librarians have a clear picture of its intent.

Outputs/impact: While numerous evaluations are done, all are to solicit the opinion of library staff. Training events are evaluated at the conclusion of the event, and not after a period of time to determine if changes were made in attitude or behavior. Even though the LSTA competitive grant process recommends a survey to determine the opinion of the user of library programs, the survey does not seem to have been used in any of the youth programs.

The Summer Reading Program is an obvious statewide program in which to implement outcome/impact evaluation. Libraries that register users to participate in the program can administer a one-time survey at the end of the program to determine the impact of SRP on participants and their caregivers. Depending on state law, the survey might only be able to be distributed to adult caregivers.