

Central Library Subcommittee/STLS Plan of Service Committee
Dormann Library, Bath
July 10, 2006 – Brief Notes

Present: Cindy Dutton, Cuba; Lynn Overgaard, Penn Yan; Barbara Radigan, Pulteney; Owen Frank, Jim Sleeth, Steele Memorial Library; Ristiina Wigg, STLS

The committee reviewed notes of the previous meeting.

Cindy Dutton discussed the important of materials that serve libraries system wide, including e-books, online databases, and phasing in a reduction of funding spent on reference.

Cost/Benefit of online databases. Owen Frank discussed evaluation of electronic materials; author Dick Boss has suggested a cost/benefit value of .75 per screen view (screen view includes the number of records viewed). Over what length of time should database use be evaluated? 12 – 24 months? To encourage use, CCLD would provide workshops on how to incorporate the databases into daily services.

Owen reported on his research into the costs of several auto repair information databases, reader's advisory – Novelist and "What do I read next", genealogy – HeritageQuest, and business information – Reference USA. The committee would be asked to try out the auto repair databases in particular to be sure they include the information patrons want, e.g. wiring diagrams.

Because the Gale Company will not sell database subscriptions based on simultaneous users, costs for their databases will be higher. Committee members discussed how to evaluate the cost. Before throwing out a data base subscription because of expense of user, would like to know how much use hardcover reference titles receive. Owen estimated a cost of \$1 - \$2.50 per use for reference titles used in Chemung County only. The cost would be pro-rated over the life of the item. Approximately 25 – 30% of the titles are replaced every year. One-half of reference questions are answered through print reference.

Print reference collections. There was discussion of print reference collections with agreement that for example the Encyclopedia of Association, formerly a standard title, was not needed in print anymore; libraries don't use Books in Print anymore. The print Chilton's repair manuals now come in a separate volume for each make of car and truck. The package is too expensive for Cuba. The Cuba and Penn Yan libraries have shrunk their paper reference collections. Owen made the case that print reference can be thought of as an insurance policy, especially titles on obscure topics. Example – the titles parapsychology that a patron comes from Watkins Glen to read. Should Central Library funds be used to pay for materials which can only be read in the library? Lynn Overgaard stated that we may not be able to afford the trade off between something used occasionally vs. something that could be used by everybody every day. Reference items

used occasionally should be purchased by Steele with local funds, not with CBA (Central Book Aid) funds.

What is Central Book Aid funding for?

- A. To purchase the most cost-effective reference material available, for databases available to all
- A. Each library could buy its own print reference

Member library and patron use of Central Library. The committee said that the Central library is not really central and the location affects patron use. Because of distances, a lot of patrons would not come to use it no matter how good it is. On-line databases could be used remotely. Barb Radigan said that she hardly ever uses the E-desk. Penn Yan has a local subscription to Novelist and uses HeritageQuest and RefUSA through the Central library.

Choosing and funding databases. Lynn Overgaard recommended guaranteeing that databases would be available for at least two years. Otherwise library staff members won't feel it is worth their time to learn how to use them.

Jim Sleeth asked what are the top three database choices.

- A: Novelist – in Penn Yan has open links in Novelist to the Penn Yan catalog
 - Car repair
 - HeritageQuest
- Prices for the three or equivalents varied from about \$56,000 total to about \$20,000.

Jim asked if there is a bias against counting use by central library customers. Are they an important audience to serve? Lynn Overgaard said, "No bias. If it were possible to measure use by staff vs. users, would have an idea if users were capable and interested in using the databases independently, e.g. Reference USA." Owen estimated that Reference USA is mainly used in the library.

Criteria for choosing databases:

- Maximize use
- Staff and patrons would both use

Q. Does currently available Literature Resource Center database duplicate what would be available in Novelist?

A. No, it doesn't answer the kind of questions patrons ask about series books, or what to read next.

A. Cuba gets little in house use by, or questions from, students who used to use the print materials included in Literature Resource – it is believed they are using those resources at school now. Now its pleasure readers – mainly adult – who want more info on books/authors.

Promotion of online databases. Cindy Dutton would inform garages that a car repair database was available.

How about downloadable audio books? There was general enthusiasm. Owen didn't think users would be ready this year.

Committee recommendations for the Central Library Plan of Service 2007 -2011:

- within two years or so, explore options for downloadable books and implement

- focus central library training on

- electronic products

- reference training for members, in particular new staff including training in using the Virtual Reference Desk; and genealogy

- subscribe to specific online databases, guaranteed for two years, purchased with a minimum number of simultaneous users if possible

Currently recommended are:

- Novelist

- car repair

- HeritageQuest (third)

- continue to purchase the excellent circulating print non-fiction titles that are often unique to the region. (Not enough demand for a local library to purchase.) Purchase high-demand non-fiction with local funds.

- gradually, over the life of the plan (2007 -2011) move increasing percentage of funds spent on print materials to electronic materials available system wide

- provide last-resource reference service

- phase out use of Central Library Development Aid to fund Sunday hours.

- (Not useful for remote counties like Allegany, Yates) Look at the best use of the funds for the whole region. Minority opinion – would like to see money continue to be used for the benefit of Chemung County residents

General comments: These recommendations will move Central Library services into the Internet world. Publicize Central Library services regularly. Some small libraries didn't know they were using central library services. Example – publicize workshops at a central library service.

Ongoing Central Library Advisory Committee. Hold meetings once a year to review progress and advise on upcoming year. Schedule the annual meetings for before work begins on the next year's Central library budget.