

Missouri State Library
Evaluation of Library Services and Technology Act
Funding in Missouri
2008–2012

Conducted and Prepared by:
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I. EVALUATION SUMMARY

The mission of the Missouri State Library (MOSL) is to strengthen libraries and library leadership in Missouri communities and to ensure Missourians have equal access to library services. To help MOSL in its mission, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) administers Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant funds to the State Library Administrative Agency (SLAA) within the Office of the Missouri Secretary of State (SOS). The use of these funds is guided by the *Missouri State Library LSTA Program Five-year Plan* (the Plan).

This evaluation of the implementation of the *Five-year Plan for Years 2008–2012* will address how well the activities identified in the Plan are meeting the key output and outcome targets funded by the LSTA grant. These targets relate to the Plan's eight main issues/goals, which also refer to the six priorities of IMLS. As suggested in the *IMLS Guidelines for the Five-year Evaluation Plan*, these main evaluation questions will be addressed:

1. Did the activities undertaken under the Plan achieve results related to the IMLS priorities?
2. To what extent did the Plan programs and services benefit targeted individuals and groups?
3. Were modifications made to the Plan?
4. How have performance metrics been used to guide policy and managerial decisions affecting the Plan's programs and services?
5. What have been important challenges to using outcomes-based data to guide policy and managerial decisions during Plan implementation?
6. How will lessons learned about improving the use of outcome-based data inform Missouri's next five-year plan?

METHODOLOGY

IMLS Guidelines suggest three areas to consider in the evaluation; the evaluators at the Assessment Resource Center (ARC) designed their evaluation to match these areas.

The Retrospective Evaluation addressed nine current program areas to determine if LSTA-funded activities achieved the results outlined in the Plan. Data sources were provided by MOSL with supplementary information retrieved from the SOS website. Data included results from the *Annual Statistical Report (ASR)*; other surveys and program evaluations; program financial reports; usage reports for library services; grant funding records; and participation records for continuing education (CE) and library programming. Additionally, MOSL and ARC collaborated on two online surveys, administered and analyzed by ARC. The *Continuing Education Survey* was developed to gauge the effectiveness of CE for Missouri library staff. The *Missouri Library Staff Survey* was developed to help identify barriers to participation in CE opportunities, to assess the use of electronic databases among library staff, and to evaluate the LSTA sub-grant process.

The Process Evaluation examined the fidelity of implementation of the current 2008–2012 Plan. Two methods were used to evaluate these processes. The minutes from the Secretary's Council on Library Development meetings were analyzed and secondly, four key stakeholders were interviewed and their discussions analyzed for recurring themes.

The Prospective Assessment focused on the State Library's processes to design the next five-year plan. ARC staff interviewed three key MOSL staff to discuss their processes and use of the retrospective and process evaluation reports, the results from the *Missouri Library Staff Survey*, and other MOSL data.

KEY FINDINGS

Retrospective Evaluation - The first main area of the LSTA evaluation focuses on current activities funded with LSTA grant funds.

LSTA PRIORITY 1: EXPANDING SERVICES FOR LEARNING - Three MOSL goals were assessed, Goals 5, 6, and 8. Key performance targets were to increase library programming and usage and to expand statewide services.

Goal 5: Services have been expanded for library users through LSTA grant opportunities. Library usage has improved, as shown by increased library visits, circulation of materials, and public access computer use; however, average reference transactions have decreased. LSTA-funded training for library staff has increased staff understanding of library practices and procedures. Training delivery methods using alternative technologies have increased.

Library staff have received the necessary guidance to implement successful programming for youth, as shown by positive Summer Reading Program evaluations and increased Summer Reading participation by children, although not by teens. And conversely, teen programming has increased but programming for children has not.

Goal 6: Childhood education has been supported through MOSL's provision of a curriculum support database. Additionally, over 1000 library staff have been trained to implement better programs for teens and to use teen input for program planning; however, the increase in collaborative activities between schools and public libraries remained small.

Goal 8: Expansion of library services to areas with no public library service was not achieved as evidenced by minimal change in the number of Missourians who reside in a tax-supported library district and by having *no* new county-wide library districts established, although MOSL staff have provided information and advice to groups working to form library districts.

LSTA PRIORITY 2: DEVELOPING A STRONG TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE - Three MOSL goals were assessed, Goals 1, 2, and 4. Key performance targets were for the REAL Program to provide public libraries with affordable and sufficient services; to increase database availability, ease of use, and subsequent usage; and to expand Missouri's cultural heritage digitization infrastructure.

Goal 1: A strong technology infrastructure has been supported through adequate support of the REAL Program's cost demands and through the REAL Program's availability of services which provide public libraries with affordable, reliable, and sufficient bandwidth. Additionally, library network operations have improved and libraries with self-service portals have increased. Many library websites have improved and library staff have received support through training in website development. Libraries have also seen an increase in the use of the public library videoconference network. A strong technology infrastructure could be further supported through adding or upgrading wireless access points.

Goal 2: Access to and use of electronic content has been facilitated by training staff members from libraries with low database usage on effective searching. Many staff have been trained to use databases and report higher comfort using databases following training. Overall, there was a decrease in usage of electronic database resources by libraries with low usage; however, one-third of these libraries saw a 100% increase in use. Access to and use of electronic content did not improve as evidenced by a decrease in the overall usage of electronic databases. A change in provider may have influenced this decline.

Goal 4: Cultural heritage preservation via digitization has been supported through the transfer of previous digitization projects in Missouri to the statewide database and through ensuring the metadata and imaging quality of all digital collections hosted on the statewide database. Additionally, there has been a large increase

in the number of digital collections in statewide digitization efforts and the number of institutions participating in statewide digitization efforts.

LSTA PRIORITY 3: PROVIDING ACCESS TO MATERIALS - One MOSL goal was assessed. Key performance targets were to increase transactions via interlibrary loan (ILL) and the statewide courier service, and increase updates to electronic cataloging.

Goal 3: Access to library materials improved as evidenced by some libraries showing large increases in ILL transactions; by increases in enrollment for the statewide courier service; and by reports of increased ILL transactions, decreased ILL shipping costs, and decreased ILL request response times. Access to library materials has slightly improved as evidenced by a small increase in patron-initiated borrowing using ILL, a small increase in materials transferred through the courier service, and a small increase in the number of OCLC holdings set. Further access to library services could be assisted by elimination of ILL fees in all libraries, automating electronic cataloging in all libraries, and supporting library staff to utilize electronic cataloging.

LSTA PRIORITY 4: DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS - One MOSL goal was assessed. Key performance targets were increases in collaborative efforts and cooperative grant activities.

Goal 7: Cooperation to improve services has been supported by increases in grant overview training offered to and attended by library staff. Additionally, LSTA grant funding for pilot and template programs has generally increased; however, there was a decrease in Cooperation grants funded and only a small increase in grants funding collaborative projects.

LSTA PRIORITY 5: SUPPORTING AN EDUCATED AND INFORMED CITIZENRY - Two MOSL goals were assessed with an emphasis on populations with special needs. Key performance targets were an increase in services provided by Wolfner Talking Book and Braille Library to Missourians with print disabilities, an increase in literacy programs, and an increase in targeted population grants.

Goal 5: Program services for people with difficulty using the library were strengthened as evidenced by an increase in circulation of materials and active deposit locations provided by Wolfner Library. Wolfner Library further strengthened its services by successfully transitioning from analog to digital media, while maintaining high satisfaction ratings from patrons. In addition to services provided by Wolfner, MOSL strengthened its literacy services by training library staff in the Every Child Ready to Read @ your library® (ECRR) program and by increasing literacy-focused programming and grant funding for literacy-related projects. There was also a small increase in the number of grants awarded for programs for targeted populations. Program services could be further strengthened by increased ESL course offerings.

Goal 6: Childhood education has been supported by Wolfner Library through expansion of reading and homework support services for Missouri's school-aged children with print disabilities, as evidenced by increases in the number of school-aged readers receiving materials, the number of school and other educational facilities with active deposit collections, and the number of youth resources in circulation.

LSTA PRIORITY 6: SERVING THE UNDERSERVED - One MOSL goal was addressed. Key performance targets were library site visits and involvement of previously non-participating libraries.

Goal 5: Program services for all were expanded as evidenced by an increase in the number of previously non-participating public libraries with staff attending training, and an increase in the number of previously non-participating libraries applying for training grants. There was also an increase in site visits for grant monitoring and library service development.

Process Evaluation - The second main area of the LSTA evaluation focuses on the key decision-making processes at work in implementing the activities in the current plan and the important challenges to using *outcome-based data* to guide policy and managerial decisions over the five years of the plan.

MOSL requested one modification to the SLAA plan. The amendment allows MOSL to expand the scope of continuing education content in order to incorporate library administration and library management training opportunities.

Through analyzing Council minutes and hearing stakeholder views, ARC determined that performance metrics were used when making many managerial decisions. The 2008 to 2011 Council minutes showed 38 discussions concerning adjustments to the Plan and that data entered the discussion and was used to help make each decision and action plan.

During interviews with four MOSL stakeholders, examples of the use of performance metrics to inform decisions were discussed. These four decisions are:

1. Using information from past grant projects, MOSL recommended a three-year maximum on funding for future grant projects.
2. Considering the economic constraints on public libraries, MOSL did not implement a statewide program to purchase electronic resources through a shared-cost pool.
3. By grouping libraries according to their level of ILL activity, size of collection, and the area served and determining the positive impact a courier service could provide, MOSL funded a courier service for every tax-supported public library in Missouri.
4. Considering the cost to MOSL for graduates unable to find a job or who default on their loans, and also job availability for participants, MOSL decided to discontinue scholarship grants for librarians and media specialists.

MOSL staff discussed several challenges encountered in using outcome-based data to guide policy and managerial decisions regarding the current LSTA plan.

1. Availability of current data is a challenge.
2. Time availability for data collection is a challenge, especially for small libraries.
3. Staff have limited time and tools for data analysis.
4. Staff training is a challenge. Providing education on outcome-based evaluation (OBE) would encourage more consistency and better data collection procedures.
5. Interpretation of data is difficult when comparing small and large libraries.
6. Staff turnover is a challenge and leads to inconsistencies in data collection, leading to difficulty when looking at trends over time.

Stakeholders identified policies/decisions for which they believed OBE did not lead to a decision that they preferred but that was best for MOSL, usually when considering data showing areas of financial concern. Stakeholders were asked to identify policies/decisions for which they had no outcomes to help inform their decision. Their examples actually used performance metrics from similar situations.

Stakeholders were asked if there was data that would help with decision making, but that is not currently available. MOSL staff discussed four areas in which more data would help with decisions.

1. Tracking the use of digitized collections and their effect on people's lives.
2. Receiving OBE information from libraries on the use of *Show Me the World* components.
3. Tracking the use of technology tools.
4. Tracking staff training levels.

It was obvious to the ARC evaluation team that MOSL stakeholders are conscientious in their use of data to make decisions. From the retrospective evaluation, it was also clear that more outcomes-based data could be collected. MOSL staff are addressing how to improve in this area.

Prospective Assessment - The third main area of the LSTA evaluation focuses on the decision-making processes at work in determining the key goals for the next five-year plan. Interviews were conducted with three stakeholders to determine their processes for defining targets for the next plan and their thoughts on data collection to evaluate their successes. They stated that standardizing data collection will be one of their goals and staff training in OBE is another. They have been actively involved in the evaluation process for the current LSTA Five-year Plan and discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the current plan in both setting targets and collecting data. ARC is confident that they will use this information to guide their development of the next plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

LSTA Priority 1 - Library users in Missouri benefit from LSTA grant funding through library staff and partner training; however, efforts should be made to translate this training into increased programming. Programming for children and teens should be a priority. Efforts should be made to form teen advisory groups and to increase participation in the Summer Reading Programs. Continue to support the formation of new county-wide library districts in counties with only municipal libraries.

LSTA Priority 2 - Satisfaction with the services provided by the REAL program support continuation of these services. It is recommended that support continue for the creation of *new* websites and wireless access points and that funding continue for statewide online resources.

LSTA Priority 3 - Due to shipping costs associated with interlibrary loan (ILL), it is recommended that MOSL continue to support the Statewide Courier Service. ILL fees should be eliminated at all libraries. Further support to library staff should be provided to increase electronic cataloging.

LSTA Priority 4 - Collaborations between schools and public libraries should be encouraged. Support for grants involving collaborative projects should continue to be a priority in grant funding.

LSTA Priority 5 - With the successful transition from analog to digital formats, it is important that Wolfner Library continue to provide access to digital technology and provide support necessary to take advantage of the technology. Encourage libraries to add ESL courses in their programming.

LSTA Priority 6 - Libraries without staff participation in training opportunities should actively encourage staff to take advantage of training opportunities and non-participating libraries should be encouraged to apply for grants.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation of MOSL and its implementation of the Plan showed that MOSL is a strong and vital resource for Missouri's citizens. MOSL encourages communication with library staff throughout the state. Throughout the highest levels of MOSL, qualitative assessment is continually in progress toward meeting plan goals. For any organization, there are always areas that can be improved. As part of this improvement process, MOSL strives to find innovative ways to tie staff training to local program development and implementation; encourages use of technology to strengthen services; and continues to search for ways to improve library services in underserved areas.