

**State Library of Ohio
LSTA Five Year Plan
2008-2012**

Evaluation Summary

**Evaluation conducted by
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Introduction

Ohio's population of about 11.5 million (2010 Census) makes it the 7th most populous state in the Union, while it is 37th in land mass. With seven metropolitan areas of 500,000+ and suburbs boosting them to 1 million residents, Ohio is a very urban state which ranges from flourishing communities to the recovering rust belt. Ohio's economic success is still heavily defined by its geographic location. Because Ohio links the Northeast and Midwest with its vast highway system and waterways, it is within one day's drive of 70% of North America's manufacturing capacity and 50% of North America's population. Although numerous rural areas are quickly becoming bedroom communities, many vibrant small towns remain linked to their fertile farmlands and agrarian heritage. Because of Ohio's early and robust economic atmosphere, an emphasis of philanthropy and education evolved across the State.

Ohio's belief in education has produced a state that is home to some of the nation's highest ranked libraries. In the 2010 *Library Journal Rankings of Libraries*, Ohio had 36 libraries considered best in the nation. Of these, 15 were 5 star libraries, which are considered the top performers in the nation. With 118 academic libraries, over 3,500 school libraries, over 400 special libraries and 251 independent public libraries, Ohio has tried to ensure access for all of its residents. Since 2008, State funding for public libraries has decreased by nearly 23% (Ohio Library Council 2010). Though the funding cuts have been difficult, 67% of Ohio's Public Libraries now have local operating levies. Such voter acceptance of this added household expense is another measure of Ohio's deep dedication and belief in access to education and information for all residents. For academics, (post secondary and school libraries), the decrease in funding has caused falling budgets and fewer staff. In public schools alone, there has been a 25% decrease in qualified librarians, while only a 3% increase in library aides. (INFOhio 2011) This calls to the need for funds to be spent in support of programs which bolster academic libraries and library cooperatives which offer both on-site and off-site access to print and digital materials. The State Library has utilized its annual distribution of approximately 5.72 million dollars of LSTA funds across a broad spectrum of programs and services that yield the greatest positive impact on all residents of Ohio.

Intended Use of the Study

The Institute for Museum and Library Services requires states receiving Library Services and Technology Act funding to conduct an evaluation of LSTA fund use, as dictated by IMLS priorities and the subsequent goals, activities and targets developed by the State Library. This review verifies the alignment of State Goals to the IMLS Priorities and evaluates to what degree the State Library has accomplished its Five Year Plan. If there are gaps in meeting the goals, an investigation into why they were not met is conducted and a final evaluation of the gap is made. This is for the use of the State Library of Ohio Board, State Library of Ohio staff and IMLS in determining the successes of the current program and the possible direction for the future.

Summary of Evaluation Questions Asked and Research Conducted

To what degree did Ohio goals and activities align with the federal purposes? What were the key findings?

The State Library of Ohio's goals and activities were found to be in alignment with all the federal purposes. Of the activities which were amended, these amendments were related to changes made to the federal priorities or due to the SLO's reassessment and changes to activities for the betterment of the program. Some changes were made due to a lack of constituent Library interest in grants within a particular SLO goal or because of shifts in the economy since 2008. All changes were within the federal purposes.

Within the IMLS Congressional priorities existing at the time the last plan was enacted, all priorities were addressed by the SLO. The majority of activities have been completed, often surpassing their projected outcomes. The SLO did a responsible and effective job of responding to the IMLS priorities and working towards their goal's completion.

To what degree did the overall goals and activities expressed in the Ohio plan get accomplished?

The goals and activities of the SLO were successfully accomplished or were in process during the evaluation period. The SLO has shown excellent stewardship of the funds and has done an admirable job of identifying areas needing reassessment due to changes in Federal focus or lack of interest on the part of libraries, and using the money in ways which served their constituents well.

What impact did the various Ohio LSTA programs have on constituents, including end-users?

The use of the funds has been far reaching and has become deeply engrained in the lives of Ohioans. Though we are unable to quantify the fact that they have touched every Ohioan, it is fair to say that their activities do so, either directly or indirectly. Through the school and public library automation projects, their focus on digitization, online resources and reference service 24 hours a day, they are very present in customer's lives. The surveys confirmed that librarians and educators eagerly use the projects of the State Library of Ohio and would be unable to fund these projects if they were asked to do so. With the reductions in operating funds at the local level since 2008, LSTA programs have become highly relied upon by educators and public library users.

What were the challenges and successes related to the use of OBE (Outcome Based Evaluation)?

We reviewed and identified the use of benchmarks, metrics, and other evaluation methodologies in the development of LSTA programs and considered what methodologies should be employed within the next five year plan. The SLO has been very consistent in encouraging the use of OBE when it is applicable. Libraries are using OBE more readily but, due to budget constraints (lack of time, expertise and staff), they have often been unable to use OBE as a means to justify a particular library service or show the benefits libraries provide to their

communities. It is also true that certain types of projects are not easily assessed using OBE. We recommend that the SLO continue asking for OBE where appropriate, continue educating library leaders on the process of OBE, and assess the evaluation methodologies of each project independently. They have done an excellent job of measurement review and validation. In many cases, the end result of a project has exceeded expectations.

How have LSTA funds been used internally by the State Library of Ohio to advance the priorities and goals of LSTA and have they remained in compliance with the allowable funds for project management?

The SLO has been diligent in holding to the allowed 4% administrative allotment and has used the SLAA grants for projects which further and ensure the Priorities of LSTA. We found that the SLO has used the funds to manage projects and lay/maintain a solid foundation for existing projects and for anticipated projects in the next five years.

What has been the impact that statewide programs and projects have had on the end users and the rationale for their continuation or reduction/elimination in future LSTA five year plans?

Survey and interview results indicated that the impact of the SLO's use of funding has been highly beneficial to all libraries and their customers in the state. In reviewing the statistical outputs, our surveys, and project surveys by the recipients (where available), we found that projects were growing in use, were well administered, were highly valued and could not be funded on a local level. We have recommended the continuation of all current projects with possible enhancements, but that the SLO should challenge the projects to look at their current models of operation, as this has not been done for some time. This will ensure continued effectiveness and connection to their constituents.

An assessment of the competitive grant process and its relevancy for future LSTA five year plans.

The competitive grant process was evaluated through the *Competitive Grant Survey* and by doing an overview of the internal process. The survey included questions about the components of the grant process; the reasons organization requested grants and the value of the projects they conducted. Additionally, recipients were asked for suggestions on topics, such as on how to improve the grant process, suggested future project types, and grant related support or assistance needs. 78 of 103 grant recipients completed the survey. We found that the recipients expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the process. In looking at the cycles and the application process, we found it to be well designed and the reviewers to be well chosen. The staff of the SLO has, from time to time, changed the process and the demands upon grant applicants, to improve it. It is our opinion that the process is sound and that the SLO has produced, through a balanced mix of competitive and statewide projects, a highly successful program.

Recommendations

Based on interviews with staff at the State Library of Ohio, grant recipients, stakeholders and the surveys conducted by this firm; we have identified the following areas for consideration in the next Five Year Plan:

- 1. Attempt to keep the funding at the current ratio of statewide projects vs. competitive grants.** Leaders of statewide projects and the majority of survey participants see the need for statewide projects and funds for research and development. This allows libraries to explore better ways to use technology, provide digital media and serve those who are disadvantaged/disabled.
- 2. Continue with reading readiness programs.** They successfully and readily provide measurable participant benefit and improvement.
- 3. Continue with its current statewide projects.** SLO should continue asking all parties to review their fiscal policy and RFP (where applicable) on a regular schedule, compile statistical/user satisfaction analyses annually and to challenge their current models of operation.
- 4. Expand resource sharing and material delivery between schools, public and academic libraries.** There was an expressed need on the part of school libraries to be a part of the statewide delivery system. As school library funding reduces, as the number of college commuter students increase, and the overall funding of library services decreases, we recommend there be a planning process to develop a delivery co-op between all types of libraries and funding allocated for its support in the early stages.
- 5. Significantly increase the marketing of KnowItKnow, LCO and OLBDP services to students, teachers and public/academic library support staff.** Due to the loss of school librarians, there is a need for a stop gap for school staff and students for research assistance. It is recommended that the SLO work with existing statewide services to develop a marketing plan and related materials, in order to increase utilization of the services. The *Statewide Resource Sharing Survey* indicated a gap in knowledge which should be filled in school, public and academic libraries.
- 6. There is a need for instruction at the secondary level on research methodology.** The SLO, INFOhio and OhioLINK should develop a plan to advance research readiness and awareness of information resources for youth and adult students as they move from primary grades through college. Activities should include a cooperative and inclusive approach between all types of libraries. This was a need expressed by OhioLINK.
- 7. Develop Regional Digitization Sites.** It is recommended that the SLO consider funding the start-up costs of regional digitization sites capable of digitizing the most common sizes of documents and producing 3-D images of objects. Existing digitization sites could be augmented to become regional sites, for possible cost savings. Sites could be accessed by all types of libraries and institutions. Minimal fees could be charged to pay for future upgrades.

8. Consider creating a digitization knowledge base to inform libraries of current practices, archiving considerations, platform migration issues, etc. Many projects exist within the state and more will follow. A clearinghouse of project files, including best practices, should be created.

9. Continue to encourage libraries to join consortia and work on linkages to collections to promote sharing. Offer grants to defray the cost of joining established consortia.

10. OBE benchmarks, metrics, and other evaluation methodologies: The SLO should continue to stress OBE where appropriate. It is important to continue stressing OBE as a process, but if not realistically applicable, the SLO should continue to attempt to ensure that the outputs and results of a project are reasonable and be a cost/service productive effort.

11. Provide funding for apps to be developed for both KIN and LCO to encourage use from newer electronic devices. In addition to apps, LCO voiced a need for the parsing of data by audience type, particularly in academic libraries.

12. Encourage grants for ESL populations. Ohio has experienced significant growth in Spanish speaking and Somali residents in the past ten years and grants should be offered to encourage library connection to these populations.