

DATE: November 10, 2017
TO: SCKLS Executive Committee
FROM: Paul Hawkins, SCKLS Director
SUBJECT: Report and Recommendations for SCKLS Grants and Services

Introduction

In April 2017 SCKLS conducted a month-long online assessment survey of the grants and services it offers member libraries in conjunction with an assessment and planning process that was held as part of the April 24 Semi-annual Meeting. In addition to evaluating relative satisfaction with and importance of various grants and services, member libraries were also asked to indicate their perceptions of SCKLS.

The overall evaluation of SCKLS by member libraries was exceptionally positive as evidenced in both the quantitative and qualitative information compiled from the online assessment. Nearly 85% of the 86 respondents indicated the level of their overall satisfaction with SCKLS grants, services and staff was “very satisfied”. The remaining 15% or 13 respondents indicated “satisfied”. One survey response which summarized overall satisfaction read: “Grants-in-aid are extremely valuable in helping provide quality service to our library users. I greatly enjoy the workshops that are provided... Automation at my library would not be possible if not for... [SCKLS]. SCKLS is a very important resource that makes excellent service possible at my library.”

This report examines information from the April 2017 SCKLS online assessment survey and planning process. The report also incorporates perspectives of the SCKLS Director, Staff and Executive Committee and will serve as a long-range plan for the next 1 – 5 years. Recommendations throughout the report are identified in **bold face type** and a summary of recommendations appears at the end of the report.

Background

The 50th anniversary year of service to member libraries coincided with efforts to evaluate and inform ourselves and member libraries about SCKLS itself. June 17, 1967 marked the official establishment of SCKLS. SCKLS staff participated in an information gathering process related to the establishment of SCKLS by visiting the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka in August 2016.

Staff obtained and had digitized more than 40 archival print records which formerly had not been available. Because the establishment authority for regional library systems resided with the Kansas State Library Advisory Commission, Topeka, and because of the mandated state archival process, records of state agencies such as the Kansas State Library Advisory Commission are held by the Kansas State Historical Society. Historical research by the SCKLS

Director and Staff provided the basis for the April 24, 2017 Assessment and Planning Process presentation that was attended by 51 member libraries.

The 50th anniversary theme and graphic of “Explore New Frontiers with the South Central Kansas Library” has been used with SCKLS Website, Infographic, Mousepads, Bookmarks and staff shirts as well as with Kansas Library Cards.



Importance of Grants and Services

In the April 2017 online survey, member libraries provided the following rankings of grants and services with the highest importance to them:

- Grants-in-aid: Public and Academic Libraries **67%**
- Other Grant Programs including Technology, Automation, Continuing Education, Program/Project, Summer Reading Program and School Interlibrary Loan **55%**
- Consulting and Expertise from Staff **53%**
- Technology Support **45%**
- Other Support Services including Rotating Collections, Interlibrary Loan and Cataloging, Youth and School **36%**
- Continuing Education and Basic Training **28%**

As an alternative method of ranking, member libraries who attended the April 2017 planning process meeting were asked to allocate \$100 among the following six areas as follows:

- Grants-in-aid **\$36**
- Other Grant Programs **\$17**
- Technology Support **\$16**
- Staff Expertise **\$13**
- Continuing Education **\$10**
- Other Support Services **\$ 9**

Annual funding and budget amounts for grant programs equal approximately 50% of total General Fund expenditures and other operating expenditures comprise the other half of General Fund expenditures. Interestingly, survey responses validate existing budget expenditure priorities.

A key principle in understanding SCKLS grants and services is that grants and services are designed and utilized differently on the basis of the size, type and need of individual member public, academic, school or special library. For example, Wichita and Hutchinson Public libraries highly value the grants-in-aid program, but they employ full-time technology staff and only occasionally use SCKLS technology support in the form of training or consulting. In contrast, some small public libraries may use every SCKLS grant and service available.

When asked to provide at least one statement about the importance of a SCKLS grant, service or staff, 85 respondents provided a total of 171 individual comments. The survey question was phrased as: (Name of grant, service or staff) is important to our library because (Reason). The statements are useful for identifying specific grants, service and staff and why they are of value for a library or respondent.

Another important validation from the survey results is that nearly 76% of respondents “strongly agree” and 22% ‘agree” that “existing... grants and services benefit public, school district, academic and special libraries.” Because SCKLS is cognizant of the need to serve all its member public, academic, school and special libraries, it strives to offer each member library at least one grant or service that is of value. Additionally, nothing in Kansas statutes or regulations requires SCKLS to provide any specific grant or service to any particular member library.

Additional information about each of the above six areas of grants and services follows.

Grants-in-aid

The grants-in-aid program annually benefits public, academic and special libraries. School district libraries are not eligible for the grants-in-aid program because school district libraries are generally not open to the public and do not provide major interlibrary loan resource sharing. However, school district libraries that annually lend at least 25 items to other libraries are eligible for the School Interlibrary Grant. The three special libraries--Hutchinson and El Dorado Correctional Facilities and McConnell AFB--are closed to the general public, but still serve unique service populations for their institutions and consequently receive an annual grant-in-aid.

As a condition for SCKLS membership, participating libraries agree to “permit any citizen of the territory comprising the system to borrow materials or receive services without charge, subject to reasonable library rules (K.A.R. 54-1-8). In 2016, the SCKLS grants-in-aid program facilitated access for 92,604 library users who reside outside of 72 established public library taxing districts. The grants-in-aid program also supported the interlibrary loan of 61,809 items to other libraries.

The grants-in-aid program has received funding prioritization for the past decade. A major factor that has contributed to the importance of SCKLS grants-in-aid has been a more than 55% reduction in state-aid funding for public libraries during the same period. The trend for decreased student enrollment in many two and four year colleges along with more limited funding within colleges, suggests the SCKLS grants-in-aid program will gain additional importance for academic member libraries. Reductions in state funding and federal funding have also affected special libraries.

Greater understanding and accountability for the grants-in-aid program has occurred from the new annual Grants-in-aid Service Contract that was initiated in 2016. Likewise, a new policy effective in 2018 safeguards SCKLS from providing more grant-in-aid support than a public library receives in local annual tax.

No additional changes in the grants-in-aid program are currently recommended. In terms of the next 3 – 5 years the grants-in-aid program may need to increase as up to 5 libraries increase in population and qualify for an increase in their base grant. SCKLS needs to take into consideration that because of growth in the next 3 – 5 years, the Derby Public Library may move into the grant-in-aid population category for a Major Resource II Public Library (25,001 – 100,000). In the budget year following the Derby Public Library reaching the 25,001 population threshold, it will be eligible for an additional \$26,980 in annual grants-in-aid funding and increase its base grant from \$13,828 to \$40,808.

Depending on population growth, other public libraries such as Augusta, Mulvane, Park City and Wellington which are in the Service Center II (2,501 – 10,000) population category may also increase from a base grant-in-aid of \$6,700 to \$13,828. Currently, SCKLS does not increase the total amount of grants-in-aid budget available for the 86 eligible public and academic libraries on the basis of changes in population. Annual adjustments in population and base grant amounts of eligible libraries are made relative to the same total grants-in-aid budget. However, base grants-in-aid amounts are higher at the Major Service Center and Major Resource II levels and become more significant relative to the total grants-in-aid budget.

Other Grant Programs

Other Grant programs offered by SCKLS include Technology, Automation, Continuing Education, Program/Project, Summer Reading Program and School Interlibrary Loan and School Makerspace grants. The value of Technology, Automation, Continuing Education and Program/Project grants is validated in the online survey responses to the question asking member libraries to provide at least one statement about the importance of a SCKLS grant, service or staff.

In addition and on average, 1 – 3 member public libraries a year have used the Professional Services grant for architectural services related to building projects. The Program/Project grants have taken on greater significance for public and school libraries wanting to fund special events or projects. A Makerspace Grant has been offered for the past three years to assist school libraries meet changing needs related to Science, Technology, Engineering and

Math (STEM) education. The E-Book Grant will sunset at the end 2017 after having met the need for initiating and developing e-resources in member public, academic and school libraries.

Over the past decade, SCKLS has revised its various grant programs to address the changing needs of member libraries. Revision of grant program has ensured greater accountability in their administration and management. Factors such as application forms, documentation requirements and grant timelines have regularly been considered and revised as needed. Full funding for the budgets of grant programs has been maintained and the pooling of unused funding in grant programs has allowed additional funding in instances in which the budgeted funding for some individual grant programs has been exceeded.

Most Other Grant Programs require some form of financial or local support from the applicant library or librarian. Member libraries value SCKLS grant programs because they are relatively easy to apply for and use. SCKLS grant programs were frequently cited in online survey responses as the only sources of funding support for new and special projects and new or special equipment or resources. The importance of Continuing Education Reimbursement grants which allow member librarians to identify and attend training and education programs that meet their individual needs was also frequently noted. Nevertheless, a caution is in order that SCKLS grant programs are not intended to be a substitute for primary local funding for ongoing services, resources or equipment.

No additional and immediate changes in Other Grants are recommended, but a new “Libraries Transform” grant is recommended to be developed by July 1, 2018. The purpose of the annual “Libraries Transform” grant would be to provide a matching grant of up to \$25,000 to assist a member public, academic, school or special library in funding a plan of change to meet the needs of its community. The grant will be funded from the General Fund Service Contingency line item and a formal proposal for the “Libraries Transform” grant with detailed guidelines will be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval.

Consulting and Staff Expertise

On the basis of their individual and varied library education and experience as well as work with member libraries on a daily basis, the current 11 SCKLS staff provide helpful consulting and expertise. Characteristics of consulting and expertise are illustrated below in responses from 58 member library participants in the April 24, 2017 Assessment and Planning process.

#5: What one word best describes SCKLS? (please words only)



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The employment longevity of four SCKLS staff with ten or more years provides a body of institutional knowledge that is valuable to member libraries in local problem-solving and development. SCKLS staff stability and experience allow newer member librarians as well as newer SCKLS staff to gain knowledge and competencies specific to meeting the needs of SCKLS member libraries. The filling of recent staff vacancies with two staff with school library experience, one with public school teaching experience and one with previous library technology support experience have strengthened SCKLS capacity. Nevertheless, hiring and retaining qualified and competent staff continues to be a critical need.

Executive Committee support for salaries, benefits and changes in workplace policies and programs have contributed to staff retention and satisfaction. Staff are encouraged and supported in their individual and group continuing education and professional development. In recent years, staff have absorbed and performed additional job duties for open positions and still been able to meet most service needs. However over an extended period, lack of staff diminishes performance and is counter-productive. Realistically, SCKLS must always be examining service needs relative to limited or reduced staffing and make necessary adjustments.

It is recommended that SCKLS develop a formal succession plan for the positions of Director and Information Technology Director. Job descriptions for all existing staff positions should be updated and additional written procedures related to job responsibilities for each position should be developed. Continued cross-training of library support positions is recommended. The Training Specialist position is the only current vacant job at SCKLS. The announced retirement of the SCKLS Information Technology Director in July 2022 is a planning focus.

Technology Support

The need and demand for SCKLS technology support services has increased during the past decade. The importance of technology support reflects the importance of technology in all types and sizes of member libraries. Of twelve budgeted SCKLS staff positions, six technology positions comprise half of the total staff.

SCKLS has been challenged to provide adequate technology support services and has made significant changes to better address the needs of member libraries. Recognition that member libraries have primary responsibility for their technology has been an incentive for SCKLS to define and limit its policies related to technology services, place greater emphasis on providing basic technology training for member libraries and change our service model to incorporate a team approach to onsite service visits as well as the use of remote technology support through TeamViewer.

The continued application and refinement of a technology support service model in which member libraries have (1) primary responsibility for their technologies, (2) SCKLS continues to define and refine its technology support services and methods, and (3) SCKLS provides basic technology skills training for member libraries is recommended.

In addition, the current five-year contract period for the South Central Kansas Automation Network (SCKAN) with the Innovative Interfaces, Inc./Polaris automation system will end in 2020. **Consideration and planning for SCKAN which is used by 24 member libraries is a current focus.** SCKAN is the only SCKLS service for which participating member libraries are charged an annual fee. SCKLS also provides support and training for the Follett/Destiny and Companion Corporation/Alexandria automation systems which along with Innovative Interfaces, Inc./Polaris are the three most-used systems in SCKLS member libraries.

Other Support Services

Other Support Services include Rotating Collections, Interlibrary Loan and Cataloging, Youth and School. Rotating Collections has seen the greatest change in recent years due to the outsourcing of deliveries which eliminated the need to replace a delivery van and for SCKLS to cover liability risks associated with a delivery van and a SCKLS-employed delivery position. High demand for more Rotating Collections materials has been addressed by adjusting the number of materials available to the 78 participating public, academic and special libraries. Small public libraries are eligible for the largest number of Rotating Collection books. Limiting the annual costs of delivery, service considerations associated with limited physical space for Rotating Collection materials and limitations associated with one-person staffing for the service have been factors in reducing deliveries to three times a year. Despite such reductions, member libraries still indicated overall satisfaction with the Rotating Collections Service.

Interlibrary Loan and Cataloging services are primarily used by small public libraries that don't have access or staffing to provide such services. As with other SCKLS support services, **the support role of SCKLS and the primary responsibility of member libraries for Interlibrary Loan and Cataloging should be clarified.**

Youth and School Services have changed in recent years as a consequence of development of services and programs for school libraries. The SCKLS school library listserv has become the primary method for communicating useful information to school librarians. Makerspace grants for school libraries have allowed school libraries to develop and acquire resources to reposition themselves as part of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education goals. Weeding, book repair and automation training are valued by school

libraries and the availability of a SCKLS website-based school services orientation has increased awareness of SCKLS.

Since 2016, the temporary employment of one part-time support staff during the maternity leaves of two regular full-time staff has been critical in allowing SCKLS to meet Rotating Collections and Interlibrary Loan service needs. Because Rotating Collections, Interlibrary Loan and Cataloging, and Youth and School Services are limited to one staff position each these positions are significantly affected by staff loss or absences. While replacement staff for Rotating Collections and Interlibrary Loan support positions can be provided for limited periods, Youth and School Services does not currently have a secondary staff position designated for cross-training. **It is recommended the Training Specialist position serve as a secondary position for the Youth and School Services position.**

Continuing Education and Basic Training

SCKLS has not had a regular, full-time Continuing Education Specialist for the past 3 – 5 years and individual staff have absorbed and performed continuing education duties. SCKLS continues to solicit and interview applicants for the open Training Specialist position. Other factors that have influenced changes in continuing education and training services provided by SCKLS include the elimination by the State Library of Kansas of its continuing education *recognition* program; the greater availability of online training; and due to reduced funding at member libraries, diminished support for member library staff attendance at continuing education events.

Nevertheless, the number and variety of SCKLS continuing education and trainings offerings always surpasses those offered by other regional library systems. In 2016, SCKLS offered 72 individual training topics that were attended by 1,309 participants. SCKLS has recognized that to secure the appropriate return on investment of staff time required to develop and deliver training, a minimum of at least six participants per training is needed. The start of the quarterly BLaST (Basic Library Skills Training Program) was postponed from September 2017 to February 2018 because of low pre-registration. However, the postponement should allow future pre-registration to reach a minimum of at least six participants.

Topics and Trends, the January and July webcast created by SCKLS Staff, has been significant in providing timely information of value to member librarians and is readily accessible online. The September 2017 SCKLS Open House and virtual Open House Map should establish a new annual venue for member librarians to network with each other and share information.

Beginning in 2018, SCKLS recommends rebranding the majority of its basic library and technology skills training offerings under the new title: “Library Talks: (Topic-Date)”. The rebranding should allow member libraries to more easily focus on the topic, month and date of SCKLS trainings. **In addition in 2018, SCKLS staff will identify and complete at least one training to further develop their online presentation skills.** The organizational goal of

improving staff online presentation skills will lead to an increase the number and technical quality of online offerings from SCKLS in the next 1 – 5 years.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The April 2017 overall evaluation of SCKLS by member libraries was exceptionally positive as evidenced in both the quantitative and qualitative information compiled from the online assessment and April 24 planning process meeting. No immediate major changes in grants and services are indicated on the basis of the assessment and planning process. However, a number of 1 – 5 year recommendations are listed below. The SCKLS Continuous Improvement model of formally and informally assessing and making improvements to SCKLS grants and services allows SCKLS to meet the changing needs of member libraries. Staffing remains a critical consideration in the provision and delivery of SCKLS grants and services.

Grants-in-aid. No additional changes in the grants-in-aid program are currently recommended. In terms of the next 3 – 5 years the grants-in-aid program may need to increase as up to 5 libraries increase in population and qualify for an increase in their base grant.

Other Grants. No additional and immediate changes in Other Grants are recommended, but a new “Libraries Transform” grant is recommended to be developed by July 1, 2018. The purpose of the annual “Libraries Transform” grant would be to provide a matching grant of up to \$25,000 to assist a member public, academic, school or special library in funding a plan of change to meet the needs of its community.

Technology Support. The continued application and refinement of a technology support service model in which member libraries have (1) primary responsibility for their technologies, (2) SCKLS continues to define and refine its technology support services and methods, and (3) SCKLS provides basic technology skills training for member libraries is recommended.

SCKAN. The current five-year contract for the South Central Kansas Automation Network (SCKAN) with Innovative Interfaces, Inc./Polaris automation system will end in 2020. Consideration and planning for SCKAN which is used by 24 member libraries will be a focus.

Staffing. It is recommended that a formal succession plan be developed for the positions of Director and Information Technology Director. Job descriptions for all existing staff positions should be updated and additional written procedures related to job responsibilities for each position should be developed. Continued cross-training of library support positions is recommended.

Relative to staffing, the support role of SCKLS and the primary responsibility of member libraries for Interlibrary Loan and Cataloging should be clarified. It is recommended the Training Specialist position serve as a secondary position

for the Youth and School Services position. SCKLS staff will be requested to identify and complete at least one training to further develop their online presentation skills.

Continuing Education. Beginning in 2018, SCKLS recommends rebranding the majority of its basic library and technology skills training offerings under the new title: “Library Talks: (Topic-Date)”.

Approved by the South Central Kansas Library System Executive Committee, November 17, 2017.