

ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST - A GUIDE TO STRENGTHEN
COMMUNITY LIBRARIES IN LIBRARY COOPERATION

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PREFACE

This publication is written as a guide to strengthen the roles and links of a community library in providing information. The premise of the author is that since no local library can meet this responsibility alone, its administrators and policy makers must look to using other existing agencies and channels for support. While portions of this manual may be useful to many libraries, the final section is written particularly for local libraries in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The terms local library and community library are synonymous and refer to the library which independently serves a local community. This library has its own governing board and sources of funding. Such an independent library may, however, be an integral part of a system or have direct or indirect relationships with a regional or district library organization established by law or membership requirements.

The term information centers refers to the wide variety of agencies, bureaus, organizations and units outside the community library structure. The practice of librarianship is not their essential purpose; however, the gathering and

dissemination of special types of information is an essential objective in their mission statements.

The author assumes full responsibility for the ambiguity and redundancy of some checklist items. There is no magic to the number 100, nor is it important that all assessment items be completed. What is important is how a library administrator approaches and responds to the special items.

Finally, the author expresses appreciation to the staff at the Lancaster County Library for the completion of this manuscript and for the high level of library cooperation they practice and exhibit daily in the performance of their particular assignments.

INTRODUCTION

Effective library service in a local community does not just happen because the library exists or laws and regulations make the library adhere to certain standards. Libraries at the local level vary from community to community. Most have evolved through the years with varying degrees of financial stability, community support and administrative leadership.

How a local library administrator views the job, the community, and the library that serves that community is part of the message of this manual. How the library administrator can take steps to increase the potential of these views and perceptions may be the value of using the assessment checklist which follows each section of the publication. The purpose of the manual is to open doors to broader horizons for more effective library service at the local level.

Many local library administrators believe they work in isolation. Often the community is physically far removed from contact with other population centers, and the opportunities for administrators to meet with other library personnel is infrequent. Limited budgets and staffing considerations may not provide the luxury of travel and attendance at area or state and national workshops and conferences. Further frustrations emerge when the local community looks to the local library and its administration to provide the information that is current and readily available.

It is difficult to imagine anyone living in isolation today. Through technology and electronic communication systems, one is never more than a few moments away from history and progress in the making. The emphasis on science and high speed transmission of information and the concerns of the global village have directed attention away from the rich human resources, organizations and structures available locally.

Community library administrators are not the only ones in the local area concerned with information. Outside the library walls in every locale are agencies, bureaus, organizations, associations, and governmental and social service units that daily gather, compile, and disseminate information as one of their major missions. In the public sector these would include: county extension agents; local government agencies and boards; planning commissions and regional authorities; state and federal offices and bureaus; programs and projects; local schools, intermediate units, academic institutions, historical sites, archives and county law libraries; commissions that focus on parks, recreation, housing, land use and community development, to name but a few. In the private sector there are banks and brokers; business and industry; land title authorities and professional offices of all kinds; suppliers and wholesalers; distributors and retailers; and trades and crafts of a wide variety. Further sources of information cluster around service clubs, societies and leagues; cultural groups devoted to history, arts, theater, music and education; and a wide range of social,

health and welfare organizations. All of these and many more share in the dissemination of information. Some may have highly sophisticated ways to get their messages to the local community. Some may have sources of funding and organizational backing that far exceed local library expectations. With few exceptions, most who administer these entities and information programs also feel a sense of isolation and a frustration in information sharing.

Aggressive action on the part of local library administrators will foster an effective program of cooperation at the local level with others who are involved in the information business. Libraries have available locally, or have access to, information from other sources that will be of great value to these local information brokers and distributors. Working with these individuals or entities will bring great benefits to the local library and will in turn strengthen the community library's link in the chain and network of library cooperation.

The assessment checklist and action items in this manual are designed to start the process of self-evaluation and continue to the assessment of the local library and community. The process concludes with the local library's relationship with other library-related groups and structures outside the local area. How this manual is used is up to each community library administrator and local policy boards. Some questions and task statements in the manual may already be completed. The assessment items will include some tasks that can be fulfilled with

relative ease and initiated at little or no cost. There are many tasks that will take a long time to complete with possible time and dollar investments not immediately available. These items should be thoroughly explored, but not necessarily abandoned if they produce final results that will strengthen the community library. It is recognized that each query and task statement may lead to other action items in order to complete the task. The task statements may also be altered and modified to more closely identify with a local concern or situation.

This manual should be viewed as a guideline. The assessment checklist is not mandated by law and should only be viewed as a guideline. The assessment checklist is not mandated by law and should only be viewed as one tool of many that are available and in use. Completion of the 100 checklist items does not in itself ensure an effective community library and its role in the community or its strength in a network of library cooperation. How a library administrator and the policy makers of a community library use this manual may, however, say a great deal about the effectiveness of leadership. The ability of that leadership to assume and practice its responsibility to ensure that it fulfills its mission statement is vital. But what is most vital is that information to the local constituency is readily, freely, and equitably assessable.

ASSESSING MISSION STATEMENTS

The role of the community library in the United States has evolved from a long heritage dating back to colonial times. Then early settlers came with their few, but precious, books. More often than not these books were shared with trusted neighbors. As the hardships of the settlers eased somewhat and villages became towns, there arose a need to provide places for schools and learning. The early libraries were somewhat elite as most were formed as subscription libraries in which members paid a yearly fee to belong. The fees provided small sums to purchase books and also provided for rent of facilities to house the collection. Then only members could use the books. Slowly the concept of free public libraries began to evolve as national or local community benefactors provided private funds to erect facilities. Some early communities were blessed with public support from the very beginning. Today, while many libraries still have financial support from private trusts and endowments, their primary sources of support come from a combination of local, state and federal funds.

The public library plays an essential role in a democratic society. Free and equal access to information of all kinds is guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States and is essential if we are to govern ourselves, make responsible decisions, and become contributing citizens. There are today as many kinds of libraries as there

are special needs for information. Long past are the days when life was simple and conducted within the context of a small social and geographic area. Today our life in the global village is immediately affected by events and decisions from places far around the world. As a result we have now moved into the Information Age, an age that through electronics and technology has brought new awareness of social, economic and political issues worldwide to our local communities and door steps.

Libraries will play an increasingly important role in helping citizens at the community level meet their information needs. At the outset, one may view a small local library as incapable of responding to such a variety of demands. This, of course, may be true, but at the same time it is also true that no library in the world, no matter how large its resources, has ever been able to meet these needs. Early realization of this brought about a variety of systems, networks, cooperatives and exchanges of resources and services. The small community library is as important a link in the chain of information gathering and dissemination as the large urban, academic, and special libraries. The importance of these various links is to foster and ensure equal access. Those are the key words--equal access. Because one must or even chooses to live in an isolated environment far removed physically from great urban and academic information centers does not mean that with time and guidance and the use of established channels, he or she cannot have

access to information. As an administrator of a small community library, you play a key role in the ongoing process of cooperative library service. You have a responsibility not only to the citizens of your community to meet their information needs, but also to understand and participate in the existing and evolving systems of cooperative library development at the local, state and national level.

This manual will hopefully provide guidance to local library administrators in not only understanding their roles and attitudes in cooperatives, but also their performance as administrators in the ongoing operations of a library. Following each section is an assessment checklist designed as a guide to respond to individual questions or tasks. The assessment checklist is not all-inclusive and is viewed only as a first step in raising one's consciousness to the broad spectrum of queries and tasks one might consider individually in the process of further developing the library's roles and importance in the local community.

ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

	Needs Attention	Under Study	Task Completed	Date
1. Do you have a knowledge or understanding of the history of library development in the United States?				
2. Do you know the history and development of your community library?				
3. Do you have on file the history and documents pertaining to the development of your community library?				
4. Has the heritage of your community library been shared with and recognized by the local citizens?				
5. Do you understand the importance of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States as it relates to the community library?				
6. Are you able to articulate the importance of the First Amendment to the library board and citizens of your community?				
7. Does your library board understand the First Amendment as it relates to the community library?				
8. Do you have on public display the Library Bill of Rights as adopted by the American Library Association?				

	Needs Attention	Under Study	Task Completed	Date
9.	Does the library board have a written and adopted policy on the role and mission of the library in your community?			
10.	Have you analyzed the library budget to determine what percentages come from private, local, state or federal funds?			
11.	What are the trends emerging over the past several years that are changing the percentage figures in financial support of the local library?			
12.	Have you and the library board discussed these trends and shared them with citizens and appropriate authorities?			
13.	Do you maintain a list of queries or information needs that cannot be met by your community library?			
14.	Identify at least ten broad subject areas that your library cannot meet on a continuing basis.			
15.	Identify at least five ways in which you view your library as an important resource in a network system of cooperative library service.			
16.	Do you maintain an active list of other libraries, agencies or information centers which you have used to provide information for patrons?			

	Needs Attention	Under Study	Task Completed	Date
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17. Identify and utilize at least five ways to inform local citizens of their right to equal access to information.
18. As the library administrator, develop, write and have on file your philosophy on interlibrary cooperation.
19. As a citizen, develop, write and have on file your perception of what a community library should be.
20. Develop, produce and disseminate a questionnaire to citizens on what they perceive their public library to be. Analyze and publicize the results of the study to the local community.

ASSESSING ADMINISTRATIVE ATTITUDE

Library cooperation works. The fact that it does is due in a large measure to a large cadre of library administrators and leaders and policy makers in the information field. As the administrator of a community library, you are both on the receiving and sharing end of many networks, systems and cooperatives already established. Just as you and your community library depend upon these existing mechanisms, so do the larger units depend upon you to keep the machinery of the library cooperation moving.

It was not too long ago that many responsible for library services at the community level were overly possessive and protective of the library's resources. Cumbersome circulation systems and restrictive registration policies did more to preserve the library and its collection than it did to provide for easy and equal access to information for the library user. Library administrators cannot be entirely blamed for this. Early libraries were seen as elitist temples of learning for the great scholars. A lack of funds made the books purchased even more precious. Funding also affected the number of hours a week a library was open. In many communities the typical patron's response to the library about a needed book was that it was either "not in the collection, always out, or kept on closed reserve." In some instances little was done to correct the

situation, but fortunately in some areas creative leadership began to devise systems to share resources and procedures to help other library units meet user demands. Library cooperation is not limited to just sharing of resources. Today it is generally believed that no library can exist independently. Increasingly library systems are designed to provide a wide array of service and administrative functions either through cooperatives or contractual agreements. Today most libraries belong to a number of cooperative organizations which again attest to the need and value of these structures in meeting the increasing demands for information.

As necessity has often been claimed as the mother of invention, it may also have had much to do with the change of attitudes for survival. This is certainly true within the context of library services. Library administrators, frustrated with the increasing difficulty of meeting information needs of library users, soon found it advisable to initiate new philosophies and attitudes about collection development, library programs and services. While big is not always better, it can often be more efficient and cost effective. Larger administrative service units can also support auxiliary services funded upon a broader financial base. Often the success of library cooperation means members must give up some priorities in order to receive benefits from a larger unit. There was a time when library administrators and staffs were reluctant to relinquish their special skills deemed so essential to the practice of

librarianship. Today through cooperatives, administrative service units, and the use of technology, library personnel have been able to apply their time saved on some skills to provide more meaningful service for library users. Also changing is the image of the library as only a place for books and print information. While early library cooperatives were formed to share books and print material, today cooperative networks include a wide array of film and electronic data bases. Increasingly, libraries are linked to other human resource centers and community agencies who share in and support the information needs of a local area.

As an administrator of a community library it is important that you can identify the trends in library services as well as ways to make resources outside your community available to library users. Equally important is the philosophy you exhibit with your staff and the community to encourage and provide for the development of a more effective means of information sharing. The assessment checklist which follows will provide first steps in a self-analysis of the attitudes and responses of the library administrator who has, among other responsibilities, that of creating a positive climate toward library cooperation among the library staff, policy makers, and funding agencies of a community library.

ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

	Needs Attention	Under Study	Task Completed	Date
21. Identify in a listing at least ten trends you see in the future of the library you administer.				
22. Share a listing of trends with your library board identifying ways these trends will affect the quality of service.				
23. Identify policies or procedures that may tend to make your library appear as an elitist institution.				
24. Identify policies or procedures that may tend to make your library restrictive to users.				
25. Identify at least five ways your library may reflect biases to age, sex, or special groups in the community.				
26. Review policies or procedures that tend to promote biases in library service in your community.				
27. Identify at least five ways your local library functions as an isolated unit in the community.				
28. Survey library responses to patron requests and identify to what degree the library is unable to meet these information needs.				

	Needs Attention	Under Study	Task Completed	Date
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29. Name at least ten local agencies your library calls upon on a fairly regular basis to obtain information.
30. Consult with your staff and identify the ten functions your library does best.
31. Consult with your staff and identify the ten functions your library does not do well.
32. Correlate items identified in the two tasks immediately preceding this statement with the results of item #20.
33. Prepare a brief report on the outcome of item #32 and present it to the library board for review.
34. Identify the characteristics a library administrator should have to exhibit a positive attitude toward service.
35. Use the characteristics identified in preceding task statement as basis for agenda for staff meetings.
36. Consult with district consultants or county agency personnel to review data and observations gathered in local studies of service and attitudes.

	Needs Attention	Under Study	Task Completed	Date
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37. Using district or extension consultants implement plans for inservice meetings with staff on attitudinal changes.
38. Visit at least three other libraries to discuss services and how these libraries approach their service problems.
39. Create a variety of posters and memos for self and staff to foster positive attitudes toward service.
40. Review on a regular basis progress made in library's service attitude, then modify, add or delete items for continued progress and review.

ASSESSING THE COMMUNITY LIBRARY

The responsibility in administering a community library entails continuous assessment of the collection, services, programs, staff and facilities. Equally important is the role of the library administrator in bringing the results of these assessments to the attention of the library board, to the community, and to policy and decision makers at all levels.

Because we live in a changing society, there will never be the ideal. From time to time libraries are planned and built that seem to be the model and answer to all library needs. But all too quickly these, too, become outdated and need to be modified in many areas. Libraries built ten to twenty years ago are often inaccessible to handicapped users nor are they able to incorporate electronic systems and new technologies. Information changes so rapidly that whole new subject areas and classification schemes need to be developed. This new information also comes in a variety of new formats requiring new methods of housing and distribution. While once libraries were depositories for information, they are now community centers for learning and include a variety of environments and settings for small and large group instruction and classes. Spaces for galleries and the local production of a variety of community programs are increasingly incorporated in new designs. Many large and not-so-large libraries include staff specialists whose expertise is not related to traditional library skills, but call

for competencies in computer technology, video and electronics, consumerism, literacy, career planning, counselling, public relations, graphic arts, preservation and community resources, to name a few.

Continuous assessment of the community library is important as a management tool to study ongoing operations of the library. It is equally important to focus on assessment as it relates to library cooperation. Library administrators have fortunately realized the changing nature of library service. No library facility will ever remain large enough, no collection varied enough in size and content, no staff maintain the special expertise, and no funding ever be totally secure enough to meet growing community needs. While once libraries were specific places confined to one location, today that same library has or is enlarging its base to accommodate satellite centers with related collections and programs throughout its service area. Increasingly, library administrators realize that providing a facility and a collection for a central service area is no longer acceptable. The library must go outside its walls to serve and to find resources beyond its own collection to meet user needs and program demands.

A library administrator will easily recognize the limitations of facilities, collections, staff and services that a particular library has in providing community services. A wise administrator will take immediate steps to share these limitations with others and initiate planning steps for assessing

these limitations through a variety of options and alternatives. The early results of taking these planning steps may foster a variety of avenues that lead to library and interagency cooperation. The end result might possibly enhance the library's ability to become a more effective and accountable entity within the community.

Initial steps for assessment might begin by meeting with staff members in an informal manner to explore areas of the library that need special attention. Following a listing of concerns a more structured process could easily develop to study areas that rank high on a priority listing of concerns. At this time, it would be useful to identify individuals outside the community library who could contribute special expertise to problems and solutions. Included in this level of involvement would be professionals from other library units and administrative agencies including county, district, regional or state library consultants. Administrators might also wish to include individuals from the local community whose expertise in a special field might provide an additional dimension and contribution to a particular study.

Assessment is a long but essential process in library management. Taking the first steps to identify areas of concern will help to establish the breadth and scope of a local library assessment and will lead to delineating some broad action items. The assessment checklist which follows provides a guideline to initiate some early study questions in the analysis of the com-

munity library. It is expected that the process of following the assessment statements or queries will encourage the library administrator, staff and community advisory groups to continue explorations. The results of these studies should identify for the local library its ability to become more effectively involved in library cooperation and its ability to serve library users at the local level.

ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

	Needs Attention	Under Study	Task Completed	Date
41.	Work with a citizen team reflecting the point of view of the user to identify the positive and negative features of your library.			
42.	Work with a special task force to prioritize a listing of desired changes in facilities and indicate short and long range plans for modification.			
43.	Identify and contact community groups and agencies that could provide support to bring about immediate and low cost changes in the facilities.			
44.	Explore the use of volunteers and local groups to contribute labor and teams to bring about changes in facilities.			
45.	Contact and propose to local funding agencies interest in providing financial support to implement long range modification plans in the facilities.			
46.	Identify areas in your library that are barriers to handicapped persons.			
47.	Observe the furnishings, signs, directionals, displays and interior decor to identify what is useful for effective library service and what contributes to clutter and patron confusion.			

	Needs Attention	Under Study	Task Completed	Date
48.				
Eliminate from the facility the accumulation of furniture, holiday and seasonal decorations and donations that serve no purpose.				
49.				
Assess the collection to eliminate materials that are outdated, no longer circulating, or whose condition is beyond effective use.				
50.				
Review and modify policies that encourage storing of back issues of periodicals no longer useful or in demand.				
51.				
Invite library consultants and specialists in the community to analyze the workspaces, traffic patterns, and storage facilities in your library.				
52.				
Consult with specialists to develop a plan for more effective lighting and ways to make the interior environment more attractive.				
53.				
Analyze staff functions to identify practices and procedures that could be performed outside the library on a service contract basis.				
54.				
Analyze and update insurance policies and maintenance contracts to protect the facility's future use.				

	Needs Attention	Under Study	Task Completed	Date
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55. Understand trends in library service to assess your library's facilities, collection and program areas to determine how they meet needs of special groups.
56. Revise and modify policies on the use of facilities by outside groups and agencies.
57. Explore with community leaders possible extension services such as placing special deposit collections in agencies and facilities outside the library's facility.
58. Plan and implement a series of informational meetings with community agencies and special interest groups on the services of the library.
59. Prepare special interest packets for display or distribution to outside groups promoting library resources and services.
60. Schedule and implement on a regular basis review sessions with community leaders and special groups on the progress of library services and new concerns that have emerged.

ASSESSING THE COMMUNITY

A library must be studied in the context of the community it serves. There is no typical community to use as a model for library services at the local level. A library administrator will find it helpful to explore the community at the same time library assessment plans are in progress, for the community itself will have the overall influence on the library's programs and goals.

The local library will have many resources to aid in a community assessment. Gathering local sources and data will also lead to other institutions and agencies whose studies and publications will have valuable information for the library administrator and study teams. Identifying these sources and agencies in itself is a vital first step in library cooperation and information sharing. Many of these agencies maintain records, produce studies and publish reports for a limited use and clientele. Knowledge of these sources is essential for a library administrator in the planning and management process. As local libraries serve a broader segment of the total community, access to this special knowledge is also important in linking the information needs of the community.

Community libraries are often compared with the size of the community served. Size in itself has much bearing on the kind of library service provided, but the word needs to be defined accurately in terms of population, geographic area or

amount of financial support. The size of the population is important because state aid allocations are based upon most recent census figures. Equally important to know is the trend in population by age groups and the mobility factor of the population. Questions that have direct bearing and influence on the library's collection include what age group is increasing or decreasing. Is the population growing or are individuals and family units leaving the area? If the population center is shifting, it may suggest new avenues of service and library extension programs. Likewise the size of the geographic area should identify physical barriers and boundaries that may affect delivery of library service.

The political and economic factors of the community play a vital role in influencing the quality of library service. Library community assessment teams will need to know the history of these forces to study trends and identify areas of concern for the future. What effect have the political and economic leaders had upon the community and the stability and way of life of the population? It is often difficult to view community studies objectively. The use of consultants from other library administrative units and areas may be helpful. Comparison studies with similar communities may also produce benefits. The review of long range plans of other library organizations may provide suggestions and valuable guidance to local assessment teams on how to achieve goals and tap other resources to support these goals.

Finally, library administrators will want to have a firm understanding of the social, educational, and cultural elements of the community. Communities are essentially groups of people who live together for a variety of reasons and circumstances. The heritage of these people needs to be analyzed. What brought them to the community and what holds them there may have much to say about their ethnic background, the influence of the family unit on the leadership of the citizens themselves. How the members of a community cluster into social groups is important to understand. Even more important is knowing if such clusters serve a positive influence in the community. A community that is standing still or progressing can have a direct impact upon a local library's efforts. Community assessment should also include the identification of the educational and cultural entities of the local area. Understanding their philosophies, programs and long range plans may lead to cooperative programs that will benefit the library as well as the local community.

An effective library administrator should know first hand and be able to communicate freely with those local entities and agencies which provide special information. A knowledge of records, resources, and services from borough, township, city and county governments is essential. Equally important is the wide array of services and information sources from county extension agents, the state and federal agencies and health and human service agencies located nearby or within the library

service area. Local accessibility to information sources is extremely important. A knowledge of the collections in local schools, academic institutions, churches, special businesses and historical and cultural sources will foster much library cooperation at the local level if procedures and mechanisms are cooperatively developed and implemented.

The initial leadership to study the community and its information needs will often be the responsibility of the local library administrator. The study will eventually involve contact and meeting with a wide variety of administrators and those designated as resource personnel for particular units or agencies. Continued exploration of the community with others will ultimately have great benefits and pay rich dividends for all concerned with information in the community. The following assessment checklist will serve only as a guide to initiate plans for a community study and should help to identify the vast potential of types of resources that can be shared at the local level. The important outcome of the assessment is knowledge of a community that is more clearly understood by those responsible for the dissemination of information.

ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

	Needs Attention	Under Study	Task Completed	Date
61.				
Prepare a listing of all sources in the local library useful for a community study.				
62.				
Work with library board and special study groups to identify the scope and plans for a community study.				
63.				
Inform public of community study and create mechanism for their input.				
64.				
Identify and contact all community leaders, government units, extension agencies, and social and business organizations that can provide resources for a community study.				
65.				
Assemble listings or packets of resources available from community groups that would be appropriate for a community study.				
66.				
Consult with District Library Center or library system personnel for guidance in beginning methods of a community study.				
67.				
Finalize plans for community study that include data gathering and interview assignments, schedules of special study teams and target dates for completion.				

	Needs Attention	Under Study	Task Completed	Date
68.	Schedule and conduct interviews with community leaders and agency administration to identify cooperative ways materials and services can be shared.			
69.	Acquire and study goals and long range plans of local government units, planning agencies, social service groups including goals and plans of local education agencies and cultural groups.			
70.	Identify ways the local library can provide resources and services to support goals of other community groups.			
71.	Develop plans to maintain a clearinghouse service of local resources available through the library or other community agencies.			
72.	Develop plans to create and fund a community human resource directory that identifies special skills and expertise of local residents.			
73.	Complete analysis of reports and findings of study groups to prepare final report of community study.			
74.	Refine report of community study to include identified trends in the community, special concerns as these trends relate to library service and study recommendations that will lead to action items.			

	Needs Attention	Under Study	Task Completed	Date
75.	Promote and inform citizens, community leaders and organizations of the results of the study, encouraging their responses to findings.			
76.	Initiate and implement plans at the local level to organize a consortium of local information agencies.			
77.	Maintain contact and representation with local planning and policy groups to ensure continued update of community plans.			
78.	Implement steps to ensure library is recipient and depository of studies, reports, brochures and information resources from all community, education, social and cultural units.			
79.	Plan at least four meetings a year with information specialists and/or administrators from other community agencies to share ideas.			
80.	Analyze and apply results of community survey updates and revisions as new trends or changes affect the growth and development of the library.			

ASSESSING AVAILABLE SUPPORT STRUCTURES

The process of assessing a community library and other information sources and centers in a local area contributes greatly to interlibrary cooperation and resource sharing. However, even access to a broader information base at the local level will not readily supply all the information needs. The next step is to understand and explore ways to use systems, networks and organizations that function outside the community. Utilizing these structures will lead to access to information beyond local, municipal or county lines into state and national information networks. Whether the structure is approached from the top down or the bottom up, the local library and its users receive the ultimate benefits in gaining access to resources and services far beyond their individual ability to acquire or maintain. The concept of equal access to information had much influence on the development of these structures and network systems. Promoting the utilization of these established mechanisms will do much to benefit local citizens in their quest for information.

Each state in the nation has devised a network system of resource sharing and support services. These structures differ depending upon geographical consideration or economic, political or population influences. While some states administer their own single system, other states designate county library units to be the links for interlibrary cooperation. Regional

library systems have been created in several states while still others rely upon the strengths of large urban libraries to administer interlibrary cooperation programs. In Pennsylvania a combination of all of the above was created and deemed the most effective way to share resources from all types and levels of libraries. The keys to the success of this resource sharing rest with the Regional Resource Centers and District Center Libraries.

There are four Regional Resource Centers in Pennsylvania: The State Library, the Free Library of Philadelphia, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and the Pennsylvania State University Libraries. Through supplemental support from the state, these vast resources and collections are continually expanded in special subject areas and serve as an important backup support of resources to other major library collections within the state. Access to these collections for the general public is through interlibrary loan requests initiated from the District Library Centers in Pennsylvania. The success of the network system and use of resources from the Regional Resource Centers and District Library Centers has made it possible for millions of residents in the state to have these resources or facsimiles delivered to the local communities for use.

The major link in interlibrary cooperation and support for community libraries has come through the organization of the District Library Centers. There are twenty-seven District Library Centers in Pennsylvania. The libraries designated as

District Library Centers were selected on the basis of the size of the collection of resources, the leadership and expertise of professional and support staff, geographical locations, and the capability or potential of the library to initiate and provide a wide array of services to the local libraries within its district. State funds provide support to ensure that each District Library Center maintains a minimum level of service to its member units. The relationship of the District Library Center and its performance with community libraries suggest that this organizational concept has done much to raise the level of library services statewide and has brought about more equal access to information for all citizens.

The size and complexities of District Library Centers vary across the state. While some are organized on a county basis, other District Library Centers cut across several county lines. District Library Centers in large metropolitan areas not only cross county lines but provide services to a wide variety of local libraries in many separate townships and boroughs. Some districts encompass hundreds of square miles and a few thousand people. Other districts serve millions of people in a relatively small geographic area.

The potential ability to provide access to resources statewide was one of the deciding factors in organizing the District Library Center and Regional Resource Center concept. Community libraries unable to meet information needs at the local level channel requests to their District Library Center.

There with larger collections, special staff can meet the requests or implement steps to move the requests further through the network. All District Library Centers are equipped with computer terminals to data bases that link the major libraries within the state and have further potential and capability of locating resources among thousands of libraries nationally. Once an item is located within the state network and the loan is negotiated, the material is delivered to the District Library Center via the Interlibrary Delivery Service within a few days. Resources requested outside of Pennsylvania are sent to the District Library Center by mail or other means. Most District Library Centers provide local delivery service to community libraries within its jurisdiction, thus lessening the time it takes between the initiation of a request and the delivery of the resource to the local community library.

Community libraries may also share in other district center programs and services. Access to the District Library Center's film collection and linkage to the State Library Film Center is another example of resource sharing. Each District Library Center has a consultant librarian who makes periodic visits to local libraries to aid in collection development or problem solving. Regularly scheduled meetings of all library administrators in the district do much to foster library cooperation or sharing of problems and program ideas as well as keeping local library personnel informed on new trends, legislation or special activities. The District Library Centers also

have a key responsibility to trustees and local library directors and advisory groups in keeping them informed. While district-wide information sessions are planned for these policy boards, other workshops and programs are planned for citizens of the community. The District Library Centers also give assistance in data gathering, special studies and in the preparation of annual reports or development of proposals for special funding. Increasingly, the District Center Libraries have been responsible for meaningful public awareness and library promotion programs to benefit local libraries.

In addition to the District Library Center structure within the state, a growing number of library systems are beginning to emerge. Many system libraries are built upon a county library unit which serves as system headquarters for local library members. There may be other federations and system organizations formed within larger geographical service areas beyond the county unit. Membership in a system usually provides services and support offered beyond what is expected of a District Library Center. Most systems provide services through a central headquarters staff that can be administered more efficiently and/or economically than if the same functions were performed by a local library. The kinds of services offered most often are centralized purchasing, cataloging and processing of resources for all libraries in the system. Larger units with greater purchasing power can usually obtain high discount rates from book jobbers and wholesalers. Many library

systems provide central accounting services as well as a system classification, payroll and benefits program. Local libraries in systems also benefit from system-wide policies in selection, personnel, resource sharing, and those policies that ease management decisions. Library users also receive benefits from system libraries in having access to another community's library through use of a system-wide library card. Many systems also receive and distribute public funds to ensure a more equitable support of local libraries.

The success of a library system organization is only limited by the creative leadership of the system administrator and the willingness for system members to realize its potential. Many system boards are in the process of implementing locally developed system standards which go beyond standards required by the state. Membership in these highly developed systems has come to mean a great deal to members who also must make contributions in a variety of ways to ensure that system goals are maintained.

Beyond the District Library Center and system libraries is the State Library and its Bureau of Library Development. This highest state level of library leadership and development provides a staff of highly qualified professionals to give guidance and direction for library services statewide. Through its Governor's Advisory Council and a wide spectrum of special committees, task forces and study groups it establishes and enforces standards for local, district and system libraries. It

also provides in-service and continuing education programs, implements federal proposals and distributes funds to meet a variety of state and local library needs. Though most local library administrators and staff work directly with district consultants, there are often times when direct consultation with State Library and bureau personnel is desirable. Many community library personnel take advantage of well planned and timely regional workshops funded by the Bureau of Library Development. These programs provide an excellent opportunity to meet experts in special fields, learn new techniques, explore new program ideas, and share in discussions with other library personnel from throughout the state.

Throughout Pennsylvania, there are a number of library-related organizations, associations, networks and consortiums that will have value to community libraries. Three professional organizations, the Pennsylvania Library Association, the Pennsylvania School Librarians Association, and the Pennsylvania Learning Resources Association, all provide excellent opportunities through statewide conferences, regional meetings, newsletters and membership involvement to learn new ideas and approaches in cooperative practices. The Pennsylvania Citizens for Better Libraries, a statewide citizen action group, will provide guidance in building local citizen support groups. Two major regional networks, the Pennsylvania Library Network on the eastern side of the state and the Pittsburgh Regional Library Center on the state's western boundary link public, academic and

special library resources and contribute greatly to library cooperation activities. There are also many regional film consortiums as well as county and regional library associations. Their sessions foster an open exchange of ideas for library cooperation. Finally through county extension agencies and state and national networks, there are published journals, newsletters and special brochures and information packets of governmental units, professional associations, foundation supported organizations and private enterprises. These publications identify resources and ideas, as well as target on issues and trends to help local libraries meet information needs.

The assessment checklist which concludes this section of the manual is not intended to provide instant solutions to interlibrary cooperation concerns, nor will it provide immediate methods to increase the library cooperation that presently exists. Your responses to the questions and action items will help open doors to subsequent plans--still to be imagined--by you and others to work more effectively in future library cooperation efforts.

ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

	Needs Attention	Under Study	Task Completed	Date
81. Meet with District Library Center consultants or system administrators to review interlibrary loan policies and procedures.				
82. Maintain and update a list of all library and information centers in your library district or system.				
83. Request District Library Center to conduct an in-service meeting with area information personnel to discuss interlibrary loan procedures and special sources and network channels of information.				
84. Schedule and visit other libraries and information agencies in the area to assess special collections and share ideas.				
85. Request from district or system administration a report or listing of periodical holdings available in their service area.				
86. Observe on a scheduled visitation the operations of a district or system interlibrary loan or film center operation.				
87. Request the district or system administrative unit to develop an area resource guide for library users.				

	Needs Attention	Under Study	Task Completed	Date
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88. Implement book and film discussion meetings and explore updating sessions on the availability and use of other media formats.
89. Identify the types of services you receive from the district or system administrative unit.
90. Make a list of support or cooperative services not presently available, but if provided would be of benefit to your community library.
91. Explore with community agencies and area information centers the potential of providing supplemental services for a variety of library-related needs.
92. Explore with district councils and system boards the equitable distribution of local and state funds.
93. Identify five services you believe could provide a cost savings if administered under a central unit or agency.
94. Maintain procedures that would ensure your library will be on updated mailing and distribution lists of state and national bureaus and information agencies that would have benefit to your library users.

	Needs Attention	Under Study	Task Completed	Date
95.	Explore with other area community library administrators, district councils or system boards the use of new technologies to support production and dissemination of services and resources.			
96.	Identify with larger coordinating units the expected advantages achieved from central administration of personnel recruitment, job classification plans, employee benefit programs as well as central purchasing of materials, equipment, supplies, and insurance and maintenance contracts and services.			
97.	Initiate efforts for central coordinating agencies to gather data and report on an annual basis a comparative study on support and services of libraries in the area.			
98.	Request from district or system centers the development and maintenance of a clearinghouse of program ideas and resources to be utilized by information agencies in the local area.			
99.	Maintain an active and involved membership status in library-related professional and education associations as well as state and local societies and organizations.			

Needs Attention	Under Study	Task Completed	Date
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100. Develop a week-in-review log that identifies and/or highlights problems, areas of concern, creative ideas, or observations that could affect your work or library service and use this material for discussions with consultants or for library board information.