SECTION II

Findings from the State Library Agency Chief Officers’ Qualitative Questionnaire
Many factors contribute to successful deployment of technology in public libraries—most notably, adequate funding, trained staff and adequate bandwidth. Exploring these and other topics, which range far beyond hardware and software, has been a core concern of this study. The 2007–2008 questionnaire to the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) expands on the questions asked in 2006–2007 related to bandwidth and builds on funding questions asked in the online survey and site visit portions of the study. The questionnaire also sought new information about the availability of training to public library staff that would better enable them to implement, improve and expand technology access at the local level.

Many of the questions were open-ended (What goals does the State Library have for high-speed and broadband deployment for public libraries in your state?), and terms were open-ended (technology evaluation training) to allow for a wide range of responses. The feedback, not surprisingly, was often as varied as the 46 states responding. Anyone familiar with libraries knows that even single-outlet small libraries are quite different from each other—not to mention the differences between an urban California library and a rural Pennsylvania library. The same holds true for the services and resources available in the various state libraries. All responses are aggregated and the commentary synthesized, but state-to-state variation and local situational context are important factors to keep in mind when reviewing the results.

Overall, the findings show that the vast majority of state library agencies play a significant and important role in providing direct and indirect support to libraries for improved access to and use of a range of technology-based resources and services. While the nature and type of support vary considerably from state to state, this support includes funding, direction, advocacy, and visibility that promotes the success with which libraries engage in the networked environment and help their residents have better access to and use of public access computing and services.

Key findings from the questionnaire include:

- A majority of state libraries (64.4 percent) reported level or modest increases in state support for public libraries in fiscal year 2007.
- Advocacy was the most important factor affecting states that had increased financial support in FY2007.
- Licensed resources were the most common technology-related expenditure that state libraries funded directly on behalf of public libraries in FY2007.
- During the past year, advocacy/marketing and technology planning were the types of training that state libraries most frequently offered public librarians.
- Almost half (48 percent) of the chief officers reported that their state library requires public libraries to have a technology plan. Another 30 percent reported that a majority of public libraries in their state have a plan, even though it’s not required at the state level.
- When asked about the state library’s role in supporting high-speed Internet access, almost 60 percent responded that their role was one of advocacy and increasing awareness through the legislative process.

These and other findings are described in greater detail in the remainder of this section.

METHODOLOGY

The COSLA questionnaire (appendix B) intended to elucidate and elaborate on other findings from the 2006–2007 Public Library Funding and Technology Access Study (PLFTAS). Specific areas queried about in 2007–08 were:

- **Budget and funding**: State libraries were asked whether state and overall funding for public libraries had increased, decreased or stayed the same. They were asked about the percentage of increases and decreases and what the most important factor was affecting state financial support. States were asked what technology expenditures they funded on behalf of their public libraries and whether they have changed the way they use federal and state funds to support technology in public libraries.

- **Staff training and planning**: State libraries were asked what training is offered to public library staff in several areas related to funding and technology access; what barriers might exist to formal training; and what training topics would be considered the most beneficial to library staff. States were asked if the state libraries required technology plans and/or technology replacement plans of their public libraries, and, if so, how often these plans are updated.

- **Bandwidth**: State libraries were asked about their roles in supporting high-speed Internet access and goals for minimum connectivity in their states.

The questionnaire was made available via a Web survey form hosted by Survey Monkey. COSLA members were emailed November 8 and asked to log in to the online form to complete the questionnaire. Ninety percent of states (46 of 50) responded. Duplicate responses were removed, and only those answers attributed to each state’s chief officer were used for the results.

The research team thanks all of the chief officers who responded to this questionnaire—sharing their data, experiences and vision—and who, with their state data coordinators and other staff members, have supported this study over the years.

FINDINGS

**Budget and funding**

One of the most difficult areas in which to gain current and detailed information about libraries is in the area of funding—overall and specifically targeted to technology. The questions related to budget and funding complement the information provided by public libraries in the national survey that also is part of PLFTAS and provide state-level data regarding funding for public libraries.

The majority of state libraries (64.4 percent) reported level or modest (1–2 percent) increases in state funding for public libraries in FY2007. More than 37 percent reported no change in funding, and 8.7 percent reported a decrease in state funding. Of course, when inflation and rising costs are factored in, flat funding equates to an actual loss in buying power for the 37.7 percent that reported “no change.”

Of state libraries that saw an increase, the increase clustered in the 1–4 percent range (50 percent) and over 11 percent (38 percent). The distribution was similar for those that reported a decrease: 50 percent were in the 1–4 percent range, and 50 percent in the 11 percent or greater range.
When asked about overall public funding (all sources of tax revenue) for public libraries, 45.7 percent of state libraries reported an increase, 39 percent no change, 8.7 percent a decrease and 6.5 percent “other.”

### Advocacy Makes the Difference

In an open-ended question, state libraries commented that the most important factor affecting state financial support in fiscal year 2007 for those reporting an increase was advocacy. One state library reported: “Advocacy efforts by libraries led to a restoration of $1 million in state aid and an increase in a special collections appropriation of $750,000.” Other state libraries reported that connecting public libraries to student educational success, and the public’s positive impressions of public libraries’ collections and services made the difference. “Statewide advocacy efforts by libraries have convinced the Legislature that these services are important and cost-effective.”

Leadership in state government or the state library was the second most important factor reported. “New Governor promised in his campaign that he would restore ‘state aid to public libraries’ to an appropriate level. Education was his main focus, and he knows libraries are a part of the education process,” wrote one chief officer.

A budget surplus or the end of several years of budget deficits at the state level also was cited. “In the past years, our state has suffered deficits but in the immediate past year, this has leveled off. This is not a dramatic recovery but certainly is more positive than...”
Budget constraints and deficits were the leading factors cited by state libraries that saw no change or decreases in funding: “Tax limitation legislation (6 percent cap on state budget growth) coupled with additional laws that define how surplus revenues must be used. The money exists, but legally can’t go into library programs in amounts to make a difference.”

Several states responded that there is no history of state aid in their states. In fact, in the most recent State Library Agencies report, Montana lists zero under “assistance to individual public libraries,” and Colorado, Idaho, Maine, New Hampshire, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington and Wyoming listed amounts under $100. Seven other states list amounts under $1,000.  

Licensed Resources is Top Technology Expenditure

State libraries reported that the five most common technology-related expenditures the state library funded directly on behalf of public libraries in FY2007 were: Licensed resources (77 percent), “other” (39 percent, including interlibrary loan, continuing education, all of the above and none of the above) telecommunications services (30 percent), instructional technology (18 percent) and wireless access (11 percent). This contrasts with the 2006–2007 Public Library Funding and Technology Access Study,  in which public libraries reported FY2006 state funding for: licensed resources (58 percent), telecommunications services (19 percent), instructional technology (3 percent) and wireless access (5 percent).

Staff Training and Planning

The Public Library Funding and Technology Access Study has strongly identified the importance of training public library staff in areas that relate to implementing technology access and advocating for library funding. Chief officers forcefully agree with this finding. For instance, 37 percent of state libraries reported last year that a lack of local library staff expertise was a major barrier to implementing or sustaining broadband connectivity. This year’s questionnaire to state libraries asked for information related to formal training—which could be offered face-to-face or online—within six categories:

- Budget planning and development
- General accounting practices
- Fundraising
- Advocacy/marketing
- Technology planning
- Technology evaluation

State libraries also provided the frequency with which the training was offered: every few years, once a year or more than once a year.

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5. Ibid., 124, 129–130.
About 11 percent of respondents offer no formal training to public library staff in these categories. Of the state libraries that offer formal training, advocacy/marketing (37 states) and technology planning (35 states) were the most frequently provided. Much of the technology planning and evaluation training offered is tied to requirements for E-rate discounts or Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grants, or stem from participation in a grants program from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Other examples offered in follow-up calls and emails included technology planning related to automated networks, wireless implementation, and network security.

For states that offer formal training, technology planning (34 percent) was the most likely to be offered at least once a year, followed by advocacy/marketing (22 percent) and technology evaluation (19 percent).

Other training commonly provided or supported by state libraries included:

- Online resources (including use of licensed databases)
- Web 2.0 (including wikis and blogs)
- WebJunction online courses
- Web site development
- Grantmaking (including LSTA grants)
- E-rate application process
- Software applications

When asked why the state library does not offer formal training in the six specific categories, 15 of 20 libraries reported that it is provided as part of general consulting activities offered by state library development staff; seven reported that state library associations provide these services; and nine reported that other agencies—including public library systems, regional systems and multitype cooperatives—provided these services.

In its study *Library Networks, Cooperatives and Consortia (LNCC): A National Survey*, ALA found that a majority of these organizations provide automation, networking or other technology services to member libraries (159 of 243 respondents, 65.4 percent). And, on a scale of 1–5 (1 being the highest), these technology services were highly ranked as a priority now (ranked 2.3) and would be more important in the next two to three years (ranked 2.1). Two-thirds of all LNCCs (165 of 243 respondents) reported providing general consulting and technical assistance to member libraries. More than four out of five LNCCs serve public libraries. The states with the most LNCCs and the most LNCC members are California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas and Wisconsin.

Limited funding and low demand also were mentioned by state library officers as reasons for limited offerings of formal training in technology support, planning and evaluation.

Additional Training Needed
Chief officers named additional training topics that they believe would be beneficial to the public library staff in their states, including:

- Library management and leadership
- Library and technology trends
- Human resources
- Cost-benefit and return-on-investment analysis
- Repairing and troubleshooting computers
- Customer service

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6. WebJunction is an online community for library staff. Webjunction.org
Network security

Most Libraries Have Technology Plans in Place

Almost half (48 percent) of the chief officers reported their state library requires public libraries to have a technology plan, and 30 percent reported that a majority of public libraries in their state have a plan, even though it’s not required at the state level. Of these states, half are updated every three years, and about 20 percent are updated annually.

Only two states (4 percent) reported that public libraries are required to have a technology replacement plan, and another five (11 percent) reported they are in place but not required.

Bandwidth

When asked about the state library’s role in supporting high-speed Internet access, almost 60 percent responded that their role was one of advocacy and increasing awareness through the legislative process. About 26 percent of state libraries reported their role was in brokering this access and negotiating telecom costs.

In an open-ended question, most state libraries reported that their goal for high-speed and broadband deployment for public libraries is to achieve a minimum level of connectivity for all libraries in the state. While this minimum level varied from T1 to 10 Mbps or was not defined, a few respondents called for bandwidth that would be adequate to immediately access information, rather than waiting for Web pages and applications to open.

Five themes emerged from the goals about how state libraries are working to improve broadband deployment. They are:

- Investing in staff or consultants to explore options and make recommendations for improvements;
- Piloting or facilitating pilot projects (including those funded by LSTA funds);
- Including all public libraries on a statewide network;
- Improving state funding for statewide networks and other broadband options; and
Identifying or actively working in partnership with other government or non-profit agencies to address broadband issues.

Statewide telecommunications networks referenced by survey respondents include BadgerNet in Wisconsin; the Illinois Century Network; JerseyConnect (launched in New Jersey in 2006); the Kentucky Education Network (KEN); MOREnet in Missouri; the Ohio Public Library Information Network (OPLIN); and the Rhode Island Network for Educational Technology (RINET).

Several state libraries work in collaboration with their state department of education and/or a statewide technology office to develop and implement plans for more robust connectivity and statewide networks.

About one-quarter of respondents did not share a goal or reported that this was a local responsibility.

When asked if their state has a target goal for minimum connectivity, 35 percent reported there was no state goal. Of the 16 states that do have a target minimum, the majority (10) reported that this minimum goal is 1.5 Mbps (or T1). Twelve states selected “other,” and most reported that this was a “moving target.” One state library expressed a common sentiment: “The goal is to improve the access for all public libraries—for some that is greater than 10 Mbps, for some that is T1 and others it would be 769 kbps.”

Thirty-six state libraries provided a range of responses to an open-ended question about how funders and regional, state and national library organizations can assist them in achieving their broadband goals. The responses clustered around three main roles.

**Advocacy and Education**

The leading request for outside assistance was focused on advocacy and increased awareness of the importance of providing high-speed Internet access through libraries. Advocacy for increased funding—particularly the E-rate discount—was a major area of need. State libraries requested that other library organizations advocate for the continuation of the E-rate program, for simplification in the E-rate application process and for more flexible use of E-rate funds. “Where services such as POTS (plain old telephone service) and data circuits are ongoing and unchanged, discounts should not be dependent on filing forms on (an) annual basis with fears raised that funding may be discontinued if they are not completed successfully. Connectivity should be ubiquitous, not based on regularly navigating bureaucracy!” one respondent wrote.

State libraries sought assistance in keeping libraries at the forefront of conversations about broadband at the state and national levels. Other advocacy needs ranged from “Help us convince our state leadership that a statewide high-speed network is a critical priority” to “raising awareness of the ‘last-mile’ considerations in rural

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communities” to “create a press kit” to “promote public library Internet access, its benefits, the outcomes, etc.”

State libraries further identified needs related to training and continuing education around best practices, and the value of broadband and network innovations for library staff and state leaders.

Standards
Several state libraries called for a broadband minimum standard to be set and advocated at the national level. “Make broadband ubiquitous—not all areas of the country can access it regardless of available funding.” In addition to or instead of a national standard, other state libraries requested demonstration sites and best practices that could be used in library planning and fundraising efforts.

Funding
While several states requested help advocating for funding, several also asked for direct financial assistance in the form of incentive grants and operational funding.

Finally, another state library called for recognition that “high-speed Internet is not the sole issue”—that often, libraries struggle to simply maintain their public Internet access. Many lack access to technical support or sufficient skills, and even time to provide the necessary maintenance and support needed.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speed for Libraries in State</th>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>769 kbps–1.4 Mbps</td>
<td>2.33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.5 Mbps (T1)</td>
<td>23.26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.6 – 3.0 Mbps</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
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<td>3.1 – 5.0 Mbps</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1 – 10.0 Mbps</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater than 10.0 Mbps</td>
<td>2.33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Our state does not have a target goal</td>
<td>34.88%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>27.91%</td>
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Note: 43 respondents answered.