

COOPERATION AND RURAL LIBRARIES

Jackie Schmitt
Head, Reference Department
Parkersburg and Wood County Public Library
Parkersburg, West Virginia

Introduction

The term "cooperation" as used in the field of librarianship is diverse both in meaning and in connotation. While it would certainly be difficult to quantify and analyze the subjective "cooperative mindset" that appears to be present in many persons working in the field, it is possible to study what types of library services have been added in libraries as a result of cooperative activities and how library personnel respond to specific questions about these activities.

In reviewing the professional literature that explores library cooperation, this author could find no evidence of an attempt to conduct a nationwide survey that asked librarians the types of services or resources that are added or enhanced as a result of cooperative activities and how satisfied librarians are with their libraries' participation in cooperative activities. Therefore, this author chose to conduct a library survey of this type. In order to limit the scope of the research, the survey was sent specifically to rural public library directors who are administrators of libraries participating in at least one cooperative group that is not multi-state. This group could be called a "system," a "network," a "consortia," or any other name as long as it is a cooperative group that is not multi-state. This author uses the term "rural public library" to designate a public library that is in a population center of 25,000 or fewer persons; this is the working definition of "rural" that is used by the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship at Clarion University of Pennsylvania.¹ The methodology and results of this survey, along with summarization and conclusions, constitute the latter part of this paper. In addition, this author felt that it would be helpful to also present an introductory overview of the professional literature dealing with library cooperation (and particularly that literature which specifically discusses, or is relevant to, the rural public library)

before presenting the survey data. By doing this it is hoped that some of the opinions and research of persons published in the area of library cooperation can be compared with ease to the data collected by this author.

Overview of the Professional Literature

The professional literature of library cooperation that this author consulted was fraught with recurring themes. One of these themes—a "fact versus fantasy" concern—seems very prevalent in library cooperation literature. A comparatively early illustration of this concern appeared in the professional literature in 1965. Ralph R. Shaw, a professor of library service at the University of Hawaii, presented a paper entitled "The Form and the Substance" at the 1964 Michigan Library Association conference. In this paper (which is reprinted in the February 1, 1965 issue of Library Journal) he uses the idea of library cooperation as one example of the library profession's tendency to assume that certain activities are "automatically okay" without anyone doing scientific research or reviewing research already completed. He explains how a doctoral candidate's research of three types of cooperative storage—an activity deemed "okay" by the library profession—could not find any facts to prove the existence of the supposed advantages of cooperative storage that the library profession had already agreed had existed.² In addition, Shaw writes the following about the formation of "larger library units" through interlibrary cooperation:

Similarly, we have in process a great wave of development of larger library units through interlibrary cooperation...Do we have any objective evidence that this is the only or the best way to achieve...our...objectives? Obviously not. But this will not stop the flood. The magic word "cooperation" serves to blank out our intellectual circuits and...leaves fact helpless against the okay word.³

This "fact versus fantasy" concern also exists among more contemporary persons in the field. Patricia Glass Schuman, President of Neal-Schuman Publishers, feels that librarians hold the following three "myths" about library networks: 1. Networks save libraries money; 2. Networks overcome the "bureaucratic structure" of libraries, and; 3. Networks overcome "barriers" among libraries.⁴ Schuman states that "...there is no evidence of overall cost savings because of networks..." and, although she believes that increasing costs

may be eliminating some of the savings, she also states that "...basically, however, most libraries joined networks with some naive assumptions about cost accounting and technology."⁵ Schuman also explains that participation in a network usually creates an additional responsibility for the library staff and administrators to train both staff and patrons in the uses of the new and different types of resources newly available to the library. Schuman refers to the research of Sara Fine, a psychologist and professor at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Library and Information Science, who found that library staff must accept a cooperative system before library patrons will and that a positive attitude about the system, thorough training of library staff, and open communication among administrators and staff about changes that are occurring can help to insure the success of the cooperative system.⁶ Schuman's third myth--the belief that networks can help to overcome "barriers" among libraries--is mentioned numerous times in the library cooperation literature. Schuman speaks of "ownership to access" attitudes and praises networks for tearing down some of the resource "ownership" attitude barriers and changing them into attitudes of "availability." However, she warns that the charging of fees, feelings of prestige, postage charges, and fragmentations among types of libraries and librarians continue to act as barriers that impede access. In addition, Schuman maintains that libraries must not be making much progress in getting resources to needy patrons because interlibrary loan circulation statistics constitute less than 2% of all library circulations.⁷

There may be no other person in the field quite as aggressive in expressing his views on library cooperation as is Thomas H. Ballard, former director of the Plainfield (New Jersey) Public Library. Ballard is the author of the 1986 American Library Association publication The Failure of Resource Sharing in Public Libraries and Alternative Strategies for Service (reviewed and critiqued by F. Schlipf on pages 454-56 of the October 1987 issue of Library Quarterly), the University of Illinois' March 1987 Occasional Paper entitled "Knowin' All Them Things That Ain't So: Managing Today's Public Library," and a host of journal articles (see the Selected Bibliography for publication information for these works). Ballard quotes statistics in an attempt to support the argument (shared with Schuman) that networking is an unappreciated,

expensive means of resource sharing that generally goes unused by library patrons; he does, however, state that rural library patrons seem to benefit slightly more from resource sharing than non-rural library patrons do. Schuman states, "What we [librarians] seem to do best is to convince library users to wait [for materials]"⁸; Ballard echoes this in his Library Journal article "Public Library Networking: Neat, Plausible, Wrong" when he declares:

Resource sharing is a return to closed stacks with the added disadvantage of less certainty of delivery and a longer period to wait. Our patrons have historically disliked this arrangement and they are now used to better. It's scarcely surprising, therefore, that they make little use of the opportunities offered by networking.⁹

Thus, both Schuman and Ballard heavily emphasize the ratio of interlibrary loan circulation to total library circulation as evidence of the failure of resource sharing as a cooperative library activity. Not unlike Shaw's reference to cooperation as a "magic word" that is automatically "okay" in the eyes of the library profession,¹⁰ Ballard sees cooperation as having "...an unthinking place in the library literature"¹¹ and concludes his American Libraries article with a challenge to the library profession to consider solutions to the problem of enhancing library services that are distinct from resource sharing.¹² His alternatives to resource sharing are the topic of his subsequent 1986 book. Like Schuman, Ballard is not totally anti-resource sharing and anti-networking. However, he feels that networking has taken up an inordinate amount of librarians' planning efforts and resources. He feels that public libraries need to borrow materials from other libraries occasionally but that networking costs are not appropriate to the size of the need. Ballard also has definitive views of multitype library cooperation, a topic also under intense discussion in the library cooperation literature. He feels that there is little value in putting forth effort to make resource-sharing cooperatives multitype because his statistics, which primarily come from Illinois interlibrary loan/circulation statistics, indicate that a very tiny percentage of interlibrary loan requests are filled by libraries other than public libraries or Reference and Research Centers.¹³ Also, Ballard makes the statement that "...librarians must be paid to cooperate!", inferring that only monetary gain makes cooperative activities valuable enough for libraries to want to participate.¹⁴ Ballard also insists that resource sharing

is such a marginal activity in the eyes of participating libraries that it is the first activity to be reduced or eliminated at signs of financial distress.¹⁵ One proponent of multitype library cooperation is Forrest F. Carhart, Jr., who states in his 1983 UNESCO Journal... article that:

...Consortia can benefit all library users only if they have as members all types of libraries...In an age when the producer of materials can transmit them to home, office or school, the library with a narrow focus is obsolete...¹⁶

In addition, Carhart's views oppose Ballard's claim that the existence of the "cooperative state of mind" and the desire to fill "the gaps of access to information between...the information rich and the information poor" cannot be considered as "hard" evidence to support networking.¹⁷ On the contrary, Carhart states, "When actions by librarians spring from a truly co-operative state of mind, the potential for service is enormous."¹⁸

There is no doubt that these recurring discussions in the library cooperation literature are relevant to rural library cooperation, and some authors do mention in passing the particular problems and concerns of the rural library and its attempts to cooperate. Schuman offers an important consideration of rural library cooperation--the attempt to provide timely and accurate resource materials that are comparable to those in larger libraries--when she relates the following anecdote:

A cousin of mine who lives in a suburban Bay Area community, an alumni of the University of California, Berkeley, just paid several hundred dollars to obtain the privilege to use the university library for his 16-year old son. "I don't understand it," he said. "Our local public library is small--it has very few research materials. When I was a kid, I could find almost anything at the public library." When he was a kid, his local library was the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. Startled, I began to explain the difference between libraries, but then I quickly stopped. Can we really expect library users to differentiate? Can we blame their ignorance when they don't? Or is the problem endemic to the way libraries operate?¹⁹

What are the problems that prevent rural libraries from providing the same depth and types of information as larger public libraries? According to John Head, few professionally trained staff members and inadequate budgets prevent rural libraries from stepping into "the information age." Head has determined through his research that very few rural libraries participate in online database

searching, online interlibrary loan and cataloging, or use of computers within the library. Head also gives the opinion that cooperatives and state library agencies are helpful in overcoming some of these problems, yet these institutions' own budget and staff limitations make them inadequate to the size of the task. Head also suggests that more research be done to determine the effectiveness of cooperatives and state library agencies in enhancing or adding to rural library services.²⁰ Head echoes Bernard Vavrek's belief that rural libraries must consolidate in order to keep up with the stiff competition from fee-based suppliers of information who are providing timely information to persons who need it and are able to pay for it. If this challenge is not met, Vavrek and Head feel that rural libraries could ultimately lose the support of their constituencies and become more like "children's libraries" or "reading rooms" than sources of vital information to communities generally needy of non-fee-based information services.²¹ Head also observes that isolation is another major problem for rural libraries because supporting reference materials and professional contacts are frequently many miles away. Vavrek also expresses this concern in the following statement from his Bowker Annual article:

Library cooperation in the form of networks, at whatever level, offers crucial opportunities for the geographically remote library to compete. Without networking, there is little hope that the typical small public library can offer much in the way of timely and accurate reference information...²²

There is a great amount of professional literature that discusses the theoretical pros and cons of library cooperation in all types of libraries, yet there seems to be little attempt to collect large-scale statistical data to support different views of library cooperation. What types of information should be solicited when evaluating library cooperation? For example, William Amundson and Milton Mitchell indicate that the public library systems in the state of Wisconsin have had much positive impact on the quality of public library service, and they feel that future evaluations of the systems will be based on both the services the systems offer and the ways that systems staffs, member libraries, and trustees work together to identify and meet patron needs.²³ Because there are few statistical surveys of this type published in the professional literature, it may also be helpful when doing this type of research

to ask study participants if they have ever been asked in the past about the value/effectiveness of their cooperative memberships.

Illinois public libraries were the front-runners in planning, developing, and implementing public library systems and multitype library cooperatives. Thus it is not surprising that it is in the Illinois Statistical Report, no. 17 (1985) that there is found a report of an evaluation of materials and services offered by the Illinois library systems. In 1983, twenty years after the eighteen library systems were formed in Illinois to provide increased library services, the ILA/PLA Statistics Analysis Committee recommended doing an evaluation of materials and services offered by the systems. This study is the first in Illinois to survey member public libraries; selected system services were evaluated previously in surveys of member academic, special, and school libraries. The study encompassed seventeen of the eighteen cooperative library systems in Illinois (in which all of the public libraries have their own policies and governing boards); the Chicago Public Library System was not included because it is a consolidated system.²⁴

Head librarians of the selected sample libraries received the survey after intense review, revision, and pre-test of the survey form. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: Use of System Services and Experience with System Services. One hundred libraries from the seventeen cooperative systems were selected to receive surveys, and the libraries in each system were categorized by size of population served with a proportionate sample being chosen from each system so that at least 10% of the libraries in each system were represented. Responses by libraries were kept confidential; none of the system directors knew which of their libraries were chosen to participate in the survey.²⁵

The survey achieved a 93% response rate. Responses were analyzed as a whole; no analyses were made of the data for individual systems (although it was understood that many of the same response to a particular question could indicate that respondents were all from one system). Briefly, the data collected and analyzed supports the following statements:

- A. 16mm films and videocassettes were the most frequently used systems materials.
- B. Respondents were generally pleased with materials offered by the systems.

- C. Under the heading "Information and Communication Services," services most frequently used were "Advice of System Consultants" and "Union Lists of Periodicals"; both were rated as satisfactory in general. Of other services offered by the systems, Delivery, Interlibrary Loan, Backup Reference, and Reciprocal Borrowing were the most heavily used and were overwhelmingly rated as satisfactory.
- D. In the second part of the survey -- "Experience with Systems Services" -- 65.6% of the respondents indicated that systems' staffs were "almost always" able to help them with problems/questions and 34.4% indicated that staffs "usually" or "sometimes" were able to help them. Respondents in libraries serving populations of less than 10,000 gave a higher number of "almost always" answers.
- E. 22.8% of the respondents indicated that a system staff member had not visited their library in the past year; 87.1% of the respondents reported that they had visited the system headquarters two or more times in the past year. Respondents in libraries serving more than 25,000 were most likely to have traveled to the system headquarters.
- F. 85% of respondents in libraries serving a population numbering greater than 25,000 persons had served on a library system committee. Only 33% of the respondents in libraries serving less than 5,000 persons had served on committees. 71% of all 92 respondents had attended meetings of member public libraries. 32.6% of the 92 respondents said that they were well-informed about system affairs, 64.1% said fairly well-informed, and 3.3% said not informed. 46.7% of the respondents from libraries serving populations of 10,000 or more persons rated themselves as very well-informed while 25.8% of the respondents from libraries serving populations of less than 10,000 persons rated themselves as very well-informed.
- G. 8.7% of the 92 respondents said that their points of view were almost always considered in the forming of system policies and decisions, 69.6% thought that their views were either usually or sometimes considered, and 21.7% felt that their views were never considered. Analysis of these figures by population served was not significant.
- H. A substantially larger proportion of the respondents in libraries serving populations of fewer than 10,000 persons gave higher quality/competence ratings to systems' staffs than respondents in libraries serving populations of 10,000 or more (82.5% versus 53%).

- I. In a question asking respondents to suggest systems services for elimination if state aid to systems was reduced, these three services were not mentioned as possibilities for elimination: interlibrary loan, reciprocal borrowing, and services to the blind and handicapped.
- J. The following were most frequently mentioned as services that respondents would like to see added if funds permit: cooperative/centralized acquisitions and processing, collection development, more staff, and delivery services.
- K. Respondents in libraries serving populations of 5,000 persons or less were the least likely to have travelled to their system headquarters during the last year. Likewise, a statistically significant number of the respondents in these smaller libraries have never served on a library system committee.²⁶

From this systems study and from the previous studies of affiliate members of the systems, it can be concluded that Illinois librarians are satisfied with their use of Illinois library systems services and with the materials that are provided by those systems. And, the study also suggests that Illinois libraries serving populations of less than 10,000 persons are significantly more satisfied with aid received from the system staffs.²⁷ In addition, the survey coordinators also stress the importance of continued evaluation of each individual library system's efficiency and effectiveness in order to allow the state-wide network to be effective in fulfilling its objectives.²⁸

In December 1986 a comprehensive study of the eighteen Illinois library systems was published. Commissioned by the Illinois State Library and prepared by the library consulting firm HBW Associates, Vision 1996: A Plan for the Illinois Library Systems in the Next Decade has been heavily criticized by library and systems personnel because of many objections to its overall recommendations. Of the fifteen major recommendations, the following three seem to be the most objectionable: 1) the formation of six systems from the existing eighteen; 2) the dispersion of resource materials from systems' headquarters to local libraries, and; 3) the contracting out of some of the services being provided directly by the systems' headquarters to the members libraries. Many Illinois library and systems personnel believe that fewer systems will result in fewer services, that poorer services will result due to increased distances between systems' headquarters and member libraries, and

that there will be inadequate funds to contract out for services such as interlibrary loan and delivery services.²⁹

SURVEY OF RURAL LIBRARIES' PARTICIPATION IN LIBRARY COOPERATIVES

Methodology

Two hundred and thirty-nine public libraries located in population centers of 25,000 or fewer persons and members of at least one non-multi-state library cooperative were randomly selected from the American Library Directory, 38th edition (ALD) to receive survey forms by mail. No library was rejected because of the type of library cooperative group that it participates in unless that library's only cooperative participation, according to ALD, is a multi-state library network such as OCLC, WLN, etc. Film cooperatives, circulation cooperatives, county/district library systems, statewide interlibrary loan networks, and others are examples of the types of library cooperatives that the surveyed libraries participate in. Cover letters enclosed with the survey forms were addressed to the persons listed as Library Directors in ALD or to the persons listed as Librarians if there was no one listed as holding the position of Library Director. Because of time limitations and the subsequent inability to send a follow-up letter if a selected library did not return its survey form within two weeks, the surveys were not coded.

Results

One hundred and twenty-eight of the 239 surveys that were mailed out were returned in time to be included in the study report (54%). Of the 128 surveys returned, 119 were completed in such a way that they were reportable in the study (92%). The nine unusable surveys were not included in the study report for the following four reasons:

1. The responding library does not currently participate in the library cooperative listed in its ALD entry (surveys were returned without being completed): Four instances.
2. The community in which the responding library is located currently has a population of greater than 25,000 persons (surveys were returned without being completed): Three instances.

3. The community in which the library is located currently has a population of fewer than 25,000 persons, but there are larger, industrialized towns in the surrounding area (survey was returned without being completed): One instance.
4. One survey came back with confusing and sometimes-illegible responses.

When a respondent gave two answers to a question in which it was indicated on the survey form to answer with only one of the options, each of the respondent's answers to that question was counted as 1/2 of a response (.5). Consult Appendix C to see the collected data inserted onto the blank survey form, and please note that percentages derived from the collected data are rounded off to the nearest one-hundredth.

The majority of the cooperatives that these 119 libraries participate in have sixteen or more members (76.5 responses / 64%). Twenty-four respondents indicated that they participate in cooperatives that have between eleven and fifteen members (20%), 9 respondents indicated that their cooperatives have between six and ten members (8%), and 8.5 respondents indicated that their cooperatives have between one and 5 members (7%). A great proportion of the 119 respondent public libraries indicated that fellow cooperative members include other public libraries (117 responses / 98%). Fifty-two respondents indicated that college/university libraries were members of their cooperatives (44%), 43 respondents indicated that school libraries were members of their cooperatives (36%), and medical/hospital libraries, corporate libraries, and law libraries were indicated by 29, 17, and 8 respondents respectively (24%, 14%, and 7%). A type of library other than the previously mentioned six types was indicated by 18 respondents (15%).

Interlibrary loan of books, consultation/idea exchange, and interlibrary loan of non-book materials are the most engaged-in cooperative activities among members of the cooperatives to which the respondent libraries belong. One hundred and sixteen respondents indicated that their cooperative members participate in interlibrary loan of books (97%), 99 respondents indicated that their cooperative members participate in consultation/idea exchange (83%), and 91 respondents indicated that their cooperative members participate in interlibrary loan of non-book materials (76%). In specifying the types of

non-book materials that are lent from library to library, 37 of the 91 respondents indicated that videocassettes were lent, 30 respondents indicated that films/16mm films were lent, and 28 respondents indicated that records were lent. Sixty-eight respondents indicated that their cooperative members lobby for financial support (57%), 48 respondents indicated that their cooperative members support extension services (40%), 7 respondents indicated that their cooperative members share a building (6%), and 32 respondents indicated participation in "other" activities (27%). Of the 32 respondents that indicated "other," 9 mentioned continuing education, 7 mentioned cooperative purchasing/ordering, and 4 mentioned centralized cataloging/processing.

In response to a question asking respondent libraries whether their cooperatives have headquarters and employees apart and distinct from the member libraries, a majority of respondents (91 / 76%) answered that there is a separate cooperative headquarters with distinct employees. A majority of respondents (75 / 63%) also indicated that there is a collection of resource materials in book format at their cooperative headquarters that is distinct from any member library's collection. In every case in which the latter is true, staff members of the member libraries are permitted to use these resources (75 / 100%); in a large majority of cases, member libraries' patrons are permitted to borrow these materials (61 / 85%).

Table I lists responses to a question inquiring about types of non-book resources/facilities that are available to the respondents' libraries only because of their participation in their cooperative groups.

Table I

Non-Book Resources/Facilities Available to Respondents' Libraries
As A Result of Participation in a Library Cooperative
(119 possible respondents)

Resource/Facility Respondent	Number of Responses	%
16mm films	75	63%
*for library's use	60 of 75	80% of 75
*for patron loan	57 of 75	76% of 75
videocassette tapes	65	55%
*for library's use	50 of 65	77% of 75
*for patron loan	52	80% of 65

Resource/Facility Respondent	Number of Responses	%
use of bibliographic utility for inter-library loan	60	50%
use of bibliographic utility for cataloging	52	44%
library science journals and/or other professional literature	51	43%
audiovisual equipment	42	35%
*for library's use	33 of 42	77% of 42
*for patron loan	26 of 42	62% of 42
multimedia equipment/supplies	35	29%
*for library's use	27 of 35	77% of 35
*for patron loan	19 of 35	54% of 35
duplicating equipment or other facility to produce signage and/or publicity brochures	24	20%
microcomputer(s)	23	19%
use of an online computer system for acquisitions	19	16%
software for microcomputers	15	13%
telefacsimile equipment	15	13%
telephone	14	12%
photocopier	12	10%
typewriter(s)	8	7%
use of an online computer system for serials control	7	6%
other(s):	13	11%
*art prints/art works received 3 responses		
*storytelling packets/puppets, union lists, and talking books received 2 responses each		

A large majority of the respondents indicated that a body of representatives from member libraries of their cooperatives meets periodically to discuss policy, acquisitions, and programming (104 / 87%); 37 of these 104 respondents (33%) indicated that their representative bodies meet once a month, 21 respondents (19%) indicated that the bodies meet once every six months, and 17 of the 41 respondents answering the question with the option "other" indicated that their representative bodies meet quarterly. A significantly large number of respondents (100 of the 119 / 84%) feel that all member libraries of their cooperatives are being adequately represented in cooperative decisions, while only 17 of the 119 respondents (14%) do not feel that all member libraries are being represented adequately (two libraries did not answer the question/2%).

Greater than 50% of the respondents indicated that a consultant or an administrator from their cooperative visits their library at least once a year. Twenty-eight respondents (24%) indicated that a consultant/administrator visits once a year, 15.5 respondents (13%) indicated that a consultant/administrator visits once every six months, 8 respondents (7%) indicated that a consultant/administrator visits once a month, and 2.5 respondents (2%) indicated that a consultant/administrator visits once a week. Sixteen respondents (13%) indicated that a consultant/administrator visits less than once a year, and 20 of the 36 respondents who indicated "other" wrote that a consultant/administrator visits whenever asked or needed. Sixty-three percent of the 119 respondents indicated that the consultant's/administrator's visits were of average or higher value to their libraries; on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest), 26 respondents (22%) gave the visits the highest ranking, 19 respondents (16%) gave the visits ranking 4, 30 respondents (25%) gave the visits ranking 3, 10 respondents (8%) gave the visits ranking 2, 5 respondents (4%) gave the visits the lowest ranking, 16 respondents answered with the option "not applicable," and 13 respondents did not answer the question.

Greater than 3/4 (78.5%) of the respondents' cooperative headquarters/administrators have held three or more continuing education workshops in 1987 for staff of member libraries. Fifty-three and one-half respondents (45%) indicated that between 3 and 5 workshops were held, 26.5 respondents (22%) indicated that 1 or 2 workshops were held, 22 respondents (18%) indicated that

between 6 and 10 workshops were held, 8 respondents (7%) indicated that 11 or more workshops were held, 7 respondents (6%) indicated that no workshops were held, and 2 persons did not answer the question (2%).

Almost all respondents (113 of 119 / 95%) participate in interlibrary loan with their fellow cooperative members. Table II gives responses to two questions asking for the approximate number of items lent to other cooperative members per month and the approximate number of items borrowed from other cooperative members per month.

Table II

Approximate Number of Items Lent To and Items Borrowed
From Cooperative Members Per Month

# of Items	# of Respondents Indicating This Many Loaned per Month & (Percentage of 111 Respondents to Question)	# of Respondents Indicating This Many Borrowed per Month & (Percentage of 109 Respondents to Question)
0 - 24	83 (75%)	61 (56%)
25 - 49	14 (13%)	24 (22%)
50 - 74	3 (3%)	8 (7%)
75 - 99	1 (1%)	5 (5%)
100 or more	10 (8%)	11 (10%)

A greater number of the respondent libraries' cooperatives have delivery services to and from all member libraries (76/64%) than do not have delivery services (43/36%). Usually there are no monetary charges to either the member libraries (63/89%) or to patrons of member libraries (73/92%) for interlibrary loan materials sent via these delivery services.

Sixty-four of the 119 respondents indicated that their libraries do not receive additional financial support as a result of participating in their cooperative (54%), 47 respondents indicated that their libraries do receive additional financial support (39%), and 8 persons did not answer the question

(7%). A somewhat related question asked the respondent to indicate a degree of agreement/disagreement with the statement "The extra costs that my library is incurring because of resource sharing is resulting in more effective service to my patrons." Eighty percent of the respondents indicated that they strongly agree or agree with this statement; 63 respondents indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement (53%), 32.5 respondents indicated that they agree with the statement (27%), 5.5 respondents were neutral to the statement (5%), and 14 respondents indicated that the statement was not applicable to their libraries (12%).

In a question asking the member libraries how active their cooperative headquarters/administrators are in publicizing the existence of the cooperative and its services, 85% of the respondents indicated that their cooperative headquarters were at least somewhat active in publicity. Fifty-eight and one-half respondents indicated that their cooperative headquarters/administrators were very active in publicity (49%), 42.5 respondents indicated that their cooperative headquarters/administrators were somewhat active in publicity (36%), and 13 respondents indicated that their cooperative headquarters/administrators were not active in publicity (11%). In a question asking the member libraries how active their cooperative systems are in asking for support from community, state, and/or federal organizations, 87% of the respondents indicated that their cooperatives were at least somewhat active. Sixty and one-half respondents indicated that their cooperative systems were very active in asking for support (51%), 42.5 respondents indicated that their systems were somewhat active in asking for support (36%), 8 respondents indicated that their systems were not active in asking for support (7%), and 8 respondents did not answer the question (7%).

Responses to a question asking respondents if their libraries had ever been surveyed about the effectiveness/value of their cooperative memberships indicated that a large majority of respondents were either never surveyed about their cooperative memberships in the past or did not know if the former director(s)/librarian(s) was/were ever surveyed. Fifty and one-half respondents indicated that they were never surveyed in the past (42%), 39.5 respondents indicated that they did not know if their libraries were surveyed in the past

(33%), 26 respondents indicated that they were surveyed in the past (22%), and 3 persons did not answer the question (3%). Of the 26 respondents who indicated that their libraries were surveyed in the past about the effectiveness/value of their cooperative memberships, 12 indicated that the surveys were done between 1 and 2 years ago (46%), 11 indicated that the surveys were done less than 1 year ago (42%), and one respondent each indicated that the surveys were done between 3 and 4 years ago, 4 and 5 years ago, and more than 5 years ago (4% each). Eight respondents indicated that the surveys were done by an independent researcher/research firm (31%), 7 respondents indicated that the surveys were done by their cooperative headquarters/administrators (27%), 7 respondents indicated that the surveys were done by a state library agency (27%), 1 respondent indicated that the survey was done by a professional association or organization (4%), and the 3 "other" responses consisted of written comments from two respondents indicating that they could not remember who conducted the survey and a comment from one respondent stating, "the people who work here."

When asked to rank the value of their cooperative memberships on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest), a large majority of respondents gave their cooperative memberships ranking 5 (78 respondents / 66%) and 90% of the respondents ranked the value of their cooperative memberships as average or above. Nineteen respondents ranked the value of their cooperative memberships at 4 (16%), 10 respondents ranked the value of their cooperative memberships at 3 (8%), 4 respondents ranked the value of their cooperative memberships at 2 (3%), 5 respondents ranked the value of their cooperative memberships at 1 (4%), and 3 persons did not answer the question (3%).

Conclusion

When analyzing similar responses to the survey questions, one must keep in mind (as Drone did with the Illinois systems survey) that the same response to a question may be coming from member libraries of the same cooperative(s). Thus, the percentage of a particular response to a particular question may not be indicative of the population of rural public libraries that exists but of only this particular sample.

In general, the cooperatives that these libraries participate in are, for the most part, composed of academic libraries and other public libraries. Interlibrary loan seems to be the most engaged-in cooperative activity, and in many cases audiovisual materials such as 16mm films and videocassettes are available to member libraries and their patrons because of the cooperatives. Consultation and idea exchange are also popular cooperative activities and, in most cases, representatives of the cooperatives' member libraries meet at least once a year for discussion. Almost 2/3 of the cooperative members have delivery services at their disposal for delivery to other cooperative members, and usually there are no fees charged to the libraries (and consequently no fees charged to patrons) for utilizing this delivery. The majority of cooperative members are not "getting paid" for participating in their cooperatives, yet the majority of libraries (80%) agree or strongly agree that their patrons are receiving more effective service because of the resource sharing that takes place among their cooperatives' members. Cooperative headquarters are usually at least somewhat active in publicity and solicitation of support from various organizations, and in most cases (more than 2/3) the responding libraries indicate that all member libraries of their cooperatives are equally willing to cooperate in ways advised by the headquarters or representative bodies. Less than one quarter of the persons responding to the questionnaire were sure that their libraries had been surveyed in the past about the effectiveness/value of their cooperative memberships.

Two-thirds of the respondents assigned the highest value (5) to their cooperative memberships. Greater than 4/5 of the respondents assigned either the highest value (5) or the next lowest value (4). Thirty of the 119 respondents are definite interlibrary loan net borrowers as indicated in Q-16/Q-17; 24 of these respondents (80%) assigned the highest value to their

cooperative memberships. Five of the 119 respondents are definite interlibrary loan net lenders as determined in Q-16/Q-17; two of these respondents (40%) assigned value 3 to their cooperative memberships, two (40%) assigned the highest value (5) to their cooperative memberships, and one (20%) assigned value 4 to their cooperative memberships. A larger number of interlibrary loan net lenders within this survey sample may have allowed for a more significant analysis of interlibrary loan borrowing/lending versus assignment of value to cooperative memberships. However, it appears that the net borrowers in this sample understandably assign a high value to their cooperative memberships.

Forty-six of the 119 survey respondents (39%) indicated that they receive some sort of additional financial support as a result of participating in their cooperatives. Of those 46, 32 (70%) assign the highest value to their cooperative memberships and 42 (92%) assign an average or higher value to their memberships. Sixty-five of the 119 respondents (55%) indicated that they do not receive some sort of additional financial support as a result of participating in their cooperatives. Of those 65, 44 (68%) assign the highest value to their cooperative memberships and 60 (92%) assign an average or higher value to their memberships. One can conclude from these statistics that, at least in this particular sample, libraries do not have to be "paid" to cooperate (at least in the sense of receiving additional monies) in order to value their cooperative memberships highly.

Briefly, in comparing this author's survey results with the Illinois systems survey results, it appears that 16mm films and videocassettes are frequently used and lent cooperative resources. In general, library staffs seem to be satisfied with what their cooperatives have to offer them and with what advice

and consultation the cooperative headquarters' staffs have to give them. In the majority of cases a staff member of the cooperative headquarters comes to visit member libraries at least once a year. Interlibrary loan is a vital cooperative activity to the vast majority of the sample member libraries of both surveys.

In some cases, notation on the survey forms that this author mailed would seem to indicate that the 1 to 5 ranking method was misunderstood (i.e., respondents would circle "1," strike it out, and circle "5"). In addition, a broader explanation of what this author means by the term "cooperative" in the cover letter may have alleviated some confusion on the part of some survey respondents who felt that a formal library "system" or a district library association that is governmentally assigned is not considered by this author to be a "cooperative." Also, it may be helpful in future research to ask specific questions about cooperative membership fees and budgeting for library cooperation. This author believes that research done on the statewide and local levels that deals with library cooperation should be published in the library literature for the profession's benefit; research is apparently being done in some cases (according to these survey results) but with few exceptions is not being published in the professional literature. More statistical analysis is needed in order to prove and disprove the many theories of library cooperation that appear in the professional literature.

NOTES

¹Bernard Vavrek, "Rural Libraries: The Era of Consolidation," in Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information. (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1987), 84.

²Ralph R. Shaw, "The Form and the Substance," Library Journal 90 (Feb. 1, 1965): 567-68.

³Shaw, 568.

⁴Patricia Glass Shuman, "Library Networks: A Means, Not an End," Library Journal 112 (February 1, 1987): 33-34.

⁵Schuman, 34.

⁶Schuman, 35.

⁷Schuman, 36.

⁸Schuman, 36.

⁹Thomas H. Ballard, "Public Library Networking: Neat, Plausible, Wrong," Library Journal 107 (April 1, 1982): 682.

¹⁰Shaw, 567.

¹¹Ballard, "Public Library Networking," 683.

¹²Thomas H. Ballard, "Dogma Clouds the Facts: Public Libraries Need Proof of Benefits Before Spending Millions on Resource Sharing," American Libraries 16 (April 1985): 259.

¹³Ballard, "Public Library Networking," 681.

¹⁴Ballard, "Public Library Networking," 679.

¹⁵Ballard, "Public Library Networking," 682.

¹⁶Forrest F. Carhart, Jr., "Library Cooperation Brings Benefits: A Pattern For Action," UNESCO Journal of Information Science, Librarianship, and Archives Administration V (1983): 223-25.

¹⁷Ballard, "Dogma Clouds the Facts," 258.

¹⁸Carhart, 223.

¹⁹Schuman, 33.

²⁰John W. Head, "The National Rural Library Reference Survey," Reference Quarterly 23 (Spring 1989): 321.

²¹Head, 316-17; Vavrek, 85.

²²Vavrek, 85.

²³Amundson, William, and Milton Mitchell. "The Policy Making Role of the System Trustee." Wisconsin Library Bulletin 79 (Spring 1984): 23.

²⁴Jeanette M. Drone, "Survey of Public Libraries' Use of and Experience with Illinois Library System Services," in Illinois Libraries Statistical Report; no. 17. (Springfield: Illinois State Library, 1985), 2.

²⁵Drone, 3.

²⁶Drone, 4-7.

²⁷Drone, 7.

²⁸Drone, 8.

²⁹HBW Study Criticized in Illinois," Wilson Library Bulletin 61 (March 1987): 9.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Association of State Library Agencies. The ASLA Report on Interlibrary Cooperation. 2nd edition. Chicago: Association of State Library Agencies, 1978.
- Ballard, Thomas H. The Failure of Resource Sharing in Public Libraries and Alternative Strategies for Service. Chicago: American Library Association, 1986.
- . "Knowin' All Them Things That Ain't So: Managing Today's Public Library." Occasional Papers. Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, March 1985.
- Bonfardine, Ann. Occasional Bibliography #8: Library Networking and Interlibrary Cooperation. Clarion, Pa.: Clarion University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, July 1987.
- Chapman, Peggy. "Librarians' Attitudes Toward Networking." North Carolina Libraries 43 (Spring 1985): 47-51.
- De Gennaro, Richard. "Libraries & Networks in Transition: Problems and Prospects for the 1980's." Library Journal 106 (May 15, 1981): 1045-49.
- Elliott, Dorothy Sanborn. "Study on Cooperative Library Automation in St. Joseph." Show-Me Libraries 36 (June 1985): 30-31.
- HBW Associates, Inc. Vision 1996: A Plan for the Illinois Library Systems in the Next Decade. Dallas, Tex.: HBW Associates, 1986.