

Work Plan, FY 2010 DRAFT

Introduction

Libraries are at a pivotal point in their history. On one hand, they are receiving more attention than ever before because of all the services they offer “for free” in today’s tight economy. On the other hand, studies show that people are getting more and more of the information and entertainment they need online. Where once they only had to worry about bookstores, libraries are now faced with a variety of online competitors, some of which offer their services in a much more streamlined and user-friendly way.

Not only can you have a Netflix movie delivered directly to your door, you can also go online and watch streaming movies instantly. The Netflix website is extremely easy to use and it remembers your login and password so you don’t have to remember a long string of numbers each time (such as a library barcode). The iTunes Music Store is the largest music retailer. You can download the exact song(s) you want immediately and most likely at a lower cost than it would take to get in your car and drive to the library to pick up a CD.

Content is moving online as well. Paper newspapers are disappearing and many magazines are now only available online. Though books probably won’t disappear anytime soon, the Amazon Kindle is becoming attractive to many and has over 245,000 books available in under 60 seconds. And it can read to you! Libraries aren’t transitioning to delivering content online so easily. Many don’t see the need to digitize library materials and see this as something to worry about “in the future.” The content that is online, is often hard to get to and hard to use. Our offerings are not as convenient.

Services such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter are now infringing on the library’s role as a community gathering place. It’s very easy to communicate with hundreds of your closest friends all at the same time and in the comforts of your own home. While many still strongly desire face-to-face content, the library is not always the most user-friendly place to go to get it. Though libraries have made some forays into this new world of technology, they are still, for the most part, using the same processes and procedures they have used for the past 100 years. Most still arrange the items in their collections in a way that makes much more sense to the library worker than the library user. They still require the user in most cases to come into the library to physically check out an item.

And there are still a multitude of rules. Many libraries are loath to change any of their check-out procedures and even if you’ve been a regular library customer for years you often can’t check out materials without your library card. When libraries make forays into online applications such as blogs, they make sure to turn off the comments feature so someone doesn’t write anything “inappropriate.”

NSLS is heavily invested in the survival of libraries. We believe that libraries need to change in order to survive. This work plan is intended to help our members not only to survive but to thrive. We believe that to survive and thrive, libraries need to focus on four key areas:

- Having a ***real presence in their community***, whether that be a city or town, school building or corporate setting.
- ***Streamlining work*** to make library programs and services easier to use.
- ***Focus on the future*** and what needs to happen to get there.
- ***Working collaboratively***. There is real power in numbers and with tight budgets, no one library can act alone anymore.

Following are activities that NSLS plans to undertake in FY2010 in each of these four key areas. As we proceed with this plan, we’ll be looking for ways to measure the effectiveness of our efforts, including a “before” and “after” survey of our members to help us evaluate our progress. We’ll document our results and share them with the NSLS Community throughout the year as we all work together on building the library of the future!

I. COMMUNITY PRESENCE

Goal: Help NSLS member libraries to have a stronger presence in their individual communities.

Objectives:

Offer professional development opportunities on how to work more effectively with a variety of different community groups.

Help libraries work with community groups to digitize materials of interest to the entire community.

- Encourage Digital Past participants to work with community groups to make more community-wide content available online.
- Share best practices of libraries who are already working with community groups to digitize their materials through panel discussions and other means.
- Identify digitization sources and provide discounts for libraries and their community groups.
- Allow the general public to contribute materials to Digital Past and invite commentary from Digital Past users.
- Hire trainers to help libraries work more effectively with their community groups on digitization efforts (either through LSTA grant or other means).

Encourage libraries to involve users more when considering new technologies or changes to online catalogs and other tools.

- Publicize success stories and best practices of libraries that get their customers more involved in decisions about library programs and services.
- Provide training on conducting focus groups with community groups.
- Encourage libraries to allow users to provide input to vendors when considering a new catalog, service or major equipment purchase.

Model use of Facebook, Twitter, podcasting, video and similar applications as just another way of delivering information and communicating with people, not something extra to experiment with “when there is time.”

- Recruit libraries from across the country that are effectively using these tools and ask them to share their experiences via Professional Development programs, online discussion venues, e-newsletter articles, etc.
- Include information on the NSLS website on how libraries can effectively use these tools.
- Provide hands-on training to teach library staff how to use these tools and to give them ideas for incorporating them into their daily work life.
- Model the use of mobile friendly websites and provide training and other opportunities for members to learn how to use this technology.
- Encourage libraries to redesign their websites to include features of the most user-friendly sites in the commercial world, such as online chat, tagging and commenting.
 - Incorporate as many of these technologies as possible into the NSLS website so that members have the opportunity to see them in action.
 - Share best practices.
 - Provide training as needed.

Help school and special libraries to promote their value to their parent organization.

- Offer Professional Development activities.
- Model best practices.
- Develop templates and other guides on the NSLS Marketing website to help libraries with these efforts.

II. STREAMLINING/UPDATING WORK PROCESSES

Goal: Help libraries focus less on rules and concentrate more on procedures and practices that will make it easier for the library user to use the library.

Objectives:

Develop customer service initiative for libraries interested in evaluating and streamlining their programs and procedures.

- Poll members to see who might be interested in having their customer service efforts observed and evaluated incognito.
- Recruit willing libraries to experiment with West Palm Beach-like customer driven library with fewer rules.
- Encourage libraries to use tagging and other methods to organize their materials in ways that are more familiar and easier for library customers to use.

Help libraries get more comfortable with emerging Web 2.0 technologies and to view them as everyday tools to get the work done more efficiently and effectively.

- Provide Professional Development opportunities for members to learn about the technologies their patrons are using on a daily basis and how they might incorporate them in their libraries.
- Provide hands-on training for libraries on using new technologies.
- Expand NSLS video efforts and recruit libraries to film video clips and post them on the NSLS Library Beat website and You/Tube.
- Model best practices of libraries using Web 2.0 technologies effectively through Professional Development opportunities, panel discussions, web site information, CoP postings, etc.
- Continue to model the use of these technologies on the NSLS website.

Goal: Streamline NSLS programs and services and make them easier for member libraries to use.

Objectives:

Redefine delivery as more than the physical delivery of materials and investigate alternative delivery models.

- Using the new System Standards for Delivery as a guide, investigate and implement changes to the current Delivery structure as needed to ensure that Delivery remains as cost-effective and efficient as possible.
 - Explore alternative funding models.
- Investigate and promote best practices and libraries or systems nationwide that are using new and more time and cost efficient delivery models.

Offer a variety of online educational opportunities to save members time traveling to the System.

- Utilize NSLS staff expertise when possible in online training efforts.
- Publicize WebJunction opportunities to member libraries.

Promote Digitization as a way that libraries can make more materials available to more people online, freeing up valuable library space.

- Initiate consortia offer to help libraries get materials digitized in an efficient, cost-effective manner.
- Utilize Digitization CoP to provide libraries with the latest news in the digitization field and give them a place to discuss common concerns and challenges.
- Conduct podcasts with digitization “experts” and promote them as an easy, time-saving way to learn about this field even while pursuing other activities.

- Provide training on why libraries should get involved with digitization and how they can get started. Offer training both in-person and online.
- Promote use of Digitization Lab to members and other Illinois libraries.
 - Ensure that the equipment in the Lab continues to meet member needs.
 - Explore option of having “traveling” digitization equipment so libraries do not have to bring all of their materials to the System to digitize.

Evaluate content on the NSLS website with an eye toward streamlining content and processes.

- Get member feedback on the website’s usefulness and ease of use.
- Redesign site based on member feedback.

III. FOCUS ON FUTURE SURVIVAL

Goal: Work with NSLS members to establish a model for the Library of the Future.

Objectives:

Pursue grant to help develop the Library of the Future.

Survey NSLS libraries to determine who is doing what with emerging technologies and other future-oriented applications.

- Publish results.
- Find ways to publicly reward member libraries for offering future-oriented programs and services, including building NSLS member awards program around these accomplishments.

Research and find examples of future-oriented libraries nationwide.

- Publish results using a variety of vehicles.

Find ways for our members to involve library users in helping to determine what the library of the future should look like.

- Provide training on conducting focus groups if needed.

Provide a wide variety of Professional Development programs (in-person and online) to help lead libraries into the future.

- Recruit change agents and experts to present programs.
- Offer training for library trustees to help them see the importance of changing library policies and procedures to become more relevant to library users.

Establish model for the Library of the Future.

- Recruit willing libraries to work on building a beta library of the future.
- Review ideas gleaned from research on NSLS members, other libraries and library users.
- Give each library one particular aspect of the library of the future to explore and test.
 - Consider “going Dewey-less” as one idea.
 - Consider adopting McDonalds or Barnes and Noble model, so that users would know what to expect no matter what library they walk into, e.g. similar procedures and methods for accessing and locating materials.
- Combine ideas and experiences of test group to create the model library of the future.
- Publicize results widely – locally, statewide and nationally.

Goal: Ensure that library systems stay on the cutting edge and offer the expertise needed to help lead member libraries into the future.

Objectives:

Conduct Needs Assessment to find out if NSLS programs and services are meeting the needs of our member libraries.

- Determine what different NSLS libraries are focusing on and planning for the future.
- Based on results, determine how NSLS can best help members face future challenges.
- Share results with membership.

Conduct Focus Groups to discover the most critical challenges that face NSLS member libraries and what worries them most about the future.

- Conduct groups around NSLS networking group meetings in order to ensure maximum attendance.
- Based on results, determine how NSLS can best help members face these challenges.

Develop CoP or area of NSLS website where members can discuss future-oriented ideas and share challenges and concerns.

Ensure that NSLS keeps up with the latest technological trends and ideas so that we can model and teach them to our members.

- Set up a system for continuously evaluating the technologies we use, including ways to evaluate and change methods when necessary in order to keep up with emerging technologies.
- Identify key NSLS staff members to keep up with emerging technologies and bring them back to the rest of the staff.
- Alert members to emerging technologies that they should be paying attention to.

Help libraries find ways to publicize how they are better than Google, Amazon, Netflix, etc., as well as the unique programs and services that libraries offer.

- Use marketing section of NSLS website to offer templates in a variety of different formats that libraries can use to publicize their services and emphasize their value to the community.
- Continue to film members in different scenarios in order to make them more comfortable appearing on camera.
- Offer workshops on public speaking and developing talking points to promote the value of libraries

IV. COLLABORATION

Goal: Help libraries to work more collaboratively and to realize the power of numbers when facing changes in the economy and technology in the outside world.

Objectives:

Champion and promote the need for libraries to work together.

Investigate existing collaborative models in the library world and beyond to see what we might try to implement with NSLS members.

- Publicize best practices.

Tap member expertise and find ways to share with other members.

- Recruit experts from different types of NSLS libraries to record a series of podcasts on various topics in their field of expertise.
- Promote NSLS CoPs as a tool libraries can use to work to collaboratively and to share ideas.
- Promote cooperation as libraries begin to digitize more of their materials.
 - Survey libraries to determine what digitization equipment they own and would be willing to let other libraries in their area use.
 - Challenge Digital Past participants to work more closely with schools and community groups in their area to digitize materials.

Goal: Find ways for the System to collaborate and form partnerships in order to make the best use of dwindling financial resources.

Objectives:

Collaborate with other Illinois library systems to advocate for increased funding and visibility for systems.

- Work with ILSDO to ensure that ROI data on system programs and services gets to key Illinois leaders and decision makers.

Work with other Illinois library systems to develop individual areas of expertise and to avoid duplicating programs and services.

- Work together to develop a consulting database that member libraries can use to tap into the expertise of system consultants.

Find and model new ways of collaborating with vendors and other potential partners in order to find alternative sources of revenue to help support NSLS programs and services.

- Continue to experiment with online advertising.
- Continue to explore other underwriting opportunities.