

Challenges / Issues

- Resource Sharing
 - Future of out of system ILL: lack of support from SENYLRC; charges from MHLS = squeezing the local library; what becomes the impact on MHLS?
 - Resource sharing (holds) greatly increasing → demand/burden on staff and budgets
 - More and more interdependence on each other (member libraries) to satisfy patron demands for items → high need for standardization and enforcement of resource sharing policies and procedures across the system
- Funding
 - Tax revolts
 - Impact of stagnant funding from state; reductions at county level;
 - inability/unwillingness for some local communities to adequately fund their libraries
 - creates more and more diversity amongst member libraries which seemingly creates a challenge for MHLS to provide services for libraries with such diverse levels of funding and developmental needs
 - Can't control rising costs related to buildings and staff; making do with less and less for actual library services; feel like we're "getting squeezed by everyone"
 - Need to be able to supply fair pay and benefits in order to retain and attract good staff
 - Balancing the results of introducing great new services and the increase in usage of those services with available funding.
 - "Can't afford to get grants." Matching funds required/work needed to get the grants is overwhelming
- Demographics
 - More diversity of ethnic groups → How to best serve them all? How to provide resources to satisfy them all? How to pick resources for them? How to pay for this?
- Programming
 - Teen programming success highly dependent on "walkability" of library location in some communities
- Reference Services
 - Not so many people come in to use the print reference collection anymore
 - Noticing a trend of "talk to a live librarian" for reference, decentralized; very interested in this as a collective; what other different modes of communication are there for patrons to access reference resources in non-traditional ways (email/IM/Blogs/phone)
 - Struggling to keep up quality "ready reference" collections
 - Increase in demand for community referrals
 - Garbage pick-up; paying taxes; public documents, etc.
- Technology
 - Changes come so fast it is hard to keep staff up-to-date; concerned about staff feeling overwhelmed

- Standards
 - Lack of leadership at state level for enforcement of library standards
 - MHLs should enforce minimum standards for library service
 - Resource sharing standards must be enforced by the system
- Administration & Management
 - Struggling to develop “systems”/organizational structure to insure consistency; “If you got hit by a bus would everything fall apart?” Or are the mechanisms to carry on in place at your library?; policies, procedures – in writing – for all activities and tasks within the library needed

System Services

- Resource Sharing
 - #1 Priority = Millennium/Delivery/ILL
- Funding
 - #2 Priority = help with stabilizing sustainable funding
 - budget votes/advocacy/marketing assistance
 - Continue assisting boards with decisions about library funding
 - Please continue dissemination of available grant opportunities
 - System has to keep looking for ways to help libraries work “smarter” (more efficiently); “creative ways” to run the business of a library
 - Templated communication pieces (annual reports to the community; service brochures; presentations, etc.)
 - Centralized benefits plan for libraries to use?
- Training
 - Staff
 - Staff are getting overwhelmed by rate of change and introduction of new technology and software
 - Need Millennium training
 - How to keep staff motivated?
 - Trustees
 - Continue trustee education series
 - Support for boards during times of tough decision-making (especially funding issues)
- Youth Services
 - May need to “redeploy” staff to meet different priorities; YS on its own is not a “core service” anymore
 - Program support materials not crucial to libraries; “nice but not vital”
 - Local library staff can be a big resource for each other
 - Need more help with adult services & readers’ advisory
 - Don’t need the Health Information Project (HIP); “it’s redundant”; need different support with the teen age groups; could the grant staff and grant funds be refocused to help more libraries with this age group? Needs to have more “global” impact amongst member libraries, not just help a few
- Print Services
 - Continue design services; either phase out or improve print services
 - Increase fees for design and print services; libraries will pay more for this service willingly

- Could press/digital press be paid for through a grant?
- Currently put up with waiting for service but if quality of the press does not improve will go elsewhere
- Technology
 - Can tech support be outsourced?
 - Explore cost effectiveness of current support system
- Consultations
 - Continue to be available by phone for directors, staff and trustees
 - Continue board consultations
- Web site is valuable resource, should be continued
- Reference
 - Help with creating a quality ready reference collection as it relates to local community referral; key components for a ready reference collection

How do you define quality service?

- Patrons have a positive experience when they come in for service
- A majority of the community is served well by the library
- Library is adaptable to change; able to meet changing needs of the community in a timely manner; “Listen to what the community wants and provide it”
- “Be the library of today, not yesterday”
- “Mind Share”: convey the value of the library in such a way that even people who don’t come through your doors or use your services directly know how valuable you are to the community
- Be able to quantify quality; know when you are achieving quality service
- Communicate effectively to a broad spectrum of the community
- Director/managers are aware, on a regular basis, of how staff interact with patrons; correct problems, provide education when needed to improve customer service