

**Library Services and
Technology Act**

**Five-Year Plan 1998-2002
Evaluation:
Alaska**

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**Prepared for
the
Alaska State Library**

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Note: The use of *italic* in this report indicates a direct quote from a document, interview, or survey.

Executive Summary

This report is an evaluation of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funded program in Alaska for the period FY1998 through FY2002. LSTA funds support a variety of projects addressing the five goals identified in the LSTA Alaska State Plan. The goals are:

- connectivity;
- access to information;
- development of partnerships;
- service to the underserved; and
- access for patrons with special needs.

Projects funded include a grant program addressing the needs of individual communities, a training program with a variety of delivery methods, statewide collaborative partnerships, leadership institutes, and E-rate support and assistance.

The evaluation process included two tiers. Tier I was a review of the State Library's overall performance in meeting the goals of the LSTA program. Tier II was an in-depth evaluation of two goals: Connectivity and Access to Information. Patrons and librarians were surveyed and additional information was collected through interviews with library board members, community members, and State Library staff. Five site visits were made to community libraries awarded LSTA funds for projects.

The overall review of the LSTA Alaska State Plan found that the State Library used the funds appropriately and effectively. The findings of this report indicate significant progress was made toward meeting the goals outlined in the Plan.

Substantial improvement was made in achieving the goals of Connectivity and Access to Information. As a result of LSTA funding, more rural libraries are connected to the Internet. Through E-rate discounts, schools and libraries have more affordable Internet access. Communities have increased access to a wide variety of general reference, health and government information. The Databases for Alaskans Project brought full-text articles to libraries and homes throughout the state. Indexing and digitizing projects increased the availability of specialized materials to Alaskans.

New statewide and local partnerships were formed and numerous training opportunities were made available to the library community. Partnerships and cooperative projects contributed to the effective use of limited resources and funding. As a result of LSTA funded training, library staff developed skills in basic library management, reference and technology to better serve their communities.

The State Library's administration of the LSTA program has been highly successful. The sub-grant announcement, application and evaluation process was fair and equitable. All funds were appropriately spent to meet the goals outlined in the Plan.

Introduction

The following is an evaluation of the effectiveness of the programs and projects administered by the Alaska State Library in meeting the goals of the Alaska State Plan. The findings are a result of a study of libraries, activities, goals, sub-grants and programs funded with Library Services and Technology Act of 1996 (LSTA) and matching State Library funds.

The Alaska State Plan was prepared in accordance with Public Law 104-208, LSTA. The purpose of the plan was to provide guidelines for the expenditure of federal funds. The Plan was written by the Alaska State Library with the advice of the Governors Advisory Council on Libraries. The final Plan was submitted and approved by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and was reviewed annually.

The State Library utilized the Plan to provide a structure for library development activities beyond the scope of federal requirements. With an approved plan in place, the State Library was able to coordinate funding sources to meet the needs of the library community.

The Plan identifies five state goals that are consistent with LSTA legislation. The identified goals are:

- *Connectivity - Access to telecommunications.*
Ensure that all Alaskan residents have affordable access to the telecommunications infrastructure for the delivery of information.
- *Information - Access to worldwide sources of information, educational resources, research data, etc.*
Ensure that all Alaskan residents have access to the wealth of cultural, and scientific information available in print, recorded, electronic text, multimedia and emerging formats.
- *Partnerships - Develop regional and multi-jurisdictional service strategies.*
Explore the potential role of community partnerships and networks in the delivery of information services and encourage innovative and multidisciplinary/multi-jurisdictional approaches to meet the informational and educational needs of Alaskan residents.
- *Service - Improve library services to the underserved.*
Improve library services to Alaskan residents living in underserved urban and rural communities.
- *Accessibility - Services to Alaskans with special needs.*
Improve the delivery of library services to Alaskans with special needs.

Priorities were identified for each of the goals. Activities were developed and a timeline was established. As part of the federal requirement, the Alaska State Plan contains an

evaluation component. This component includes in-house analysis, sub-grant evaluations, and an independent assessment from an outside evaluator.

Background

Alaska is the largest state, encompassing 571,951 square miles of land, and ranks the lowest in population density at 1.1 person per square mile. Anchorage, Alaska's largest city, has a population of 260,283. The total population of the state is 626,932. Sixty percent of the population is located in three urban locations: Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau. Two other areas with relatively good road access are the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, population 59,322, density 2.4 persons per square mile and the Kenai Peninsula Borough, population 49,691, density 3.1 persons per square mile.

With only 15,598 miles of road, much of the state is only accessible by air. Remote communities are dependent on small charter airlines for the delivery of food, heating fuel, household goods, building supplies, and other necessities. In Northern and Western Alaska coastal communities, a seasonal barge may deliver building supplies and fuel only once a year. The cost of transportation often exceeds the cost of the items being delivered. Travel between communities in "Bush" Alaska is often by small boat or snow machine. Weather conditions are critical in all of these modes of transportation. Winter temperatures in the Interior often drop to minus sixty degrees. Ice, fog, and blizzards are standard winter conditions, and winter in most of Alaska is nine months long.

Because of these conditions, the building and maintenance of the communication infrastructure is slow and difficult. While almost every village has telephone service, it is not always affordable or dependable for every household.

These factors of geography, demographics, transportation, and economy create a challenge for the delivery of library services. In response, cooperation among libraries and librarians in the state traditionally has been very strong. Previous federal library legislation, Library Services Construction Act (LSCA), helped foster this cooperation with the Title III - Interlibrary Cooperation and Resource Sharing program. Alaska continues to use LSTA as a means of developing networks and innovative programs that serve the needs of users in both large and small communities.

Connectivity in the state is dependent on funding, availability of a telecommunication infrastructure, training, and local expertise. These factors have the greatest impact in the rural communities.

Historically, programs such as Statewide Library Electronic Doorway (SLED) provided free Internet access for those libraries that had the necessary equipment and telecommunications infrastructure. Community efforts, such as NetDay activities, also aided in connecting school libraries. In conjunction with NetDay, the Alaska Science and Technology Foundation assisted the effort by providing funding for connectivity.

The telecommunication infrastructure in Alaska limits the ability to connect at even a moderate speed in most communities. Many communities only have dial-up access. Some

communities do not have an Internet Service Provider (ISP) and must pay long-distance charges. Broadband, high-speed connections are only available in the largest urban centers.

The availability of information resources varies greatly from community to community. The acquisition of information is dependent on local funding levels and appropriate facilities. Communities with insufficient population to provide a tax base find it difficult to develop basic collections, maintain a facility, fund positions, and provide training for a librarian/library aide. Even with the Alaska Public Library Assistance Grant Program, funding may not be adequate to provide these services.

Although everyone may have common information requirements in the areas of medicine, law, government and education, each community also has its own unique needs and interests that may not be met by the standard, small public library collection. Logging camps and remote villages find it difficult to identify and access materials that are appropriate in content and format for their patrons. Examples include finding information on such topics as small engine repair and region-specific economic development.

More than fifty percent of the public libraries in Alaska serve communities of fewer than 1,000 people. A community with a small population generates less revenue for basic community services such as fire, water, and sewer. These services consume the available revenue, leaving little or no funding for library support. In many cases, a library must generate its own revenue by conducting fundraisers and/or applying for grants to cover operational costs. In addition, state and federal funding is no longer available to assist with the construction and maintenance of local libraries. In small communities, the library facility may be inadequate such as a small room in City Hall or a re-purposed building.

The implementation of the Alaska State Plan funds a variety of activities designed to assist libraries in providing appropriate services. Primarily, these activities include sub-grants to individual libraries, statewide projects and initiatives, and a broad range of training opportunities. The total dollar amount of LSTA funding expended for the five year period from 1998 through 2002 was \$2,443,434. Of this amount, 71 percent was spent on statewide projects and initiatives, 19 per cent was spent for projects addressing the needs of individual libraries, and the remaining 10 percent for training and continuing education.

Evaluation Process

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the progress made toward the goals as identified in the *Alaska Library Services and Technology Act Five-Year State Plan*.

The process included a two-tier evaluation. Tier I was a review of the State Library's overall performance in meeting the goals of the LSTA program. Tier II was an in-depth evaluation of two goals: Connectivity and Access to Information.

The methodologies used to conduct the evaluation included:

- a review of all sub-grants funded under the LSTA Alaska State Plan;
- the distribution of two surveys by mail to librarians and library patrons;
- interviews with representative library directors and decision-makers conducted on-site and by phone;
- visits to libraries for in-depth observation of selected grant projects;
- review of existing statistical data;
- compilation of survey data; and
- summarization of the findings.

The documents for each sub-grant included a proposal and a final report. The information contained in these documents provided both an overview of the projects as well as specific information on the program's success and the impact on the local library community.

Two surveys were developed addressing overall satisfaction with the LSTA program and the progress made toward meeting the goals outlined in the State Plan. The first survey was distributed to all libraries identified as having personnel responsible for library operations. Distribution included public, academic, special, and school libraries. The survey focused on the State Plan goals and asked the respondent to rate satisfaction and detail specific local outcomes.

Not all libraries used every one of the services referred to in the survey. When analyzing the data it became evident from the explain/comment fields that many of the "Not Sure" responses were actually "Not Applicable." Example: Respondents answering "Not Sure" to the question about the helpfulness of the E-rate assistance program commented that the School District office handled E-rate issues, not the librarian. All tables included in this report label this response as "Not Sure/Not Applicable."

The second survey, for patrons, was sent to twenty libraries receiving a sub-grant within the past five years. The libraries were requested to distribute the surveys regarding Internet use.

Interviews were conducted to collect data from key library directors who represent a broad range of library types. Included were members of the Resource and Research Library group, Directors Leadership group and other recognized leaders in the statewide

library community. These interviews solicited feedback on the five goals established in the State Plan and the administration of the LSTA program.

On-site visits were conducted to provide a profile of five sub-grants and their progress toward meeting the Connectivity and Information goals. These sites included Big Lake, Delta Junction, Elim, Ninilchik and Sutton. A combination of observation and interviews was used to gather data for the evaluation. Formal and informal interviews were held with librarians, staff, city managers, library trustees, and patrons.

Statistical data were provided by the State Library on the Databases for Alaskans project. This data were reviewed along with data compiled from the librarian and patron surveys noted above and reported as part of the findings.

A draft report was submitted to the Governor's Advisory Council on Libraries for review. Recommendations from the Council were incorporated into the final report.

Implementation Review: Five-Year Goals and Findings

This section reports on the overall implementation of the LSTA Alaska State Plan. All five of the goals were reviewed and evaluated. The goals of Connectivity and Information Resources were reviewed and evaluated in depth. A full list of the goals and activities from the LSTA Alaska State Plan can be found in Appendix A.

Goal 1: Connectivity - Access to Telecommunications

Ensure that all Alaskan residents have affordable access to the telecommunications infrastructure for the delivery of information.

Priorities

- *Identify and develop opportunities for libraries to participate in cost effective telecommunications networks.*

- *Develop programs which assist libraries in the following areas:*
 - *-planning and identifying hardware and software needs;*
 - *-identifying local providers and evaluating services;*
 - *-training library staff and parent agency personnel;*
 - *-establishing libraries as community information centers.*

Review and Findings

A review of the activities over the past five years indicates that access has increased through projects and programs sponsored in part by LSTA and the Alaska State Library. One of these projects is the continued funding of the Statewide Library Electronic Doorway (SLED). This program provides easy to use, menu-driven access to the Internet via a toll-free, dial-up service. Toll costs for this service are annually negotiated with AT&T Alascom and financially supported by the State Library and the University of Alaska Fairbanks. LSTA funds are used, in part, to support this program.

Initially MUSKOX, an early email system developed along with SLED, provided librarians throughout the state with an email system before such services were readily available. This LSTA funded project allowed Alaska librarians to become leaders in communications technology. In 1998, when government agencies brought in-house computer and email systems online, MUSKOX became redundant and was phased out.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 opened opportunities for libraries and schools to obtain connectivity at reduced rates by creating the Universal Service Fund (USF). The State Library recognized the beneficial impact this legislation could have on libraries statewide. The State Library studied the legislation in depth and provided information and testimony before the Federal Communications Commission, the Alaska Public Utilities Commission, and the Schools and Libraries Corporation in order to modify regulations as they relate to schools and libraries in Alaska.

The State Library staff provided expertise and support to schools and libraries as they dealt with the new E-rate program. It was through the efforts of the State Library staff

that many rural schools were able to complete the filing process and reduce their telecommunication cost by as much as 90 percent. Many school libraries were then able to connect to the Internet for the first time. The initial number of public libraries utilizing E-rate was low, but the number has increased steadily.

E-rate discounts received by Alaska schools and libraries:

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Amount</i> |
|--------------|------------------------|
| 1 | \$11,932,992.58 |
| 2 | \$12,724,517.43 |
| 3 | \$12,837,374.30 |
| 4 | \$11,397,744.56 |
| Total | \$48,892,628.87 |

Of the 54 librarians who responded to the survey question regarding the usefulness of the State Library's assistance in filing E-rate forms, 85 percent rated it Extremely Useful to Useful.

| <i>E-rate Support</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|-------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Extremely Useful | 33 | 61.1% |
| Very Useful | 4 | 7.4% |
| Useful | 9 | 16.7% |
| Somewhat Useful | 0 | 0.0% |
| Not Useful | 2 | 3.7% |
| Not Sure/Not Applicable | 6 | 11.1% |

When asked to comment on the State Library's E-rate assistance, librarians submitted the following representative comments: (See Appendix F for the full list of comments.)

"The support from Della Matthis is outstanding! Her information is precise and professionally presented. She knows all the answers. Outstanding! Terrific! Marvelous!"

"The State Library has provided valuable information relating to filing dates, changes from year to year, specific information about potentially tricky parts of the applications, answers to questions which are complex or baffling, and provides all-around help with the process each year. It boosts one's confidence to be able to ask questions of Della, Aja etc."

"I doubt we could have received E-rate discounts without the State Library assistance."

"Although the E-rate is somewhat hard to file, it was a success! With this we were able to afford Internet use for the community."

In describing changes in connectivity over the past five years, State Library staff indicated this was the goal where the most progress has been made. Although the State

Library may not be totally responsible, it has played a significant role. The following are some of the changes noted by staff:

- *increased number of fax machines;*
- *the development of SLED resources;*
- *increased technologically-proficient librarians;*
- *initial connections to those libraries not connected; and*
- *the expansion of services to libraries already connected.*

The staff equated connectivity with communication. In describing this aspect, staff members indicated library development was greatly enhanced by the improvement in connectivity. The addition of email and fax machines removed the barriers of time and location, resulting in increased contact between library development staff and their constituency. During this period, 31 sub-grants were awarded for a total of \$197,338 in LSTA funds to improve connectivity in individual libraries.

Many rural communities in Alaska do not have an Internet Service Provider (ISP). While E-rate provided an affordable connection to schools and libraries, connectivity for municipal offices, tribal councils, health clinics, fire services and Head Start facilities was still problematic. The State Library spearheaded a successful effort to receive a waiver of the FCC regulations allowing communities to access the Internet using school lines after school hours.

The increase in connectivity meant an increase in cost, even with E-rate. Comments from librarians and Library Board members indicate that telecommunication costs are increasing. A library that had previously only one phone line in the budget, may now have additional lines for fax and Internet connections.

During this five-year period, cooperative networks in Alaska have increased as evidenced by the emergence of new partnerships between libraries to share online catalogs and bibliographic information. Two examples of this include (1) the formation of the Alliance through which participants: the Rasmuson Library University of Alaska Fairbanks, Capital City Libraries, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, and the Noel Wien Library, successfully bid a joint online circulation system and web-based public access catalog and (2) Alaska Resources Library and Information Service (ARLIS) agreed to share reference staff with the University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library and an online catalog with the Anchorage Municipal Library.

Each of the goals identified in the State Plan include a training component. Among the training activities funded were:

- Small Libraries Institute for Management (SLIM and SLIM2);
- Small Libraries Institute for Continuing Education (SLICE);
- Public Library Director's Leadership Group (DirLead); and
- grants to the Alaska Library Association for professional development, continuing education, reference workshops and summer reading programs.

These training opportunities served librarians from the largest to the smallest libraries and addressed skill levels from basic to expert. The survey responses indicate this training improved the quality of library services.

| <i>Training</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|-------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Significantly Better | 36 | 57.1% |
| Somewhat Better | 12 | 19.1% |
| About the Same | 2 | 3.2% |
| Somewhat Worse | 0 | 0.0% |
| Significantly Worse | 0 | 0.0% |
| Not Sure/Not Applicable | 13 | 20.6% |

Other training supported by the State match for LSTA included on-site visits to small communities by the State Library staff to assist in dealing with day-to-day technology issues and to provide individualized training.

The Alaska State Library staff participated in the development and delivery of training programs such as SLIM, SLICE, and Village Reference Training. In addition to these specific projects, ASL staff annually conducted more than 50 technology-related workshops for librarians, teachers and the general public in communities throughout the state. Other educational needs were met through topic-specific workshops at state and regional conferences and travel to communities for training and consultation.

Feedback from the surveys and interviews indicates a positive impact from the sub-grants providing equipment or connectivity directly to libraries. The sub-grants ranged from providing a fax machine to upgrading existing online catalogs to enable web access. In many cases, a small amount of funding was able to provide connectivity where none previously existed.

The data collected in the librarian and patron surveys indicates that librarians and patrons were highly satisfied with progress made toward the Connectivity goal. Forty-seven percent of those surveyed rated connectivity as significantly better.

| <i>Connectivity</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|-------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Significantly Better | 66 | 46.8% |
| Somewhat Better | 34 | 24.1% |
| About the Same | 18 | 12.8% |
| Somewhat Worse | 1 | .7% |
| Significantly Worse | 0 | 0.0% |
| Not Sure/Not Applicable | 22 | 15.6% |

The following comments are representative of librarian responses: (See Appendix F for the full list of comments.)

“Links to state economic facts/organizations are very convenient for economic students.”

“SLED has significantly improved library service in Anchorage and especially, in rural areas of Alaska by offering free, convenient, and equitable access to online electronic information resources and a portal to the Internet. This service has markedly improved the ability of the average Alaskan to gain information from libraries, government agencies, and local communities, 24/7; it has saved taxpayer funds. SLED has also gained a statewide reputation for reliability and as a ‘safe harbor’ for information age neophytes.”

“SLED is so important that I made it the home page after other forms of Internet access became available to us.”

“In earlier years (1994-1998) many members of our community used SLED's dial-up access. Now we have more reliable ISP's and this aspect is not as crucial. However, we do have several students who take correspondence and other distance education courses, and those in smaller communities still make use of SLED for this function.”

“In our remote area the library and reference resources are small. SLED has opened doors to many, many resources for us.”

“Easy URL to remember. User-friendly, wealth of resources. Easy access to AK databases. I constantly remind my students to start their research with SLED - an authoritative site.”

“Tech training by Tracy Swaim has been very helpful.”

Goal 2: Information - Access to worldwide sources of information, educational resources, research data, etc.

Ensure that all Alaskan residents have access to the wealth of cultural and scientific information available in print, recorded, electronic text, multimedia and emerging formats.

Priorities

- *Support of regional and statewide cooperative collection development activities and networks.*
- *Coordination of statewide resource sharing activities and improving linkages with systems outside Alaska.*

Review and Findings

A review of the data indicates that access to information increased as a result of the projects and programs outlined in the activities for this goal. These projects included Databases for Alaskans, SLED, 800 Number Reference and Interlibrary Loan (ILL), the Alaska Project, and sub-grants for adding specialized collections to the Alaska bibliographic database.

Early in 1998, a sub-grant was awarded to the Alaska Library Association to train librarians in identifying and negotiating with database license holders. Out of this workshop came the statewide initiative to license collections of magazines and periodicals. The State Library, in conjunction with the University of Alaska Anchorage, Consortium Library, negotiated and licensed full-text databases from EBSCO, IAC Health, and Electronic Library. This resource, named Databases for Alaskans, extended the serial collections in Alaska's libraries and was added to SLED. Recent surveys indicate that Databases for Alaskans is a resource that is heavily utilized and highly valued.

| <i>Databases for Alaskans (statistics through October 2001)</i> | | | | |
|---|----------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1999 | Logins | Searches | Email | Full-text |
| EBSCO | 43,432 | 499,927 | 3,075 | 141,388 |
| IAC Health | 19,788 | 11,420 | 0 | 4,627 |
| Electric Library | | 26,764 | 0 | 37,985 |
| 1999 Total | 63,220 | 538,111 | 3,075 | 184,000 |
| 2000 | Logins | Searches | Email | Full-text |
| EBSCO | 101,383 | 999,772 | 1,373 | 374,328 |
| IAC Health | 11,196 | 26,799 | 0 | 4,503 |
| Electric Library | | 83,655 | 0 | 106,662 |
| 2000 Total | 112,579 | 1,110,226 | 1,373 | 485,493 |
| 2001 | Logins | Searches | Email | Full-text |
| EBSCO | 93,248 | 635,589 | 34,796 | 335,928 |
| IAC Health | 9,627 | 20,693 | 0 | 2,978 |
| Electric Library | | 67,474 | 0 | 91,900 |
| 2001(10 months) Total | 102,875 | 723,756 | 34,796 | 430,806 |
| | | | | |
| Project Total | 278,674 | 2,372,093 | 39,244 | 1,100,299 |

Alaska State Library staff members, when interviewed, agreed that the Databases for Alaskans project had the most significant impact in increasing access to information. This project provides free access to Alaskan residents to full text articles from over 2000 magazines/journals and 100 newspapers, transcripts from radio and television programs, maps, photographs and dozens of books and reference sources. The Databases can be accessed from libraries, schools, home or work computers. Other resources developed with LSTA funds include the expansion of SLED, the newly licensed Grant Station, and several other sub-grants for the addition of specialized collections.

The data collected in the librarian and patron surveys indicated a high level of satisfaction with progress made toward this goal.

| <i>Databases for Alaskans</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|-------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Significantly Better | 81 | 61.8% |
| Somewhat Better | 24 | 18.3% |
| About the Same | 9 | 6.9% |
| Somewhat Worse | 0 | 0.0% |
| Significantly Worse | 0 | 0.0% |
| Not Sure/Not Applicable | 17 | 13.0% |

The following comments are representative of librarian responses: (See Appendix F for the full list of comments.)

“What a godsend for doing research in the high school setting.”

“Librarians have significant additional resources to use in assisting patrons with information requests.”

“Teachers have more information to help with course preparation and their own continuing studies, also, our patrons love the full-text aspect of these databases.”

“Patients at Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) are able to search for consumer health information and print the full text documents identified.”

During on-site interviews, librarians and patrons indicated that paper reference and periodical collections are still very important. While all libraries need to maintain basic collections of print resources, even the smallest libraries now have access to a full range of information. Online resources provide current information such as legislation, economic trends, and health care. Patrons initially attracted to the library for email and the Internet now come on a regular basis and use other library services. A librarian stated, *“One man came in to check email and was startled to find the video collection and the IRS tax forms. He is now a regular patron.”*

In late FY2001, the UAA - Consortium Library (with the assistance of an LSTA sub-grant) partnered with the Denali Commission and the US Department of Agriculture to license Grant Station, an online resource that focuses on helping Alaska non-profits and individuals find and secure grants. Licensed for two years, this project provides access to a comprehensive database of public and private funding sources. This is an example of a project that addresses the goals of both Access to Information and Partnerships.

Another valued LSTA funded program is the 800 Number Reference and ILL. This service allows any library in the state to call a toll-free number to refer difficult reference questions to Alaska’s largest public library, the Anchorage Municipal Library. Surveys indicate libraries with limited resources find this service valuable, and it improves the quality of library service in their communities.

| <i>800 Number Reference and ILL</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Significantly Better | 34 | 28.3% |
| Somewhat Better | 20 | 16.6% |
| About the Same | 29 | 24.2% |
| Somewhat Worse | 0 | 0.0% |
| Significantly Worse | 0 | 0.0% |
| Not Sure/Not Applicable | 37 | 30.9% |

Comments from State Library staff indicate small libraries with untrained staff not only find this service useful, but essential. *“A part-time, ten-hour per week library aide does not have the time needed to process Interlibrary Loan paperwork.”* The 800 Number Reference and ILL program provides this service with a simple phone call.

The following comments are representative of librarian responses: (See Appendix F for the full list of comments.)

“Fantastic Service. I use this service weekly.”

“800 service in Anchorage is used a lot as well as Patent information from Anchorage Municipal Libraries (AML).”

“Glad it's available.”

“We use this service only as a back-up for items we can't secure on our own. This service is VERY important to communities that don't have LaserCat.”

The Alaska Project is a program that coordinates billing and payment of interlibrary loan charges. Although there is no fee for ILL within Alaska, libraries borrowing materials from outside the state often incur charges. This project allows Alaska libraries to deposit funds at a central location for consolidation of billing and payment. An average of 3,000 ILL transactions are processed annually.

A number of collection development activities were funded during the five-year period. All of these projects expanded the resources available through Alaska's libraries. The most notable of these projects are:

- AKEELA, Inc. (formerly the Alaska Council on the Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Library) holdings;
- Anchorage Museum holdings;
- Alaska Resources Library and Information Services (ARLIS) Digital Document Maintenance and Analysis Project; and
- Patent Depository Serials holdings at Anchorage Municipal Libraries.

Goal 3: Partnerships - Develop regional and multi-jurisdictional service strategies.

Explore the potential role of community partnerships and networks in the delivery of information services and encourage innovative and multidisciplinary/multi-jurisdictional approaches to meet the informational and educational needs of Alaskan residents.

Priorities

- *Encourage libraries and other agencies to extend and enhance local library services through the development of regional and multi-type service networks.*
- *Provide consultation and technical assistance to libraries in the development, improvement and operation of cooperative activities and networks.*

Review and Findings

A review of the sub-grants and survey data indicates that partnerships and networking have increased and benefited libraries. The State Library funds meetings of the Resource and Research Libraries (R&R) group to foster network development and discuss potential projects that could be co-facilitated. The R&R group is composed of the directors of the three largest academic libraries, the three largest municipal libraries, and the State Library. The Alliance and Databases for Alaskans are examples of such partnership projects. (See Connectivity and Information Access Goals.)

Sub-grants were awarded during this five-year period for a number of partnership activities. These included:

- Anchorage Historical and Fine Arts Museum partnered with the Anchorage Municipal Library (AML) to add the Museum's library collection to the AML OPAC;
- Haines Cooperative Wide Area Network, where the public library and two schools partnered to share a catalog and circulation system; and
- Special Access for Remote Libraries in Interior Alaska, where Internet ready equipment was purchased for school/community libraries in seven villages.

The Alaska Library Association was awarded a sub-grant to research a statewide library card. The committee members recommended a multi-stage process starting with a reciprocal borrowing agreement. More than 40 Alaskan libraries have signed the agreement creating a de facto statewide library card. The expectation is that a physical card will soon follow.

Small libraries often establish partnerships with agencies and organizations within the local community. These range from formal public/school library agreements to informal alliances with groups such as a local quilting club. When asked about partnering activities, librarians offered the following examples. In Delta the Kiwanis club conducts a story hour, in Elim the public librarian opens the school computer lab one night a week, and in Nilnilchik the Volunteer Ambulance Association raises funds for the library through cookbook sales. Although none of these examples use LSTA funding, it is

evident that librarians at all levels view partnerships as an important part of the delivery of library services.

Goal 4: Service - Improve library services to the underserved.

Improve library services to Alaskan residents living in urban and rural communities.

Priorities

- *Provide alternative services for people who live in areas lacking sufficient population or local revenue to support independent library units.*
- *Support and fund training opportunities for library directors and staff.*

Review and Findings

In 1998, Alaska Public Library Law and State Regulations were revised and enacted. As part of this process, the State Library solicited input from groups such as DirLead, the R&R group, and the Governor's Advisory Council on Libraries. These regulations set minimum standards for collection development, hours of service, staffing, and funding for public library service. With standards in place, the libraries were given a planning tool on which to base development of library services.

The State Library staff work individually with community libraries in developing strategic, collection development, and technology plans. These plans are required by either the state or the federal government in order to receive funding.

Staff from the State Library regularly provide consultation and support for libraries in developing programs that meet the needs of the local community. Support is provided by site visits, phone, fax and email. Interviewed librarians rated this service as extremely beneficial.

Sub-grants were awarded to provide training opportunities for library staff in the areas of basic skills, library management and the effective use of technology. These included SLIM and SLIM2, SLICE, DirLead, the Summer Reading Program, scholarships, continuing education, and professional education support. These training activities were highly rated by survey participants.

The following comments are representative of librarian responses: (See Appendix F for the full list of comments.)

"DirLead has given me the opportunity to have a voice in librarianship statewide."

"The computer skills help with cataloging and help patrons on the computer."

"Programs like DirLead and others, promote cooperation between types of libraries."

“I was able to attend SLIM and a conference through grants. It has improved my skills in the library and the patrons have benefited.”

A document entitled *Culturally Responsive Guidelines for Alaska Public Libraries* was developed by DirLead to help public librarians examine how to respond to specific informational, educational and cultural needs of Alaska Native users and communities. The document was developed at the annual DirLead workshop funded by LSTA.

In FY2002, a sub-grant was awarded to the Anchorage Municipal Libraries to purchase and install library kiosks and computers at the Fairview and Spenard Recreation Centers. Both of these facilities are located in underserved and economically depressed areas. Summer Reading programs were offered at the Centers, and a small collection of reference materials for homework reference was provided. (An evaluation of this project is expected in September 2002.)

The two Regional Resource libraries (Fairbanks and Juneau) continue to receive funds from LSTA to support the Books-by-Mail Program. This program serves families and individuals who live in areas without a public library. Although highly rated by Books-by-Mail participants, this program is very costly for the number of patrons served. FY2000 sub-grant Final Reports indicated 1,375 patrons were served. The FY2001 Final Reports indicate only 1,250 were served. More than one third of the LSTA funds each year are spent on this program. The Books-by-Mail Program has been funded with federal funds for over twenty years. It can no longer be considered an innovative or pilot project; therefore, it may be more appropriate to fund it under the operational budget.

| | <i>Total LSTA Funds</i> | <i>LSTA Funds Books-by-Mail</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|-------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>1998</i> | \$604,938 | \$191,874 | 32% |
| <i>1999</i> | \$602,909 | \$271,294 | 45% |
| <i>2000</i> | \$608,473 | \$203,386 | 33% |
| <i>2001</i> | \$627,114 | \$269,880 | 43% |
| | \$2,443,434 | \$936,434 | 38% |

Goal 5: Accessibility - Services to Alaskans with special needs.

Improve the delivery of library services to Alaskans with special needs

Priorities

- *Identify services and equipment that allow libraries to expand and enhance their services to Alaskans with special needs.*
- *Provide consultation and referral services to help libraries comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.*

Review and Findings

A review of this goal indicates that most librarians refer patrons to the Talking Book Center at the Alaska State Library when appropriate. In some cases, local libraries have collections of large print materials addressing the needs of senior citizens and individuals with visual impairments. The Talking Book Center also provides a reference referral

service to libraries and individuals researching information on American with Disabilities Act (ADA), adaptive products, and disability support organizations. The Talking Book Center is funded by state general funds.

In addition to the Library of Congress tapes, the Talking Book Center provides recorded copies of the Battle of the Books tapes to schools requesting this service. Many of the librarians interviewed commented positively on the usefulness of materials provided by the Talking Book Center.

Only one sub-grant, funded with State matching funds, was identified as providing service for patrons with special needs. This sub-grant was awarded to the Homer Public Library for an Aladdin Reader. The Reader magnifies print materials 4 to 25 times in size.

During interviews, librarians indicated that patrons with special needs are encouraged to utilize the library. Services are individualized to meet special requirements. Examples include delivery of materials to shut-in patrons, availability of TDD access, purchasing of audio and large print books, and appropriately modified furniture.

Overall, librarians reported ADA requirements pertaining to infrastructure and facilities were being met by local government.

Administration of the LSTA Alaska State Plan

The administration of LSTA funds in Alaska is conducted primarily through a competitive sub-grant process. The State Library administers LSTA sub-grants through the Interlibrary Cooperation Grant Program (ILC). The ILC grants are funded with state and/or federal funds depending on which is the more appropriate.

The availability of ILC grant funds is announced on February 1 each year on the State Library's website, through the Library Association listserv, in *Newspoke*, the quarterly newsletter of the Alaska Library Association, and in the *Friday Bulletin*, a weekly electronic newsletter written by the State Librarian. Grant application packets with instructions and guidelines are mailed to every public and academic library and every school district in the state.

The application process includes filling out a simple, two-page form requesting a narrative description, budget information, a timeline, and a self-evaluation process. Applications must be signed by the librarian and certified by the local agency administrator. Deadline for submission of applications is April 1. If funding is available mid-year, libraries may submit additional applications.

In May, a review committee composed of State Library professional staff is provided with a copy of each proposal and a detailed table. This table contains the:

- State plan goal or activity addressed by the proposal;
- amount of the grant funds requested;
- amount of matching local funds; and
- total amount of state and federal funds to be awarded.

Proposals are reviewed and evaluated; final selections are made after committee consensus is reached. Unsuccessful applicants receive non-award notification with comments on their proposal. Successful grantees are notified and awards are announced by June 1.

Feedback from librarians on the administration of the LSTA program indicates a high level of satisfaction. Some librarians commented that the State Library staff encouraged them to submit applications for specific projects that had positive impact in their communities.

Overall, the State Library's administration of the LSTA program has been highly successful. Funds were spent appropriately to meet the goals outlined in the Plan. Librarians and patrons are extremely satisfied with the progress made.

Conclusions

The overall review of the LSTA Alaska State Plan found that the Alaska State Library used LSTA funds appropriately and effectively. The findings of this report indicate significant progress was made toward meeting the five goals outlined in the Plan. Substantial progress was made in achieving the goals of Connectivity and Access to Information. New statewide and local partnerships were formed and numerous training opportunities were made available.

During this period LSTA funds increase Connectivity as evidenced by:

- Twenty-six small libraries received sub-grants for computer equipment and/or Internet connections. By providing basic equipment and initial Internet connections, rural Alaskan residents have better access to the telecommunication infrastructure for the delivery of information.
- Libraries in the major urban communities received sub-grants totaling \$248,970 for equipment upgrades, purchase of additional terminals, and/or communication equipment enhancing Internet connections and web-accessible catalogs. Additional equipment and network hardware provides urban residents better access to the telecommunication infrastructure for the delivery of information.
- State general funds used as matching funds for LSTA provided staff to assist libraries and school districts in participating in the E-rate program. E-rate provided up to a ninety percent discount on telecommunication cost for schools and libraries totaling over \$48,000,000. Without this support, many of Alaska's schools and libraries would not have access to the Internet.
- SLED provided information resources to Alaskans in communities that had no other access to the Internet. This service was critical in the development of the web infrastructure in Alaska. During the five-year period, the role of SLED changed from one of Connectivity to one of Information Access.

During this period LSTA funds increase Access to Information as evidenced by:

- LSTA funds in support of the Databases for Alaskans Project increases the availability of information to all Alaskans, both in their homes and through libraries. It also leveraged more state funds.
- SLED provides a user-friendly interface to specialized Alaskan information resources for libraries and patrons.
- A sub-grant providing reference referral and interlibrary loan service is supported by LSTA funds. This highly rated service is critical to small libraries with limited staff and resources.

- LSTA funding for collection development and expansion of Alaska's bibliographic catalog increases the number of information resources available to Alaskans.
- Sub-grants for training in the areas of basic library management, reference, and technology provides librarians and staff with increased skills to better serve their communities. Training efforts supported by LSTA and LSTA matching funds are critical to the delivery of library and information services.

During this period LSTA funded efforts encourage Partnerships as evidenced by:

- Alaskan libraries' long history of cooperation is reflected in the high number of partnerships at state, regional and local levels. LSTA funds are awarded through Interlibrary Cooperation sub-grants. Partnerships such as the Alliance, school/community agreements, multi-agency OPACs, and local fund-raising efforts provide better library service.

During this period LSTA funds provide library service to underserved Alaskan residents as evidenced by:

- The Books-by-Mail program is highly rated by participants receiving the service. However, this service is no longer a pilot program or an innovative project. The State Library should consider funding the program through the operational budget rather than with LSTA Funds.
- Sub-grants providing 800 Number Reference and Interlibrary Loan services and training opportunities not only increase the availability of information but also provide underserved populations with better access to library service.

During this period LSTA funds assist in providing library services to patrons with Special Needs as evidenced by:

- One sub-grant for an Aladdin Reader assisted the Homer Public Library in serving special needs patrons. With the exception of this project, it appears that local libraries provide funding to purchase materials and equipment for special needs patrons.
- Although not funded with LSTA or State matching funds, the Talking Book Center provides an important service to patrons with visual impairments. Librarians, statewide, commented positively on the usefulness of this service.

The State Library's administration of the LSTA program has been highly successful. The sub-grant announcement, application and evaluation process was fair and equitable. All funds were appropriately spent to meet the goals outlined in the Plan.