

# Library Services System for Iowa

## Library Services Task Force Report

### December 2000

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The Library Services Task Force would like to thank the many library professionals, trustees, board members and other interested individuals throughout the state for their efforts and participation in the development of this report. As the Task Force considered many complex issues, librarians from across the state provided comment and value from their perspectives, which is reflected in the report. With their diligence and commitment, now and in the future, Iowa's library system will continue to thrive and grow.

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# Preface

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It was a huge and arduous task to develop and plan for revamping the library services system for the residents of Iowa. This effort was not undertaken lightly or without careful examination of the need. Organizations and institutions of all kinds are struggling with change, knowing that it is critical to remain modern and responsive to a changing environment that continues to emphasize the needs of the customer and consumer. Iowa is changing, its economy is changing, the population is shifting, and, certainly, the expectations of Iowans create new demands on the public and private sectors.

These factors contribute to the impetus to move forward in redesigning the library services system. The time is right. The timing is also appropriate within Iowa's policy environment. Libraries have from time to time garnered the attention of the Legislature, particularly regarding the structure at the regional level. In addition, education is a key issue in the state, and the relationship between education and all types of libraries, including school libraries, is critical.

Over the last year, the State of Iowa embarked on the development of a plan for the next ten years. Iowa's 2010 Plan raises issues of declining populations, a diminishing work force, economy shifts, and educational and environmental challenges. Iowa's government is looking systematically at ways to plan for and approach the future.

The Library Services Task Force also knows it is critical to look to the future. Iowa has a tradition of holding literacy, life-long learning, and information as priorities. Public libraries are valued in communities throughout the state. Iowa's schools and Area Education Agencies work to ensure all schools have library and media services and resources to support student learning. The local public libraries are supported by a Regional Library System that provides critical technical assistance, support, and training. Iowa's higher education system, with its regents institutions, the community college system, and 30+ private colleges provide a network of libraries making expansive collections and specialized resources available to students and community members throughout the state. And Iowa's private sector corporations and organizations continue to develop their own collections to be available to their members, employees and families, and, in some cases, the public. Connecting these valuable resources to reconfigure a library system that will meet the needs of Iowa's future is a formidable task. The Library Services Task Force tenaciously took it on.

Effective change often comes incrementally, but incremental change requires a great deal of sustained intensity and clear planning. This report is an effort to address the needs, as well as demands, of Iowans in the future. It is no secret that younger Iowans will expect more, and the increasing and emerging number of baby boomers turning 60 years old is a growing and demanding constituency for Iowa's libraries. The increasing diversity of Iowa also generates need for new and different library services. The Task Force also clearly understands that with incremental change, the planning process can better target critical resources and allow for policies to be developed on all levels to better effect the changes.

This report is a five-year roadmap to an improved and updated Iowa library services system. It takes into consideration Iowa's 900-plus rural towns, urban areas, and the growing suburban communities. It is an effort to intentionally move toward a system that addresses

the needs of Iowa and Iowans in the future. It is planful, realistic, and provides an opportunity for success.

As a guide for librarians, library policy makers and the local level, community leaders, local and state policy makers, and library customers across the state, these recommendations create a vision of libraries as friendly, welcoming places where Iowans can access information in person or on-line, obtain, and use ideas and trusted information that will enhance their quality of life. This report specifies the steps to achieving this vision and creates an environment of opportunity to move steadily toward the new system.



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# Introduction

*The Library Services Task Force will make recommendations to the Iowa Commission of Libraries on positioning libraries to effectively and efficiently meet the future needs of Iowans.*

## Charge to the Task Force

Welcome to the unveiling of Iowa's redesigned library services system. There is no expectation that this updated system be in place and operating in a matter of weeks or months. But there is an expectation that a dynamic library services system be deliberately put into place over a five-year period—a statewide system that will continue to look into the future at information, access, educational, professional, and other needs of Iowans in all phases of their quest for life-long learning and a place to gather in an environment of ideas and information. This is a library services system that is focused on providing the best service possible to the diverse customers of all types of Iowa's libraries.

Some might view this document simply as a plan that brings together the various and unique types of libraries, emphasizes the value each provides to Iowans, integrates and enhances their opportunities to collaborate, and increases the economies of scale and return to the state on its investment in the library system. This is much more than a plan. It recognizes the complexities and shortcomings of the current library services system and the transition that will be required for libraries to develop a more interdependent approach and culture of working as a single system where possible and appropriate. It recognizes the factors at play in Iowa's library system—including retaining local control, providing trustworthy information to customers (be they students, children, professionals, or seniors), ensuring free and public access to information, workforce issues, and growing expectations of library customers.

This document includes not only what should be put into place, but also why it is needed and how it should be accomplished over time. It creates a system comprised of seven interdependent elements that by definition must function as a whole or risk breaking down the entire system. It sets forth specific steps to bring Iowa into the future of library services, de-fragmenting the system and creating a common library view for educational, academic, private, public, regents, and library support services.

The time is right for this report and the creation of a new statewide library services system. The Library Services Task Force members report an increasing voice and tempo from library users demanding libraries not only keep pace, but lead change in the field of information and access to good information for users of all ages. Expectations are considerably higher—expectations of the customer and expectations of local and state policy makers.

From the public and the government, there is a growing expectation that efficiencies increase, and that investments provide a return. There is an increasing expectation that investment (or tax dollar budget appropriations), as a result of taxing to pay for services and policy implementation, show specific outcomes or benefits. As the demand for funding increases at all levels, decisions on public funding will not be based on that is the way we've always done it. Decisions in the future will be based on whether that gives us what we really need.

These expectations necessitate change. There is a greater focus from government on customer service. Technology is a window to the world, and it is critical to make sure the

window is open to Iowans of all ages. Iowa's libraries provide access to quality information, ideas, and experiences. They provide the public venue that allows Iowans, regardless of personal circumstance, to have equitable access to information.

The library services system and the plan to implement it over a five-year span is not a panacea. It is hard work that will face a number of barriers along the way including meeting the challenges of continued rapid change and increased demand by customers and policy makers. This system takes advantage of the strengths of libraries in communities. It also requires policy makers to give Iowa's libraries a high priority as they discuss quality of life issues.

This report, with its recommendations and roadmap to the future of Iowa's library services system, provides the Iowa Commission of Libraries, the Governor, the General Assembly, local governments, and the public a workable and thoughtful response to the charge to the Task Force to position libraries to effectively and efficiently meet the future needs of Iowans. A consensus document, this report can be used by policy making bodies of all types across the state in their reviews of their roles and responsibilities as part of the statewide library services system. Its validity is confirmed by the process to develop the report which included a variety of venues for involvement of library stakeholders across the state. Its importance is confirmed by the difficult and diligent discussions about the best ways to provide enhanced services to customers without creating unintended impacts on entities outside the basic system.

Library services are a central component in Iowa's communities and individuals quality of life. This set of recommendations ensures the library services system continues to address the future information needs of Iowans as it brings those ideals into practice.

# Overview of the Library Environment

Ask typical Iowans what comes to mind when they hear the word library, and it is likely their response will include references to children, books, community pride, and a quiet place where knowledge is housed. While there are elements of truth to those responses, they are far from complete. The common view of a library is that of a public library of 25 years ago. The general image and understanding of Iowa's array of libraries and library services is severely behind the times.

Incomplete assumptions about libraries contribute to the difficulty in understanding the scope and breadth of library services to the residents of Iowa. The average Iowan does not recognize the many types of libraries offering distinct services to specialized customers. Sometimes even library advocates and stakeholders do not fully understand the current system. Certainly policy makers at all levels, with the many demands and priorities claiming their time, cannot have a clear picture of how Iowa's current library system works.

Regardless of whether there is a clear understanding of all libraries, Iowans do value and hold their libraries in high regard. Long considered a measure of an educated citizenry, libraries claim a loyal following and respect of the vast majority of community residents. With this high position in the minds and hearts of residents, there is an emerging set of expectations for more, better, and faster access to information and ideas that are free and available to the library user on demand. The higher expectations, coupled with pressure for change, challenge libraries to produce and provide services ranging from a helpful face at the desk to the on-line 24-hour reference line.

Meeting these expectations and challenges is no simple task. There are a number of perennial issues, problems, and opportunities facing libraries. Before we look at those, it is important to clarify the types of libraries, their roles, how they fit in the current system, and the entities that provide them with services support. A simplified description of the library system is provided here, with more detailed information found in the Appendix.

## Libraries in Iowa

There are four fundamental types of libraries in Iowa—academic, public, school, and special libraries. Each fulfills specific roles and complements one another in the library system. The numbers of libraries may surprise some, and the consideration of the role each plays is important in reviewing the library services system.

- Academic libraries 79
- Public libraries 540
- School libraries 1,700
- Special libraries 113

The relationships and interdependence between and among libraries is extremely complex. Each type of library serves a unique and distinct purpose and customer base. The current system adds to the complexity, separating one type of library from another by funding stream, governing body, and coordinating entity.

**Academic libraries** Academic libraries consist of libraries affiliated with higher education institutions, including the community colleges, private colleges and universities, and the Regents institutions. Each of these libraries is governed by and the budget controlled by its individual institution's board. Examples of new kinds of collaborations are in evidence, such

as the partnership consisting of the Cedar Falls Public Library, the Waterloo Public Library, Hawkeye Community College, and the University of Northern Iowa; Oskaloosa Public Library and William Penn College; QuadLink involving 20 plus Iowa libraries and neighboring Illinois libraries. There is a need for an ongoing and comprehensive way for academic libraries to plan, communicate, and work with other types of libraries.

**Public libraries** Public libraries are what the average Iowan thinks of when thinking of a library. The 540 public libraries across Iowa, provide free, public access to information, technology, and other resources to anyone who comes through the door or dials up via the Internet. Each is locally governed by a board of trustees, with strong ties to a municipality, through which much of the funding is received. Public libraries vary greatly in size, services, staffing, and collections. Three-fourths of all public libraries serve populations of fewer than 2,500. Public libraries receive 81.4 % of their funding from local sources (property taxes), 0.1% from federal sources, 2.2% from state sources, 15.7 from other sources such as gifts and grants. In recent years public libraries have sought collaborative relationships with other public libraries or academic libraries to enhance services and stretch resources.

**School libraries** School libraries serve the educational needs of children and youth in Iowa's K-12 schools through books, other media, and technology. Many school library media centers have shifted in recent years to focus more on technology support for students and teachers. There is currently no requirement that schools staff their libraries with trained library media specialists. In 1994 the Legislature removed authority from the Department of Education to require this level of staffing. There are also no statewide standards for school libraries because they operate within the policies and procedures of the local school system and are governed by the district school board. School libraries generally are not linked to public, academic, or special libraries. Funding for school libraries comes from the local school budget (which is property tax based) and is inconsistent among buildings and districts.

**Special libraries** Private corporations, nonprofit organizations, state agencies, prisons, private schools, and hospitals and health centers may have special libraries to meet the information and access needs of their clientele. Corporate or organizational libraries may house collections of highly technical or topical materials. These collections serve the staff and professionals of the controlling organization. Special libraries are funded in a variety of ways, depending on the situation. Prison libraries, for example, are funded primarily through the Department of Corrections budget. Corporate libraries, on the other hand, are funded by the business and intended for private business use. Special libraries hold valuable information, and often are willing to collaborate with other types of libraries in making their collections more widely available to other users.

Of course, it is necessary to provide support and some basic services to the various types of libraries. Under the current system, support is provided to libraries by four entities.

**Area Education Agencies** Each Area Education Agency (AEA) includes a media division that provides services to the K-12 schools. The scope of services and support to schools varies from AEA to AEA. There is no legislative mandate for AEAs to serve school media centers as an entity. Most have advisory committees of school media specialists.

**Regional Library System** Designed to provide training and technical support to libraries, the seven Regional Libraries have evolved into the primary support structure for small and medium public libraries. While there is no prohibition of the Regional System serving other kinds of libraries, only a few school, academic, or special libraries avail themselves of

Regional Library services. Large library systems find they have less need for the Regional Library services because their human resource level often allows them to independently meet their training and technical assistance needs. The Regional Library System is funded with state general funds.

**State Library of Iowa** The State Library of Iowa, a division of the Iowa Department of Education, provides services and programs to state government, libraries, and the residents of Iowa. Services for libraries include training, certification, accreditation, database acquisition, information, and many others. The State Library also serves the Iowa legislative, executive, and judicial branches in meeting their information and research needs. In short, the State Library of Iowa provides information and services to government and program coordination for libraries. Public libraries are the primary library type served by the State Library. This has come about partly because, historically, federal funds which flow through the State Library could primarily be used only for public library programs.

**Association activities** Many libraries benefit from activities and priorities of library associations. The Iowa Library Association (ILA) is open to librarians from all types of libraries. Subdivisions within the ILA serve more specific interests of special libraries, academic libraries, public libraries. The Iowa Educational Media Association (IEMA) membership is school library media specialists.

## **Current Governance and Funding of Iowa Libraries and Support Systems**

**Public Libraries** Iowa's 540 public libraries are governed by independent local boards appointed by municipal government and funded primarily by local property taxes, with additional sums from fines and fees, contracts with adjoining areas, and state and federal support. To receive state funding through Enrich Iowa, public libraries must meet at a minimum, some basic standards set by the Iowa Commission of Libraries.

**School Library Media Centers** Approximately 1,700 school library media centers are part of local school districts, which are governed by independent local school boards and funded primarily by local property taxes. Accreditation standards for public schools are set by the State Board of Education, but do not include standards for school libraries.

**Community College Libraries** Community College Libraries are located on each major community college campus and, in some instances, are available in attendance centers. Community colleges are governed by locally-elected boards and are funded from three basic sources of revenue in addition to two smaller revenue categories. The major sources of revenue supporting the operations of the community colleges of Iowa are as follows:

- Local property taxes,
- General state aid, and
- Student tuition and fees.

Community college budgets are approved by locally-elected Boards of Trustees and the State Board of Education.

The State Board of Education develops state requirements and standards for state accreditation of community college programs. In addition, community colleges are also eligible to receive accreditation from the North Central Association, Commission of Higher Education. Failure to receive NCA accreditation will place the community college at risk of

losing all types of federal aid to students. All of the community colleges in Iowa hold accreditation from the NCA and the State of Iowa.

**Regents University Libraries** Located at each of the Regents universities they are governed by the State Board of Regents. Their funding comes from state support, student tuition, and federal grants. Regents university libraries are accredited by the North Central Association.

**Private College Libraries** Located on the campuses of each of the 30+ private colleges in Iowa, each private college library is governed by the college's Board of Trustees. Funding comes primarily from student tuition, gifts, and endowment support. Private college libraries are also accredited by the North Central Association.

**Special Libraries** Many Iowa businesses support libraries designed to provide information and research necessary to their success. The libraries are supported by the business. Many are willing to share resources in order to have access to information when they need it. Other Iowa special libraries are located in the not-for-profit or government sector, e.g., prison and hospital libraries. They are governed by the boards of their organizations and are typically funded by the entity which establishes them.

**Area Education Agencies** Fifteen AEAs are located around the state, in regions that align with community college and ICN districts. AEAs are governed by independent boards elected from among the school districts in the region. Board members may not be employees of a school district. Funding comes primarily from local property taxes, collected at the state level and redistributed to individual AEAs based on student population served. The Iowa Department of Education approves AEA budgets. AEAs must meet accreditation standards set by the State Board of Education.

**Regional Libraries** Seven Regional Libraries are located around the state in multi-county areas. Each Regional Library is governed by a board; seven members are elected in general elections; the Director of the Department of Education appoints an AEA representative and a community college board member, both of whom are non-voting members. Funding for Regional Library services comes from the Iowa Legislature. Regional Libraries meet standards set by the State Library to receive funding.

**State Library of Iowa** The State Library of Iowa is an independent division of the Iowa Department of Education. It is governed by the eight-member Iowa Commission on Libraries; six members are appointed by the Governor, of which one must be from the medical profession. One member is appointed by the State Supreme Court and one by the Iowa Department of Education. Funding for the State Library comes from the Iowa Legislature and the federal Library Services and Technology Act.

The result of the current system is inequity between libraries limited coordination, and lost opportunities for collaboration. Other results include inefficiencies and duplication of efforts. Within the current library system in Iowa, libraries must struggle to develop common initiatives, communicate routinely, or advocate for common issues.

Consider these additional issues facing libraries in Iowa:

- The State of Iowa does not adequately fund libraries. Public libraries in Iowa receive 2% of their funding from state funds; the national average is 12%. Of the four types of libraries (public, school, academic, and special), only the public libraries have

support services such as consulting and continuing education specified in the Code of Iowa.

- There is nothing in Iowa legislation that ensures school libraries exist or are served; there are no standards for school libraries.
- The recurring scrutiny of the Regional Library System demands that libraries expend considerable political energy protecting vital support services.
- The current system does not ensure equitable access for all Iowans.
- 80% of public libraries do not have high-speed Internet access.

These are all incentives to redesign the library services system now.

Other factors contribute to the urgency to develop a new system. The role of libraries is changing. Twenty years ago no librarian would have imagined the following changes brought to the state's libraries:

- Technology, including computers, the Internet, e-books, and DVDs
- On-line services, such as databases
- Distance learning and fiber optics videoconferencing classrooms
- Demand for speed and availability of services around the clock
- Diversity of Iowans requiring diverse materials and information offered in a variety of languages
- Increasing use of library services by elders

There are pieces of today's library services system that should be retained. A number of essential principles are well-served under current practice. Though a system might be reconfigured, it will be important to retain certain aspects which now serve Iowans and libraries well.

- Local control. Communities, agencies, and institutions currently ensure their libraries serve the needs of their particular constituency and customer base. Over the years, this strong Iowa tradition has contributed to protectionism and turf issues, but a new system could maintain important local control while encouraging cooperative and collaborative efforts.
- Support services. Although not required in the Code of Iowa, school libraries/media centers may receive support services from the AEAs. Regional Libraries are mandated to provide support services for public libraries. The State Library of Iowa is the lead library agency in Iowa and develops and delivers programs and services statewide. It is critical that the library system continue to provide this type of assistance and technical support in an equitable and consistent manner.
- According to a 1998 marketing survey of library users conducted on behalf of the Iowa Library Association:
  - Public libraries came in second only to fire protection in a ranking of what Iowans considered important city services.
  - 70% of Iowans surveyed think that more tax dollars should be directed toward public libraries.
  - 71% of Iowans use the library at least once a year and 1/3 use it at least once a month.
  - 90% of Iowa library customers expect to use the library at least as much, if not more, in the future.

## **The Time for Change**

Now is the time to change Iowa's library system. The reasons for thoughtfully and planfully creating and moving toward a new statewide library services system are compelling. Library customers press for services never-before considered to be in the realm of libraries. Vast databases and resources are too costly for libraries to access independently. Opportunities for new alliances and joint efforts are emerging as technology and a mobile population make them possible and desirable. Libraries are now being seen not only as friendly community meeting places, but also as community resources, attractions, and enhancements to the quality of life of communities. Information, equitable access, and knowledge continue to drive libraries toward the future.

Individual needs add to the argument for change now. People need information to thrive in their jobs, families, and communities. Literacy in all its forms becomes even more important in this new information economy.

The future needs of Iowans are the key. The current library system does not adequately address the needs of an aging, more diverse, more urban, mobile, globally-connected, and technology-demanding populace. Change is necessary to equitably serve the customers of this state.

Library professionals often believe they operate in a response mode, rather than in a proactive manner to address future needs of their customers. They strain to keep up with current demand and need a system that will help them be leaders in developing and delivering a broader range of services. A system that provides some economies of scale that allow limited human and financial resources to be used more effectively would be welcome.

Library customers see libraries in a new way as well. They expect to be able to access specialized information from any type of library, and they will begin to demand services even from distant libraries. A reconfigured library system can foster these kinds of collaborative relationships and can begin to tell Iowans of the valuable resources available to them through their libraries. While most library patrons even today think of the library as a physical place, many new and young users access a virtual library for their daily needs. This is not to discount the importance of the library as a welcoming physical place, however. In many communities, a library is a gathering place and a nurturing environment where ideas can be aired and debated. The public will hold this fundamental principle of freedom of speech and information as a measure of the value to the community of every type of library.

Library policy makers at all levels are beginning to see libraries in new roles as well. Local and institutional governing boards review the demand for services and look at the changes in library use over the years. They understand the resource demands placed on their organization. They need to see that the funds allocated to the library are, indeed, meeting the needs of their customer base. They must meet the dual sets of expectations that may not always be harmonious—ensuring customer satisfaction and operating an efficient institution.

State policy makers necessarily take a broader perspective of library services across the entire state. In an environment of dwindling resources, they recognize the value of libraries to their constituents, but they also expect libraries to demonstrate outcomes to customers, eliminate duplication of service, deliver seamless and enhanced programs and services, and provide the State of Iowa and the taxpayers a return on their investment of tax dollars. While



not diminishing the importance of information and access services to Iowans, state policy makers expect libraries to proactively move toward economies of scale and cost effective practices. It is in this context the General Assembly sees a new library services system benefiting Iowans.

## **Moving Toward a New System**

No two libraries in Iowa are alike. There are approximately 2,400 libraries of all types in the state. The system that includes all libraries and delivers quality and instant services, provides customers seamless access to vast stores of information in a variety of ways, provides appropriate levels of support services, ensures qualified staffing, creates economies of scale, and encourages collaboration and cooperation is not simple to construct or to implement.

To guide development of the library system for Iowa, the Library Services Task Force worked from a vision for library services:

*Libraries provide all Iowans:*

*economical, convenient access to quality information, ideas, and experiences,  
expert assistance in finding and using information,  
and friendly, welcoming places to meet and exchange ideas  
to help them lead thoughtful and productive lives in vibrant communities.*

The remainder of this report suggests it is possible to create this system and put the system into place. It will require a spirit of risk-taking, openness to new opportunities, interest in collaboration, and a commitment to the hard work of making it happen. Over the next five years, Iowa will transition to its new library services system that will continue to keep its eye to the future and adapt as customer demand and new services dictate.

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# Transition to a Redesigned Library Services System

Iowa's library services system will be fully operational by 2005 when the five-year transition plan is complete. Taking a phased approach to implementation will safeguard current library services for Iowans, allow the new system to adequately develop and enact necessary legislation and rules, allow development of outcomes and expected results, and provide ample opportunity for libraries to develop cooperatives, alliances, and partnerships to better serve customers or administer library services across the state.

The transition will require integrated and decisive action. For example, governance structures must be created at the same time marketing messages are being developed. Funding must be assured to address the needs of the system as it begins to phase into operation. Timing will always remain important, and the transition must consider the daily life demands on the libraries that will carry primary responsibility for the transition, just as it will consider ensuring key parts of the system are in place as quickly as practical.

In developing the library services system, the Library Services Task Force identified seven components of the system. Each of these components is interdependent and all must be functioning to ensure an efficient and effective statewide system. The seven components are:

- Governance
- Resources/Funding
- Services
- Information
- Infrastructure
- Staffing
- Marketing

The recommendations set forth to transition to a new system demonstrate the integrated nature of these components and the need for careful implementation to ensure all seven components are in place according to a plan that allows the new system to be most productive in the shortest time frame.

The transition to a redesigned library services system cannot happen, of course, without a governance structure. Putting in place a system does not imply developing a governance structure that devours or takes over other library governance structures. It must be a governance structure that embraces and understands the needs of Iowans and the libraries that serve Iowans. The proposed Task Force governance structure proposes the creation of a new Department of Libraries and an advisory committee. Simply, the proposed governance structure places libraries in a more active role to work together to improve library services in Iowa.

Resources continue to be a challenge. Iowa's libraries are appreciative of Enrich Iowa, the state funding that is designated for public libraries. Despite this initiative, Iowa is behind the national average in state funding to public libraries. Under the proposed Task Force recommendations, the redesigned system begins to address

ways to develop economy of scale opportunities in sharing, purchasing, and mutual support and technical assistance. It also seeks to create a more customer driven administrative structure. Through the redesign, maintaining services to communities and libraries of all sizes and in all locations in the state remains a priority.

At many levels, in state and local government, there is a growing awareness of institutions needing to define and measure outcomes. The most frequently asked question in any budget policy discussion is, What are the taxpayers getting for this investment? The Task Force, in redesigning a state library system, addressed this question and developed a five-year plan that builds in measurable outcomes, shows Iowans the benefits of their investment, and seeks efficiency and competence in their administrative and service delivery structure.

Like corporate boards and investors, or private institution contributors, Iowans expect to get something from their public institutions. There remains an expectation in Iowa's schools, academic and higher education institutions, and in public libraries that when one enters the confines of the library space, or accesses it with a phone or computer, that there will be help and answers. Libraries remain one of the last vestiges of trusted, accurate and reliable information. This means that maintaining qualified staff and personnel is a priority. Certainly, access to information goes well beyond library hours, but library information needs to be available to the public any day and at any hour, every day of the year.

Books and reading continue to be of prime importance in libraries. And libraries are trusted and counted upon to provide research and information on subjects ranging from the most complicated global and far away issue to something very simple and very local, but very important to the seeker of that information. The Task Force recognizes the value and importance of improving services in the current proposed structure of governance and services.

Across Iowa, many communities are building or renovating their community libraries. In public and private schools, libraries and media centers are often the centerpiece of learning. Academic institutions tout their libraries and media capacity in recruiting students. Libraries are a significant part of Iowa's information infrastructure. If Iowa is to close the digital divide, libraries must be a part of the solution.

Iowa's librarians are vibrant and customer service oriented. The challenge in the future is to continue to staff Iowa's libraries with qualified, committed personnel. The Task Force recognized the challenges of attracting and retaining outstanding people in the current workforce environment. Sharing and supporting professional development opportunities at all levels is a key recommendation of the Task Force.

One of Iowa's best kept secrets is the value of library services. While library customers are on the increase, many of these new customers are accessing the library through technology. There are many adult Iowans who have not been in a public or school library since they were children and do not know that library services can be accessed from homes, businesses and organizations. And their perception of what a library is or what services it provides may be dependent on that childhood experience. The Task Force feels that Iowa's libraries need to become more sophisticated in their marketing of services to Iowans.

These seven key components, when including specific recommendations, provide a policy structure to support a successful redesign of Iowa's library system. Building a successful system will depend on the implementation of key recommendations in all of these components.

## **Recommendations for Iowa's Library Services System**

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The library services system designed by the Task Force is organized into seven components. For each component, a set of recommendations was developed to ensure a comprehensive and integrated statewide library services system.

Among the most difficult and sensitive components is that of governance. The Task Force deliberated carefully and with considerable input from library stakeholders across the state. In the final considerations, a good deal of effort was made to ensure representation for service delivery to libraries of all sizes and types in all communities.

In addition, the Task Force has identified, in the broadest sense, potential Code changes that will need to be made by the General Assembly to implement this services system.

### **Governance**

There is an expectation in government today to provide measurable outcomes and a good return on the public's investment. The governance recommendations are the centerpiece of the Task Force's seven elements to redesign the Iowa library system. It proposes a structure that solidifies consistent support services for all types of libraries, ensures communication among providers of those support services, provides an overall statewide direction and accountability of the system, maintains local touch and representation, involves libraries as customers in decision making and acknowledges the need to support small libraries and communities throughout the State of Iowa.

#### **Governance 1:**

**Establish an Iowa Department of Libraries and Information Services to represent the needs and interests of all types of libraries. The Department will be governed by the Iowa Commission of Libraries, a policy-making board comprised of 7-9 Iowa residents. A new Advisory Committee, composed of one representative from each Unified Library Service District (see Recommendation 2) will be established to advise the Department of Libraries.**

The Iowa Commission of Libraries, which is appointed by the Governor, will hire the State Librarian.

#### **Background**

Administration, policy making, oversight, funding, and linkages between libraries and support agencies are currently inconsistent, and complex. The State Library of Iowa is an independent division of the Department of Education. The State

Librarian is hired by and reports to the Iowa Library Commission which is appointed by the Governor and submits its budget through the Department of Education.

Regional Libraries are mandated to provide continuing education, consulting, interlibrary loan and reference to libraries. Their focus is public libraries. Limited staffing and other resources prevent them from serving other types of libraries.

Area Education Agencies (AEAs) provide varying levels of support for local school library media centers. Each AEA has an independent governing board. AEAs must meet accreditation standards, including media services, established by the State Board of Education.

Community college libraries report to their individual college administrations and every two years submit reports to the Department of Education.

Regents university libraries have an unofficial joint planning group. Individually, the libraries report to their university administrations and the universities report to the Regents.

Private college libraries participate in the Iowa Private Academic Libraries group and each report to their college administrations.

Historically, because of federal funding restrictions, the State Library has focused on public libraries. However, its programs and services also benefit school, academic, and special libraries. Increasingly in the high-technology world of the Internet, the State Library is challenged to coordinate efforts among libraries of all types and sizes to ensure that every Iowan has equitable access to information, training, and support; to combine resources to reduce expenditures for new technology; and to plan for changing customer demands.

### **Issues Addressed**

Goal 8 of the Iowa 2010 Report is State and local government in Iowa have achieved national recognition for effectiveness and efficiency through voluntary regional realignment, streamlining, reallocating resources, and making services available when and where citizens demand them.<sup>1</sup>

It is the role of the library department of state government to assure equitable distribution of scarce resources, accountability of every element of the statewide library system, coordination of all elements of the system, and responsiveness of library services to the changing needs of Iowans.

Iowans want quality service delivered locally and they want a voice in determining priorities and policies. Most of all, they do not want different governance and funding streams to interfere with reliable, convenient and timely service.

### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over five years (by 2005).

### **Governance 2:**

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<sup>1</sup> Iowa 2010: *The State of our Future*, at [www.iowa2010.state.ia.us](http://www.iowa2010.state.ia.us).

**Establish seven Unified Library Service Districts to provide support services to local libraries, including, but not limited to: consulting, continuing education, interlibrary loan and reference services. Each would be governed by a policy-making board of seven members, appointed by the Iowa Commission of Libraries; each board would hire the District administrator. The representation of these new boards must include at least one of each:**

- AEA media center representative**
- Public library trustee**
- Librarian**
- Community college representative**
- At-large representative**

**Each AEA Board will include a Unified Library Service District representative.**

**Funding will be divided equally among the seven Districts. Unified Library Service District employees will be state employees for purposes of salary and insurance.**

Hiring will be based on uniform standards for qualifications for positions. To further ensure consistency of, and accountability for, service, standards for the Districts would be enhanced and each district would be reviewed and evaluated by the Iowa Commission of Libraries every five (5) years through an accreditation process.

Library District Standards and Plans of Service will include measurable objectives, to be reviewed by the district boards and approved by the Iowa Commission of Libraries. The Plan of Service will contain statewide goals to be met by each Library District.

### **Background**

For more than 20 years, the seven Regional Libraries have facilitated interlibrary loan, and provided reference support, continuing education, and consulting services, as defined in Iowa Code. Electronic library networks and other technology have resulted in dramatic changes in service patterns in recent years.

With State of Iowa Libraries Online (SILO), participating libraries are able to search, request and fill interlibrary loan requests themselves. This change has resulted in faster service to Iowans and a decrease in interlibrary loan traffic to Regional Libraries. At the same time, databases such as Electric Library and FirstSearch offered via SILO and the Internet have resulted in dramatic improvement in access to information for all libraries. As a result, libraries use of Regional reference services has decreased.

While there is less demand for interlibrary loan and reference, there is greater demand for regional continuing education and consulting services. Examples of continuing education and consulting include training on electronic information sources; assisting with library management, collection development, policy and personnel issues. The continuing education provided by Regional Libraries enable library directors to maintain their public librarian certificates. In addition, Regional Library staff will assist the State Library with implementation of programs such as Enrich Iowa, Open Access and SILO. Staff in local libraries rate Regional Library

continuing education and consulting highly effective and want it to not only continue, but expand.

**Issues Addressed**

This recommendation creates a governance structure that provides overall statewide direction, consistency and accountability; maintains local touch and representation; involves libraries as customers in decision making; establishes stronger links among Unified Library Service Districts, AEAs and community colleges.

**Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over five years (by 2005).

**Governance 3:**

**Create legislation that directs the State Board of Education to promulgate rules directing or requiring Area Education Agency Media Centers to provide support services including, but not limited to, consulting, continuing education, interlibrary loan, and reference service to school district libraries.**

**Background**

Area Education Agency Media Centers provide varying levels of support for local school library media centers. Standards for AEAs set by the State Board of Education include, support local district media centers and services.

**Issues Addressed**

Including language in the Code of Iowa, specifying consulting, continuing education, interlibrary loan, and reference service to school district libraries would strengthen support services to school libraries.

**Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over three years (by 2003).

**Governance 4:**

**Adopt a statutory requirement for joint planning and service delivery among Department of Libraries and Information Services, Unified Library Service Districts, and Area Education Agency Media Centers to enhance the library service support network.**

**Background**

During their lifetimes, Iowa citizens receive library service in their communities from public libraries, from school library media centers, from college or university libraries, and from workplace libraries. They expect a continuum of service to meet their changing needs.

**Issues Addressed**

Although there are noteworthy exceptions, in general, local public and school libraries in Iowa function separately. They are governed by independent local boards and receive funding primarily from local sources. The resources of individual libraries are often insufficient to meet basic needs, let alone address new technology, training, and service requirements. There is little incentive in the present system for formal coordination of services or sharing of staff or budgets or buildings.

Library support services are also divided by type of library. Public libraries receive support services from Regional Libraries. School library media centers may receive support services from Area Education Agencies (AEAs). There is limited joint planning or coordination between these two regional support structures. Their board structures, their funding sources, and their service packages are very different from each other.

#### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over two years (by 2002).

#### **Governance 5:**

**Encourage the creation of voluntary Library Cooperatives at the county or multi-county level through the establishment of incentive programs.**

Examples of cooperative activities, including all types of libraries, are:

- Shared programming for both children and adults,
- Shared technology person among an estimated 8-10 libraries, and/or
- Strategic planning for the cooperatives to identify future needs.

#### **Resources**

- Incentives for piloting cooperatives
- Training and consulting to assist with organizing and forming cooperatives

#### **Background**

The Iowa 2010 report recommends that local government build on successful experiences to date and move toward more regional delivery of local government service through incentives for regional alliances, not mandates. The State of Iowa should provide technical assistance and financial incentives to spur more regional delivery systems.

Local control is very important to Iowans. Individual libraries may have difficulty meeting basic needs and addressing new service needs and technology, yet there is little incentive in the present system for coordination of services or sharing of staff.

#### **Issues Addressed**

Cooperatives involving all types of libraries will provide coordination of services, reduce duplication of effort, meet changing customer needs, provide more opportunities for library programming and public services while maintaining local control of library decision making and funding.

#### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over three years (by 2003).

#### **Governance 6:**

**Create enabling legislation that provides more options for local library governance structures, such as multi-county or city/county library systems.**

#### **Background**

Iowa Code allows for the establishment of only two types of public libraries - city libraries or county libraries.



### **Issues Addressed**

This legislation would not require libraries to establish any particular structure but allow them to do so if they wished. It would allow cities, counties and wider geographic areas more options and flexibility in creating local library governance structures that fit their needs.

### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over three years (by 2003).

### **Governance 7:**

**The Department of Education will reinstate the position responsible for ensuring quality school library service. Responsibilities will include, but are not limited to, developing service standards, data collection, participation in the Department of Education's initiatives on literacy, curriculum, enhancement, etc.**

Additional resources are required. This recommendation is also one of the Staffing recommendations.

### **Background**

Up until 1993, the Department of Education was the locus of the position described in this recommendation. After this designated employee's retirement, the position was eliminated. School library media specialists and school libraries have no representation at the Department of Education. No data is collected about school libraries by the Department of Education. Unlike public library directors, school library media specialists have no source at the state level for help with providing school media services.

### **Issues Addressed**

A school library media consultant at the Department of Education would develop service standards, collect performance data about school libraries, participate in initiatives on literacy and curriculum, etc. This position would ensure quality school library media services.

### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over three years (by 2004).

## **Resources**

During the implementation phase, more detailed funding needs will be identified. Some transition funding will be needed in the interim.

One specific recommendation regarding local library funding was developed as follows.

### **Resources 1**

**Raise minimum levy for county support to municipal libraries. Retain the requirement for cities and counties to support library service.**

### **Background**

Iowa Code sets the minimum levy at 6-3/4 cents (\$.0675) per \$1,000 dollars assessed value. This levy is distributed to public libraries within a county to support library service to rural residents of that county. Currently, cities support library service at an average of \$0.96 per \$1000 assessed value, while counties support library service at an average of \$0.17 per \$1000 assessed value.

**Issues Addressed**

Raising the minimum levy would result in more equitable financial support of library service.

**Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over three years (by 2003).

## **Services**

Iowans will no longer be satisfied with the ways libraries provided services in the past. More is expected, and it must be timely and relevant.

### **Services 1:**

**Initiate a statewide 24-hour on-line reference desk.**

#### **Background**

The lifestyles of Iowa library customers are changing. With 24-hour banking, grocery stores, online bookstores, and restaurants, they are accustomed to convenient services at any time of the day and on any day of the week. Many prefer do-it-yourself service, but some still want personal assistance. As their expectations for service have changed, Iowans expect libraries to offer the same 24/7/365 service.

#### **Issues Addressed**

No Iowa libraries are open 24 hours a day and many libraries have very limited hours and staff. The cost of extending hours for any individual library is high, so requests from library customers for extended hours cannot be efficiently addressed.

#### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over five years (by 2005).

### **Services 2:**

**Provide ongoing information literacy training that enables Iowans to find, evaluate, and use information.**

#### **Background**

Iowans are learning throughout their lives. Libraries play a critical role in this lifelong learning, beginning with infant and toddler reading-readiness programs at public libraries. This continues in school libraries where students first learn to enjoy literature and then learn how to find, analyze, use and create information; followed by college, community college, or vocational training where information forms the basis of study, then to workplaces which are increasingly dependent on timely and accurate information; to their personal lives, where reading offers enjoyment and information offers answers to practical questions and insights into deeper understanding throughout adult life.

As the amount and complexity of information increases, Iowans will find it increasingly difficult and time consuming to find the information most relevant to their lifelong learning needs. Various kind of literacy are becoming more and more necessary, including information, emerging, language, and visual literacy as well as technological fluency.

Librarians are information specialists who help users with both physical and intellectual access to information. It is no longer enough simply to make information available. Librarians offer expert assistance in locating appropriate resources, learning to use various electronic and traditional tools, evaluating information for authority and relevance, and helping Iowans use new and emerging technologies.

#### **Issues Addressed**

Graduation requirements for public schools and higher education increasingly include information seeking, analysis, and presentation skills which are designed to prepare young people for careers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Without training, staffing, and collections designed to support these requirements, students will find themselves information poor.

For adults too, the challenges of rapidly-expanding, global information are daunting. Information-seeking skills are the key to managing the glut, but many adults are also worried that they lack the skills and time to sort through the complexities. They trust libraries and see an important role for libraries in helping them make the transition to information seeking via technology.

### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over three years (by 2003).

### **Services 3:**

**Develop a consistent, affordable courier system to deliver print information among all types of libraries.**

### **Background**

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, ownership is taking a backseat to access for print as well as electronic information. Many people mistakenly assume that books and other physical information packages are out-of-date in the new Internet era. In reality, much of the world's information is still available only in print form and many uses still require a physical object. A child still looks forward to climbing into his mother's lap for a story; the experience consists of equal parts language, pictures, and comfort. Travelers still pack a paperback book, a magazine, or a book-on-tape for the long hours on the road. Scholars still rely on books and bound journals to trace the roots of their subjects. For all these reasons, sharing the varied and specialized collections in Iowa libraries will enhance Iowans' access and satisfaction. At the same time, sharing responsibility for building and maintaining collections takes pressure off many libraries to have complete collections in every area.

### **Issues Addressed**

Iowa libraries collectively hold more than 20 million items, including books, journals, microforms, video and other audio-visual materials. That's 7.4 items per Iowa resident, most of which were purchased with public funds. Yet in any given library or locality in Iowa, a resident may have immediate, physical access to only a small percentage of these items.

Seven hundred Iowa libraries participate in the statewide SILO union catalog, so their holdings are known to other libraries. In 1999, these libraries lent nearly 160,000 items through the state-subsidized Access Plus interlibrary loan program. Presently, Iowa libraries use commercial delivery mechanisms (like the U. S. mail, UPS, or FedEx) to ship books and other physical items to other libraries in the state. The AEAs deliver materials to schools, and depending on the AEA, some public libraries.

As more customers discover the ease and convenience of borrowing books through interlibrary loan, they use the service more often, and when they do, shipping costs rise in direct proportion to the increase.

### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over three years (by 2003).

## **Information**

Libraries have always been expected to provide reliable information. But today, information access goes beyond the buildings of the past. Information must be available at all times to everyone.

### **Information 1:**

**Cooperatively develop trusted, evaluative, and easy-to-use web pathways to a wide variety of Internet resources. Participating Iowa libraries will work together to create these web pathways and all Iowa libraries and residents will have access to them through the Internet.**

### **Background**

Libraries have traditionally served as selectors and evaluators of the very best information. In the Internet era, the amount of information presented to residents of Iowa is increasing so rapidly that it is hard for any individual person or library to keep up. The Internet allows information to be published without the selection and screening roles played in the past by the editor, the publisher, and the reviewer. As a result the quality, currency, and reliability of information on the Internet varies widely. Libraries can make an important contribution by gathering together the very best Internet information and presenting it in an easy-to-use format.

### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over three years (by 2003).

### **Information 2:**

**License additional electronic databases that meet a broad range of user needs.**

### **Background**

More and more information is available in digital format; some only in that format. The advantages are many: instant access from home, school or work any time on any day, and up-to-the-minute information that was either unavailable or very expensive in the past; with choices to store or print. The cost of obtaining and licensing these databases remains significant and pose barriers for many libraries wishing to provide expand services to meet customer needs.

Compared with other states, Iowa is significantly behind in this area. Funding issues and the independence of and diversity among libraries can explain but not justify Iowa's lapse in providing these services.

### **Issues Addressed**

For the many small libraries in Iowa, the costs and complexities of licensing are prohibitive. They face the possibility of falling into the digital divide, along with many citizens who cannot afford access to this proprietary information. Iowa libraries have already joined together in some ways to purchase full-text databases.

Economies of scale depend on the number of users and usage, so the larger the group, the lower the cost per unit. Statewide licensing saves local libraries money.

### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over three years (by 2003).

### **Information 3:**

**Expand the SILO union catalog holdings to include every library collection in Iowa.**

### **Background**

Any individual library—school, public, academic or special—holds only a small fraction of the 20 million total items owned by all Iowa libraries, but library customers' information needs are not smaller if they live in a small town. Sharing resources among all Iowa libraries vastly increases access and reduces the necessity to duplicate specialized items. Much of the world's information still exists only in print format. Interlibrary loan is a long-standing service that allows libraries to borrow from other libraries on behalf of their patrons.

The most equitable interlibrary loan system is one in which lending and requesting are in balance for all types of libraries. This is one of the goals achieved by State of Iowa Libraries Online (SILO). Expanding SILO would include more libraries and their resources.

### **Issues Addressed**

Presently, 700 of Iowa's 2500 libraries contribute their holdings to the SILO union catalog. Contributors are primarily public libraries and college and university libraries. The collections of 1700+ school libraries are not included. For a library to contribute holdings, it must have its catalog in digital format that meets national standards.

### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over five years (by 2005).

## **Infrastructure**

Iowa is behind. Nationally, of 15,100 public libraries with Internet, 81% have direct, high-speed connections. Of the Iowa public libraries with Internet access, 19% have direct, high-speed connections. Enhancing technology as the new infrastructure, will diminish the digital divide in Iowa. The Task Force recognizes that access to information through technology will keep Iowa competitive and enhance its quality of life.

### **Infrastructure 1:**

**The State of Iowa will see that all libraries have direct, high-speed Internet connections so that Iowans will have equitable access to information.**

### **Background**

According to the Iowa 2010 report, High-speed telecommunication services in rural Iowa continue to lag behind those in metropolitan areas. This inequality of service availability has a significant influence on where businesses are choosing to locate.<sup>2</sup>

### **Issues Addressed**

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<sup>2</sup> Hypothetical snapshot: Iowa in 2010, from *Iowa: the State of our Future*, available at: [www.iowa2010.state.ia.us](http://www.iowa2010.state.ia.us).

Of the Iowa public libraries with Internet access, 19% have direct, high speed connections. Public school districts have nearly 90% connectivity to high-speed access to the Internet, with the majority aggregated through hubs at the Area Education Agencies, which are then connected to the Iowa Communications Network (ICN). Most initial connections are through the district high school. Additional work needs to be done so middle school and elementary schools and the libraries in all of these buildings can have high-speed access the Internet.

#### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over four years (by 2004).

#### **Infrastructure 2:**

**Provide accessible and appropriate spaces in libraries for Iowans to read, meet, and use collections with help from qualified staff when needed.**

#### **Background**

When Americans think of their public libraries, the main images that come to mind are of a welcoming and familiar place, according to a nationwide study conducted for the Library of Congress in 1999.

In a 1998 Gallup Poll conducted for the American Library Association, two-thirds of Americans reported using a library in the last year, in person, by phone or online. Traditional uses accounted for the highest percentages: 81 percent checked out a book, 51 percent used reference material, and 50% read a newspaper or magazine.

#### **Issues Addressed**

The library as a place is a priority in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Libraries are trusted as places to go for information and experiences and where ideas can be brought forward and discussed in an open, democratic setting.

#### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over five years (by 2005).

#### **Infrastructure 3:**

**Provide access to technology in libraries to connect customers to information and to extended services.**

#### **Background**

Libraries have important roles as technology teachers and access points linking customers to increasingly global, rapidly changing information.

#### **Issues Addressed**

Libraries must be included in any discussion of equitable access to technology in every corner of Iowa. Libraries must take advantage of technology to enhance customer service, to automate routine tasks so staff are available for customers and to collect and present data to improve decision-making.

#### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over five years (by 2005).

#### **Infrastructure 4:**

**Develop a uniform electronic data collection system for all types of libraries so outcome-based information can be compared locally, statewide, and nationally.**

#### **Background**

Taxpayers are calling for greater efficiency and accountability for public funds. State government in Iowa is initiating a continuous improvement program to force agencies to take a systemic, customer-focused look at their services and operations. Across the country, schools, hospitals, local governments, and public agencies of all kinds are being asked to prove that they are improving customer satisfaction, becoming more efficient, and adding value to their communities. Foundations and other funders are asking for proof of outcomes.

Inside libraries, pressure is also intense. With tight budgets that don't allow for experimentation and increasing costs and choices among service options, library boards and administrators face a public environment in which they can't afford to make a mistake. They need data that is recent and reliable on which to base decisions.

As the Iowa library system develops into a truly integrated statewide service environment, it will be important for individual libraries as well as state policy-makers to have data that shows how all the elements in the system are functioning, in order to make improvements.

#### **Issues Addressed**

No comprehensive, comparable data about the library services system is collected in Iowa. There are several problems with existing data:

Different data from different types of libraries is collected at different times and reported to different bodies, or not at all.

Existing data is primarily input data, reporting income and expenditures, staffing, collections, and hours open, for example. Where output data is available, it is limited to circulation figures, web site hit rates, and traffic counts, which only partially reflect the usage of a library in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

No statewide data (and very little local data) is collected about customers and potential customers, their uses of libraries, customer satisfaction, or the benefits and value of library service.

#### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over three years (by 2003).

#### **Staffing**

To keep our communities vibrant, and maintain a community place that people depend upon, libraries must be supported by the public and staffed by professionals who understand the critical services libraries provide. More recruitment, retention, and training will ensure certified and qualified library professionals will be available to serve Iowans.

#### **Staffing 1:**

**Develop programs to train library staff in the art of strong customer satisfaction.**



## **Background**

Americans trust their librarian and count on him/her to provide personal guidance to books and information, according to a 1996 Benton Foundation survey, which notes that customers want libraries that are high touch *and* high tech, in that order. To keep the trust and confidence of customers will be a challenge in the next few years, as customer expectations increase, new technologies challenge library staff to develop new expertise, and customers use libraries via the Internet and not face-to-face.

## **Issues Addressed**

Iowa library customers in the next decade will be older and more racially and ethnically diverse.

Most library staff who come into contact with Iowa library customers are not trained librarians, but customers assume they are and expect them to be highly skilled information navigators.

## **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over one year (by 2001).

## **Staffing 2:**

**Ensure that all Iowa students are information literate by providing strong school media programs that include appropriately certified staff.**

## **Background**

Half a million children attend Iowa public schools. Three recent studies confirm that strong school library media programs help students learn more and score higher on standardized achievement tests than their peers in library-impooverished schools.<sup>3</sup> In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the ability to find, analyze, and use information effectively will become even more critical, as the amount of information mushrooms and previous barriers to access are eliminated by low-cost telecommunications and ubiquitous technology. To prosper in the information age, Iowa students must be information fluent.

## **Issues Addressed**

In 1994, the Iowa legislature removed the requirement for districts to have certified professionals. The result has been reduction or elimination of school library media positions, followed by reduction in collection budgets and deterioration of programs designed to teach information fluency in schools around Iowa.

## **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over two years (by 2002).

## **Staffing 3:**

**The DOE will reinstate the position responsible for ensuring quality school library service. Responsibilities will include, but are not limited to, developing service standards, data collection, participation in the Department of Education's initiatives on literacy, curriculum, enhancement, etc.**

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<sup>3</sup> Dick and Jane go to the head of the class, by Christine Hamilton-Pennell, Keith Curry Lance, Marcia J. Rodney, and Eugene Hainer, *School Library Journal*, April 2000, p. 44+

Additional resources are required. This recommendation is also one of the Governance recommendations.

### **Background**

Until 1993, the Department of Education was the locus of the position described in this recommendation. After this employee's retirement, the position was eliminated. School library media specialists and school libraries have no representation in the Department of Education. No data is collected about school libraries by the Department of Education. Unlike public library directors, school library media specialists have no source at the state level for help with providing school media services.

### **Issues Addressed**

A school library media consultant in the Department of Education would develop service standards, collect performance data about school libraries, participate in initiatives on literacy and curriculum, etc. This position would ensure quality school library media services.

### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over three years (by 2003).

### **Staffing 4:**

**Assure that ongoing continuing education and consulting related to literacy and lifelong learning are available throughout the state.**

### **Background**

The rapidly-changing information environment, rising customer expectations, and expanding professional responsibilities require that library staff become lifelong learners. As designers and managers of highly complex information services, they must understand the change process and be comfortable in highly-visible leadership positions.

### **Issues Addressed**

Regional Libraries and Area Education Agencies, Library Schools, the State Library, the Iowa Library Association, and Iowa Educational Media Association provide a wide variety of continuing education offerings to all libraries. Library staff also take advantage of college courses, computer training, and other specialized courses and workshops.

Regional Libraries, AEAs, library schools, and the State Library also provide consulting expertise, ranging from phone support to onsite facilitation of planning or program development.

### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over five years (by 2005).

### **Staffing 5:**

**Develop cooperative programs among Regents institutions and community colleges to recruit and educate a diverse professional and paraprofessional library workforce.**

### **Background**

The knowledge and skills needed by library staff at all levels is increasing. Entry-level staff in all types and sizes of libraries now must have skills in customer service, must operate a

variety of complex equipment from computers and printers to phone systems

and scanners, must work evening and weekend hours, and must be capable of working in a team that often includes people from other departments and organizations. Leadership staff must travel to represent the library in increasingly important state-level planning.

### **Issues Addressed**

The Iowa library workforce is aging. In the next few years, many experienced library leaders in the state will retire, leaving a knowledge gap that will be a challenge to fill. Iowa library schools at the University of Iowa and University of Northern Iowa are not presently graduating students in numbers adequate to fill current vacant positions, let alone meet the growing number of vacancies expected in the next decade.

Many libraries in the state—school, public, and academic—find it difficult to attract and retain qualified and experienced staff. Their salaries are low, benefits are minimal or non-existent, and the work requires constant change. Even in small towns, other jobs in retail or local government often offer higher wages, more benefits, and less stress.

### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over three years (by 2003).

### **Staffing 6:**

**Set standards for library professional and paraprofessional staff education and continued professional development for all types and sizes of libraries.**

### **Background**

The library system must guarantee that library customers, wherever they may be in the state, receive service from trained information professionals.

The requirements for successfully managing a library—be it public, school, academic, or special—are increasing. The theoretical knowledge and practical skills necessary must be learned over a period of time through study and practical application with the guidance of experienced and knowledgeable library staff.

Furthermore, the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are expected to continue to change and increase. Professionals from doctors to teachers are shifting their licensing requirements away from the old once-in-a-lifetime method to a model of ongoing renewal. Certainly the rapidly-changing field of information requires continuous, lifelong learning.

### **Issues Addressed**

Entry-level standards are presently available for public librarians. After initial certification, there is a continuing education requirement of 45 contact hours (clock hours) of continuing education every three years.

School library media specialists are licensed teachers with certification in library science. Their teaching licenses must be renewed.

Academic libraries require professional staff to be graduates of an American Library Association-certified masters of library science degree program or masters degree or higher level subject specialist. In addition, there are often tenure-track requirements or salary step

requirements that must be met, which include additional education or training. Community college librarians are required to be certified by the Department of Education. There are no continuing education requirements per se in four-year colleges and universities and Regents institutions.

#### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over three years (by 2003).

#### **Staffing 7:**

**Suggest minimum salary levels for professional and paraprofessional library staff related to the relevant certification standards.**

#### **Background**

Iowa is experiencing a full-employment economy. Competition for good workers and skilled leaders is intense in every field. Libraries are no exception.

#### **Issues Addressed**

Low salaries and poor benefits, evening and weekend hours, and the stress of working with the public result in high turnover in libraries, especially in small public libraries.

Libraries spend valuable resources recruiting and training staff, only to have them leave in a few months for the private sector or better-paying public sector jobs.

Library services and planning stagnate in the periods without a director.

#### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over three years (by 2003).

#### **Staffing 8:**

**Develop staff evaluation tools appropriate for different types of libraries.**

#### **Background**

Of the factors affecting the quality of library service, none is more important than staffing. In addition, personnel costs are a major part of a library's total budget. From both a service delivery and fiscal perspective, a high priority should be placed on personnel management including staff performance evaluations. Performance evaluations can help clarify job expectations; identify training needs; enhance job performance; acknowledge employee achievements and ultimately improve customer service. Besides holding the individual employee accountable, staff performance evaluations contribute to the library's accountability.

#### **Issues Addressed**

If a library is part of an institution accredited by the North Central Association, the institution will have a program of staff evaluation. Other libraries may or may not have such a program. Developing models or tools for staff performance evaluations would help libraries initiate or improve the effectiveness of staff performance evaluations.

## **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over three years (by 2003).

## **Marketing**

Attention needs to be focused on identifying customer needs and preferences and aggressively promoting library services to meet those needs.

### **Marketing 1:**

**Conduct ongoing, coordinated market research and analysis to identify trends in demographics and lifestyles, determine priority needs of users and potential users, and initiate changes in services.**

### **Background**

Businesses and non-profit organizations around the world are becoming increasingly sophisticated in communicating with their customers and using the data to make strategic, continuous improvement.

Customer groups in the future may be significantly different than the customers of the past and present. Customers will include people of diverse cultures, ages, educational levels, economic levels, and native languages. The library system must be capable and prepared to serve such growing population segments as seniors and immigrants as well as traditional users.

Data are necessary for quality decision-making processes at the local, regional, and state level, to ensure that libraries spend their limited funding on high priority services. Data demonstrate the value of libraries and show progress, outcomes, and accountability.

### **Issues Addressed**

Currently, customer need and demand is defined individually by each library, and in many cases, because customer surveying resources are not available, no systematic market research is conducted at all. Service is based on personal relationships and intuitive understanding of the needs of library customers. That approach is no longer adequate to meet the needs of customers using the library via phone or Internet, of those speaking different languages or with disabilities, of the various market segments that libraries serve—age groups, lifestyles, income levels, geographic locations. It does not address potential customers—those people who pay taxes but do not use the library. Nor is the traditional personal service model adequate to anticipate the rapidly changing needs of customers.

## **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be fully implemented over two years (by 2002).

### **Marketing 2:**

**Develop a coordinated public relations strategy with targeted campaigns to increase public awareness and use of library resources and services.**

### **Background**

Competition for the attention of customers is fierce in every sector. For libraries, the expansion of the Internet presents a unique challenge, as customers respond to glitzy advertising touting its convenience, 24-hour-a-day access, and customized service.

The Benton Foundation has conducted extensive national research on how Americans use public libraries nationwide. In 1996, the Benton Foundation published *Buildings, Books, and Bytes: Libraries and Communities in the Digital Age*, <http://www.benton.org/Library/Kellogg/buildings.html>

According to this research, Americans strongly support public libraries. Public library services ranked very important include:

- Providing children's programs
- Purchasing books and other printed material
- Maintaining and constructing library buildings
- Providing computers and online services
- Providing a place where librarians assist people with using technology

Following *Buildings, Books, and Bytes*, in 1998 the Benton Foundation published *The Future is in the Balance*. This further national research showed:

People associate being a good parent with taking children to the library.

While Generation X-ers are not frequent library users themselves, they still want public libraries there for their own children.

Surveys showed that the public is somewhat uneasy about too much promotion of technology. Those surveyed suggested that when librarians promote technology, they should be sure to talk about the traditional technology. Otherwise, they felt that technology about libraries.

Once libraries align their services to customer needs (see Marketing Recommendation #1), they must find ways to let their customers, potential customers, and funders know about how they are meeting the needs of Iowans.

### **Issues Addressed**

Fifty-nine percent of Iowans are registered users of a public library, according to 1999 Statistics of Iowa Public Libraries. No data is available for school, academic, or special libraries.

Most Iowa libraries have limited resources. To produce a professional public relations campaign is beyond their reach. As a consequence, they have difficulty getting messages about their valuable services out to their customers and potential customers. On the other hand, messages from state-level organizations are often not well received by local newspapers and radio stations. Local libraries are perfectly positioned to customize an existing message, personalize it for the community, get it to the right media at the right time, and support it by word-of-mouth.

### **Timeline**

Given adequate resources, this recommendation can be implemented over three years (by 2003).

# Appendix

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# Process to Develop the Recommendations and Report

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Developing this set of recommendations and report regarding the library services system for Iowa was accomplished over a six-month period actively involving 45 individuals and providing information and gaining feedback from thousands of others. It was not a simple process, nor were the outcomes clear at the beginning.

The Iowa Commission of Libraries determined in Spring 2000 that it would charge a task force with developing recommendations to ensure Iowa's library services system provides what Iowans need now and in the future. They determined the task force would include diverse representation from all library stakeholder groups. Each stakeholder group appointed its own representatives.

The resulting 45-member Library Services Task Force included representation from:

- Area Education Agencies - 2
- At-Large Representatives - 4
- Community Colleges - 1
- Governor's Office - 1
- Iowa Commission of Libraries - 2
- Iowa Educational Media Association - 2
- Iowa Department of Education - 1
- Iowa Library Association - 2
- Iowa Libraries of Medium Size - 2
- Iowa Private Academic Libraries - 1
- Iowa Small Libraries Association - 5
- Iowa Urban Public Libraries Association - 2
- K-12 Schools - 3
- Legislature - 4
- Library Users - 2
- Regents Universities - 3
- Regional Library System - 2
- Regional Library Trustee - 2
- Special Libraries Roundtable - 3
- State Library of Iowa - 1

State Library of Iowa staff provided support through meeting arrangements, logistics, and coordination with the consulting groups. Process facilitation and report development was provided by Des Moines-based State Public Policy Group. Research and technical consulting was provided by Sara Laughlin & Associates of Bloomington, Indiana.

To develop the best possible system for Iowa, Task Force members found it necessary to set aside the agenda of their own job or organization and look at the issue and charge from a systemic perspective. Task Force members were asked to apply their own expertise and experience to the work of the Task Force. This approach allowed deliberations to consider the whole of library services to Iowans, rather than one piece of



services.

Meeting six times over a four-month time frame, the Library Services Task Force undertook a deliberate process to examine the needs of Iowans for library services, the current system, and developed and refined a set of recommendations to create and implement a more effective and efficient library services system over the next five years. The Task Force focused its efforts on responding to the charge of the Commission of Libraries.

*The Library Services Task Force will make recommendations to the Iowa Commission of Libraries on positioning libraries to effectively and efficiently meet the future needs of Iowans.*

The work undertaken by the Task Force required members to actively participate by being present at the meetings, by assisting in letting others know what the Task Force was doing, fielding questions from library stakeholders, and participating in the discussions and consensus decisions of the Task Force. This was a time-consuming process and included a number of complex steps.

Understanding and clarifying the role and value of all types of libraries.

Identifying needs of Iowans as well as services they demand from libraries.

Developing a vision by which to look at data and information about Iowa's current services.

*Libraries provide all Iowans:*

*economical, convenient access to quality information, ideas, and experiences,*

*expert assistance in finding and using information, and*

*friendly, welcoming places to meet and exchange ideas to help them lead thoughtful and productive lives in vibrant communities.*

Reviewing information and data on Iowa's libraries and library system to serve as background and a foundation for decision making.

Developing themes around which libraries need to fulfill needs of Iowans. The twelve themes are:

Customer service

Need and demand

Life-long learning

Equal access to information

Value

Marketing library services

Library system

Staffing and workforce

Data collection

Support services

Technology

Friendly, welcoming places

Drafting general recommendations that would address issues raised in each of the theme areas.

Reviewing the recommendations from a system perspective to develop the seven components of an Iowa library services system:

Governance

Resources

Services

Information

Infrastructure  
Staffing  
Marketing

Developing specific recommendations and timetable for a new library system to be put into place over a five-year time frame.

Throughout the Task Force process, there have been intensive efforts to communicate with a broad range of library stakeholders. From the outset, the Task Force efforts have been clearly open, with information provided to all interested parties in a variety of ways. There has been considerable effort devoted to developing honest communications at the Task Force meetings so that issues are brought forward and discussed so that all members have an opportunity to understand the full scope of the issues and concerns of particular entities. An e-mail listserv allows Task Force members to easily communicate with one another and the entire group between meetings.

The Task Force intent is to make its work fully accessible and open to all. Individual Task Force members have taken the responsibility to report and provide information to groups with which they interact. A number of other efforts extended to the broader library community (and the world!!) to encourage two-way communication:

Library Services System Survey distributed at September town meetings and mailed to 2,200 individuals.

Town meetings awareness effort as part of State Library of Iowa's annual town meetings.

ICN input session opportunity for any Iowan to provide feedback or ask questions about the draft ideas surrounding the services themes.

Website the State Library of Iowa staff maintain all current and past documents on a Library Services Task Force web site, which provides an option for e-mail feedback.

FYI a written publication (five issues) provided to 2,400 library stakeholders to update them on the activities and progress of the Task Force.

The report and recommendations of the Task Force will be forwarded to the Iowa Commission of Libraries for their consideration. The Commission will consider the report and determine what they will recommend to the Governor and the Legislature. The Commission is under no obligation to accept and forward the recommendations of the Task Force exactly as they are presented. The Commission will, however, recognize the effort, care, and diligence that went into development of the recommendations and report.

# Research and Data

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