

CHAPTER 3

SITE VISITS

One key component of the data collection activities for the OnLine at PA Libraries project evaluation effort was site visits to four libraries participating in the project. The site visits provided the evaluators with: (1) an opportunity to meet with the site's library directors; (2) site library staff; (3) library directors and staff from surrounding libraries; and (4) users of the public access Internet service provided at the site libraries. This Chapter provides background information regarding the method employed for the data collection effort at the sites and a summary of the findings from each site.

INTRODUCTION

The investigators conducted the site visits during the months of June and July 1997. The objectives of the site visits were to:

- Observe the set-up and use of the public access Internet workstation and connection;
- Meet with the library directors, staff, local area librarians, and users to obtain their comments and assessment regarding project activities and the use of the public access Internet workstation and connection; and
- Identify factors that affected the overall success of providing public access to the Internet via the OnLine at PA Libraries project.

These objectives guided the development of the data collection activities employed for the site visits.

In discussions with officials from the Office of Commonwealth Libraries, the investigators developed the following set of criteria to select site libraries:

- *Geographic region.* To obtain geographical representation throughout the state, the investigators defined four regions. The regions were the northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest/central.
- *Rural designation.* A key component of the OnLine at PA Libraries project was to provide public access to the Internet in rural areas of Pennsylvania. An emphasis on rural libraries, through population density data, was therefore critical.
- *Workstation.* Site libraries had to have at least one OnLine at PA Libraries workstation that had an Internet connection as of February 1997.
- "Representative" library. Each site library needed to be a "typical" library within the region.

Candidate libraries within these regions were identified within the geographic regions using these criteria with assistance from the Office of Commonwealth Libraries staff.

During May and June 1997, the investigators contacted the directors of the libraries to confirm dates for the one-day visit. They sent each library director a letter detailing the schedule and proposed activities for the visit. The letter described topics that would be discussed in the various data collection efforts during the visit (see Appendix G). Each site visit included the following data collection activities:

- Selected documents and library background information provided to the investigators prior to their visit as well as collecting additional items while at the library;
- Interview with the director of the library;
- Group interview with library staff who had been involved in the planning or use of the public access Internet workstation;
- Focus group session over lunch with near-by library directors who also were participants in the OnLine at PA Libraries project;
- Focus group session with users from that library of the public access Internet workstation; and
- Follow-up phone conversations with the directors of the library (when needed) for additional information or clarification of the information obtained.

All libraries were extremely helpful and cooperative in assisting the investigators organize the site visits.

At each library typically there were two to four library staff interviewed; five to nine neighboring library directors interviewed; and six to 13 users in each of the focus groups. The investigators asked all participants and users to complete a questionnaire that obtained background information as well as their assessment of selected key issues (see Appendix H and I). The library directors were especially successful in obtaining participation from library users for the focus group sessions.

Both investigators participated in the site visits for libraries A and B. Then each did one additional library -- C and D. This strategy was important as a means for the investigators to fine tune the techniques and instruments during the first two visits together. Information from each of the visits informed later ones as to discussion topics and techniques. Each investigator developed notes from the sites which were then organized into this report that summarized findings for each library.

Thus, the following four summaries for each of the libraries are not verbatim accounts of the various data collection activities as described above. Rather, the investigators have organized the content into key topics and reported them below. A significant amount of information from lengthy notes, the questionnaires, and background information has been distilled into the following summary.

LIBRARY A

The library's budget is \$120,000 with approximately \$20,000 for books and \$1,500 for periodicals. The library is located in a county with a population of 47,800; the population served is 27,000, but it also serves a significant number of individuals from around and outside the county. The facility was renovated in 1987 and has about 4,000 square feet. Only 4% of the county residents have a college degree. There are four Full Time Equivalents (FTEs), one part time and one student; the library is open 63 hours per week. The library works with two library boards -- a county governing board and a system board that is more advisory in nature. The area is economically depressed although there are some small businesses. Agriculture is an important component of the local economy as well as "traffic from the Turnpike."

Interview with Director

Initially the director was reluctant to jump on this project due to his perceived lack of technical sophistication and awareness of computers in the beginning of the project. Further, the library had very tight resources, limited staff (who were not knowledgeable about computers), and limited time. At the time of the site visit he was very impressed with the workstation and provision of public access Internet use. He was very glad that this library had been part of the project as Internet access would not have occurred without such participation. And, he thought that the amount of time and effort dedicated to this project was not as extensive as he originally thought.

Set-up and Connectivity

The library received the workstation in October 1996; there was a 2-3 week delay in obtaining an Internet Service Provider (ISP) and phone line. The actual set-up was not a problem. The initial ISP went out of business; now they have a local provider who charges \$19.95/month; the phone line is \$30/month; and they spent \$200 for installation. (\$760 per year). The library has not explored leased line possibilities as yet and was unaware of leased line as an option for better and faster connectivity.

Library's IT Infrastructure

The library has four PCs -- OnLine PA; Access PA; and two OPACs that connect to the server. The director was very interested in how a LAN/networked approach might be developed rather than the "stand alone" approach currently in place. He would welcome some training from the DLC or other sources on IT

planning and how to maximize impact of computing in the library and on services. One of the investigators explained benefits of a networked strategy and he was very interested in such applications in this library. He said he would ask the DLC for workshops and information on IT planning and networks.

Support for Information Technology

The bottom line is that there is no money available for computers and information technology either in the library budget or from new sources in the county. The library was \$8000 short in revenue this year which, if not for a fund raising effort that covered most of the shortfall, would have been taken out of the book fund. The director is interested in advice and planning information for what to do next to support computing efforts at the library given this situation. He is well aware of the need for upgrades and additional equipment but not sure how or if this can be done without state aid.

Perspective of the Boards

The county board was pleased with the project and the library's participation in it, although such participation and increased county visibility did not translate into more resources. The system's board has little involvement in the project. By and large board members are not familiar with the Internet or computers. The director would like the board members to become more knowledgeable about the public access workstation.

Staff Interest

Generally, the staff were not technologically literate about computers and had some significant hesitation about using the public access workstation. The director has probably been the heavier user of the workstation although staff are now "beginning to come around." Some of the staff thought the workstation would be "an albatross" and require too much time and effort. They were also concerned about the use of the computer to access pornography. Staff, for a variety of reasons, have yet to attend formal training sessions on the Internet or computers in conjunction with this project.

Visibility and Credibility

The director believes that the public access terminal has been helpful in raising the overall visibility/credibility of the library within community. He thinks that the workstation's presence directly helped with this year's annual fund drive which raised \$8000 rather than the usual \$2500-\$3000. It is clear that a number of library users are pleased and impressed with the new service. He also noted that change comes slow in this county and that significant visibility of the public access service will take time.

Users

The director believes that Internet users are more than 50% male while the usual library user is 80-85% female. Internet users are usually "middle class, business professional" which is a group that does not normally come into the library. There is little use by the high school although it is across the street. Those students that do use the workstation are the "responsible ones." Apparently there are few terminals for the students in the schools currently, but this will change in the next year as some access and training will be provided. The director thinks that for some workstation users, they come to the library to use it for a while, are impressed, go and then try to get a connection at home.

There has been only one problematic user. He stayed on all day using chat rooms; when asked to cut back he got upset and wrote a letter to his state representative complaining about being denied access. There have been no other problems, but they intentionally put the terminal within view of librarians and close to the main desk. Initially they had a "no one under 18" policy without signed parental consent, but dropped the requirement due to the responsibility of students that were using the terminal. The library is considering a new policy/parental consent form.

Services

The director provides assistance to users "as best I can." He believes that the staff are "coming around" to providing assistance although there are some elderly staff who will probably never learn to use the computer and especially the mouse. Most of the users are self taught and get "minimal" assistance from the library staff. The director may have been too modest about his involvement as later in the user focus group participants regularly complimented him for all of his time and assistance in using the workstation for reference help. The director indicated that he has developed his own set of bookmarks for the patrons. He stated that he sees himself as competent enough to get the average user on the right track, but may not be able to help more sophisticated users.

Training

The director attended the first OnLine at PA Libraries project training session and was not impressed with it or the training. He left with the impression to *not* call for help if needed. He was very frustrated by not being able to obtain the password to Fortress to change settings for display colors, resolution, modem settings, etc. He did comment that the handouts were good. The second session he enjoyed, learned a great deal, and found the focus on reference very helpful. The instructors at this session were much better, in his view, than those at the first session. His staff, however, would not attend. The director provided them with copies of handouts and some instruction from the session. He was not sure how much the staff read or used the handouts. He thought there was too great a lag time between the first and second session.

Impacts

There have been a number of important impacts from the library's participation in this project. First, the director sees himself as much more technically literate and interested in technology applications and uses in the library. He is very impressed with the public access Internet service and sees huge potential for its use as a reference tool and for other services. He hopes that the workstation's presence will also be a catalyst to move staff into greater interest and use of computers and technology.

In addition, he has received numerous comments from library users as to the importance and success of the workstation. Despite some recent difficulties with their service provider, there is constant use of the workstation. Some of the users have "congratulated" him for having the public access terminal as it is the only means by which they would be able to access and use the Internet.

Finally, he thinks the public access terminal, although not directly helpful in obtaining additional funds from the county, did help him in fundraising and will help in the future. The "aura" of having the public access terminal makes the library look like it is "really in the information age." He plans on future fundraising efforts to take more advantage of the "presence" of the computer. The long term issue of raising expectations with the presence of public access to the Internet without adequate funding and technology knowledge has him somewhat concerned.

Staff Interviews

The investigators met with two full-time staff. One had worked for the library 20 years, the other for two years. When the library applied to participate in the project they had "mixed feelings." They were skeptical as to "who would want to use the Internet in this county?" They were a bit fearful about having to learn how to use it themselves and being able to show how to use the workstation to others.

They have started using the workstation, but they characterized themselves as "slow to learn." Patrons started coming in and taught them and the director how to use the workstation and the websites. The two staff indicated that they really rely on sophisticated users to learn from, *if* they are willing to show them. Guides that came with the computers were problematic; hands-on use was better.

Publicity

There have been a few articles in the local paper about the new service. There has also been a story in a local Vo-Tech newsletter. Generally they believe that the publicity has come from word of mouth among library users. They thought more publicity was being developed.

Users

They thought that the users represent a diversity of ages -- young to old, but mostly under 55 and between 25 and 50. They believed that the users were split relatively evenly between men and women and that they came from all economic levels, but predominantly blue collar -- which is the nature of the county. They thought that some have Internet access at home, but that the library's connection was "better" or maybe "faster." They also believe that the public access to the Internet attracted new users who had not previously used the library. "More than half of the users just use the Internet; they don't check out books." Use of the workstation continues to increase and as the students become aware of the access and learn about the Internet at school, use will probably "take off."

Except for the one instance with someone using the chat rooms extensively (see above) there have been no problems with improper use of the workstation or with pornography. The staff believe that with the workstation so close to the main desk, people would be too embarrassed if "caught viewing porn." If kids begin using the workstation a lot, however, problems might increase.

Assistance to Users

In terms of assisting users, they try to help as best they can; they give a brief tutorial -- but they noted that they only have limited knowledge and limited time to provide such tutorials. The amount of help they can provide someone really depends on how busy the library is and the availability of someone who knows enough to help the user. These staff begin work at noon on Mondays so the director is there alone to help that morning. They also rely on him for "more advanced help." One staff member commented that generally it is the younger people who know how to use the workstation. They both recognized that they needed more training and confidence in using the workstation but were unsure how they would get it or become "expert" at the computer.

Some patrons continue to offer suggestions for changes in the set-up of the computer -- including settings on the PC. The initial password protection was an issue that frustrated them: couldn't change things, but they were not technically competent to do so. They eventually relied on some users to help with configuration changes.

Problems

The public access creates problems for the librarians because the librarians cannot get access to the workstation and use it for reference questions/sources since it is usually being used by the public. Without a workstation that they can use regularly, they believe that their "comfort level" with the terminal will not increase. Both felt that they needed an additional terminal at the reference desk just for librarians. It is a bit embarrassing that the patrons know more about the workstation and the Internet than the staff.

They noted that the ISP problems in obtaining reliable connectivity created problems for them and users. A number of users were quite frustrated in not being able to use the workstation when they came to the library. The new provider seems to be much better.

Training

For a range of reasons, the staff had not been very interested in training -- "not enough time," "too much work to do," "computer was complicated," etc. Since they did not attend the second project training session (although the director asked them to attend), they still felt some unease at using the public access workstation. One of the investigators noted that there were some easy things they could do to help themselves:

- Sign up for time at the workstation to be sure that they had an opportunity to use the workstation and have "hands-on" experience.
- Have regular staff meetings once a week (including the director) to discuss use of the workstation and "favorite" sites that were good for reference.
- Purchase a couple of trade magazines like *Internet World*, or *NetGuide*, to help them learn about good websites and other information about the Internet.
- Take advantage of local training opportunities.

They agreed that these were good ideas. But it is unclear if the strategies would be implemented.

Conclusion

The two staff interviewed were generally positive about the provision of public access to the Internet in their library. It probably has been a "good thing" for the county. Both circled "3" (1 = unsuccessful, 5 = very successful) when assessing the success of the OnLine at PA Libraries project on their questionnaires. They were unsure about how it might be integrated into traditional library services and how they might better use the workstation. Throughout the session they noted their need to better learn how to use the workstation and provide better reference service, but they seemed to have some hesitancy about developing those skills.

Luncheon Focus Group with Neighboring Librarians

Over lunch, the investigators met with five neighboring librarians who had participated in the OnLine at PA Libraries project and the director of the library at the site visit (six librarians total). Their budgets ranged from \$34,000 to \$85,000. The populations of their communities ranged from 4,500 to 13,000. They described their communities as "remote, rural, and to some degree, economically depressed." Some of the libraries were open less than 40 hours per week and were "one or two-person" libraries.

These were especially dedicated librarians. Many worked hours at the library well beyond that for which they were paid. All of the librarians were enthusiastic about the project and pleased to discuss their involvement in it. Their general view of the project was "its GREAT," "the State Library did an outstanding job working with Bell Atlantic to do this," and "people love it and appreciate it."

Set-up and Connectivity

These librarians reported no significant problems with the set up of the workstation although one eventually had problems with the monitor. It took over a month to successfully fix the monitor and was quite a frustrating experience. Three of the librarians reported having problems with the ISP and having reliable connectivity. Problems included two ISPs going out of business, poor reliability, and the connection just going down unexpectedly. Costs for the connectivity were reasonable -- usually \$20-\$30 per month although some indicated that it could be a problem for their budget.

Users

There was some agreement that most of the users were younger folks as well as students. One library was in a school district where students had some access to the Internet and thus, knew how to use the workstation. This library had heavy use of the public access terminal by kids. They all expect increased use by kids as the schools provide Internet access and training. Some thought that there would be an "avalanche" of students this summer.

There was some variance across these libraries in terms of the nature of the users. In some instances new users came to the library as a result of the Internet access. In other instances the Internet users were the same users that always came to the library. One explanation for the possible difference was that some of the libraries had made a number of efforts to publicize the availability of the connection; these appeared to be the ones that then had "new" users. Most agreed that the users were often repeat users in that they used the Internet access regularly.

User Assistance

A very real problem for these librarians was being able to provide user assistance and run the library at the same time. Oftentimes they were in the library by themselves and providing instruction on the use of the workstation could not be done given "a line at the reference desk and the phone ringing." The level of assistance provided to users varied in light of how busy the librarians were with other tasks. Usually a short introduction to the workstation and basic URLs was all users needed. One librarian commented that the "hand holding" it took to get elderly folks to try the workstation and use it was "ridiculous." And that even after that effort, the user gave up in frustration.

Need for Second Workstation

These librarians were emphatic about the need for a second terminal that was intended primarily for reference work and available only, or mainly, to the librarian. In most cases, it was very difficult for the librarian to use the terminal because others were on it. Plus, trying to learn how to use the terminal while with a user is difficult and oftentimes very embarrassing. They thought that if they were going to be good on the Internet they needed their own terminal.

While they all were extremely impressed with the sources and information that one could get off various websites, they will not be able to take advantage of the workstation because users are on them “constantly.” Even when the librarians come in before or after library hours to learn the Internet, they then cannot access the workstation during regular operating hours because usually someone is at the terminal. There was some discussion about the project’s requirement that the workstation be a public access terminal rather than for the librarians.

Success Stories

All of these librarians had success stories concerning finding resources or information that otherwise could “never have been obtained at the library.” One librarian was overwhelmed with the “neat stuff” available from the federal government and noted that some of the statistical sources she had been using were “fantastic.” They also told of success stories from the users that ranged from one woman finding information about home gardening and plants to another that obtained agricultural information that helped him manage his farm. One librarian noted that they were almost always able to find material and print it for patrons that otherwise could not have been obtained except via interlibrary loan. Users were often “amazed” at what they could find.

Publicity

The librarians had very different views about the need for and importance of publicity for the public access Internet workstations. One that had done some publicity noted that it did result in new people coming to the library, but that it also resulted in waiting lines and having to develop a sign-up sheet for when people could use the terminal. Another commented that she had “plenty of use and additional publicity was not needed” and any publicity may result in “too many people wanting to use the workstation.”

Benefits and Impacts

When the investigators asked the librarians to list what they thought were the most important benefits and impacts from the project, a flurry of responses resulted that included the following:

- Visibility and credibility. In these communities, users now saw the library as “at the cutting edge of using technology.” In addition, the library is “the first place to try” to obtain information “because we have computers.”

- Reduced intellectual isolation. People in the community now had “the same access to information and resources as people in the cities.”
- Introduced computers to people. For a number of users in these libraries, this was their first exposure to a computer and learning how to use one. The users have been “empowered” to access information that they otherwise could not obtain.
- Expanded and “cost free” collections. The librarians were overwhelmed with the range, quantity, and quality of reference sources that they (and users) now accessed. “My collection is now the entire world -- and it costs me nothing,” one librarian commented.
- Use of e-mail. The ability of these librarians to now use e-mail to contact their district library and other libraries and individuals is very important to them. Because they cannot afford long distance calls, they can now “talk to anyone in the world.”
- Reduced Inter-library loans. These librarians believe that they are requesting fewer interlibrary loans. Users come in and “usually they can find *something* on the net that meets their need -- and it is full-text.”
- Collaboration with schools. Two of the librarians noted that they were collaborating with the local schools with training and use of the workstations.
- Leveraged donations and fundraising. As with the view of the director of the site library, the appearance of the computers seems somehow to have helped them in various types of fundraising efforts. One person commented that “new services seems to help fundraising -- especially if the services help children.” Another received a \$25,000 donation that came, the librarian believes, at least in part, because of the new computer presence at the library.
- Jump-started the library and the librarians. These workstations quickly moved the libraries into the computer age and did it in a relatively short time. The project also got the librarians to become computer literate and for these librarians, “I am very interested now in using the computer in the library.”

In short, there were numerous impacts and benefits that have resulted from participation in the project. Some commented that there may be more benefits yet to be realized since they had only provided Internet access for 4-5 months.

Too Successful and Raising Unrealistic Expectations?

To some degree, there was a sense that the OnLine PA project had been “too successful” in that the libraries had significant amounts of users and work that had not been there prior to the project -- and she noted “no additional staff or

resources for that workload.” One librarian commented that the success was wonderful, but she needed “more staff and resources to keep up” with the demands placed on the library. The project had raised community expectations for library services and use of computing. The reality, however, was that no additional resources from local governments would be forthcoming and they wondered how they would “cope” with this success in the future.

Recommendations

There were two sets of recommendations. The first set of recommendations dealt with the OnLine at PA Libraries project directly:

- The reference training (second session) needed to be done earlier in the project. More “hands-on” training would have been good. Possibly the district libraries could be more involved in training and project support.
- Not providing the libraries with the password to disable Fortress was unfortunate and just made it more difficult for the libraries to finally get the computers configured correctly.
- Treat librarians in participating libraries as partners in the project, not “problem children.” While it was clear that not all library staff and directors were technology literate, most consider themselves quick studies. To not include the librarians in the decisions of computer configurations (e.g., what speed the modems were set to and the resolution of the video) seemed inappropriate.
- A district electronic discussion list or perhaps a list for all the participating libraries in this project to share information about what they have learned and successes would be very useful.
- Clarifying the “next steps” for the libraries now that they are connected and providing public access Internet service. “What are we supposed to do now?”

Another set of recommendations dealt with suggestions for “Phase II” of the project:

- Provide each district library with a projector that could be loaned throughout the district so that the librarians could demo what the Internet connectivity was “all about” for groups in the community.
- Hold more training sessions and better share information in the district about successes and how to best use the new workstation.
- Provide each library with a second workstation that could be used primarily by the librarians for reference services.

- Develop an on-going collaboration with Bell Atlantic or other organization to support projects such as this.
- Learn more about IT planning and how to integrate the computers into the library better.

These librarians felt strongly about the need for some continuation of the project and to have a “Phase II.”

Conclusion

Clearly the librarians thought the project was very successful. The average response on their questionnaires regarding the success of the project was 4.2 (1 = not successful, 5 = very successful). They were concerned, however, that this “quick fix” could not be carried through into the future. To some degree this project whetted the librarians’ appetites for more computing and Internet resources. But they believed that they would not get additional resources from local governments given the economic climate in their communities. They saw this project as a very important State Library initiative and hoped the State Library would continue the initiative as it was their “only hope” for staying abreast with new technology and applications.

User Focus Group

Six individuals participated in the user focus group. The library director also was present. The group included a:

- Male pastor and writer, 43 years old
- Male manager of a used bookstore, 51 years old
- Female free lance writer, 39 years old
- Male college student, 24 years old
- Male former restaurant manager, 55 years old; and
- Female management consultant, 44 years old.

Five had college or graduate education and one had a community college degree. None considered themselves as “new users” to the library. Four saw themselves as “beginners” and two as “intermediate users” in terms of their Internet skills. For five of the six, their first ever access to the Internet came through the OnLine at PA Libraries project.

Awareness of the Internet Access

All of these users heard about the Internet connection as a result of coming to the library. They saw the workstation and were interested in using it, talked to

the director about it, and received basic instruction from him. Then, as one person put it, "I was off and running." They had not received much assistance from library staff and "learned by doing."

Use of the Internet

All of the participants were "amazed" and "impressed" with the information resources available over the net and more specifically on the Web. Each had one or more success stories of how they found information that they otherwise would not have been able to obtain. Topics that were of interest to them for which they had used the Internet were employment opportunities, information on companies, financial investments, music, hobbies, and the Civil War. One told of getting the name and address of an organization in a foreign country; another about pictures of paintings in a particular museum; and yet another about historic needlework with pictures of that needlework.

They noted that the general use of the public access workstation seems to be increasing. Two agreed that they now phone ahead to make a reservation to use the workstation because they do not want to wait when they arrive at the library. There was a general consensus that once the kids knew about the Internet from the schools it would be very difficult to gain access to the workstation. They asked the director when a second public access terminal would be available.

Access for Economic Development

Three and possibly four of the respondents used the Internet as an entrepreneur. One person commented that she uses various websites to "check-out opportunities for freelance writing." She noted that a number of sites on the Web had given her ideas or direct opportunities for selling some of her articles. This person referred to the public access workstation as her "lifeline" to the world. Another was trying to start up a virtual bookstore on the Web. Another talked about the possibility of selling crafts via the web. This discussion highlighted the view that users could use the web to compete in a global marketplace, "bring commerce" to the county, and that they were using the library's Internet connection to support local economic development.

Additional Resources for the Library's Internet Connection

The users were a bit disparaging about the likelihood that the Internet connection would result in more local government support for the library. One person stated that in his view, "anything new was good for the county," was *not* the view held by most everyone in the county -- especially local government. They stressed that this was a very conservative county, that no one would be willing to support tax increases for anything -- least of all the library, and that most people would likely see the Internet connection as a "frill." They asked the library director how the public access terminal would be maintained *after* the end of the project.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This group of users were avid supporters of the library and the public access Internet connection. They believed that such innovations at the library were critical if the county was to move forward toward the 21st century successfully. Indeed, they thought this particular county could really profit by the public access terminal because it was so poor, rural, and isolated. They also noted that their views probably were not the views of most people in the county.

One person commented that use of the Internet via the public library was especially important because many people in the county could not even have TV reception unless they paid for cable -- due to the isolation of the county. Thus, her view was that in such a situation, having a free Internet connection via the public library was absolutely essential. Without it, some county residents might "never learn about the bigger world out there." She felt the county was very provincial and the public access Internet connection would reduce that provincialism.

This group of users did not want to lose the public access to the Internet and were concerned about how the service would be maintained and expanded in the future. They saw a need for a second public access terminal now; they liked the idea of having more training sessions and thought maybe a local "expert" might volunteer to do this; and they thought additional guides, magazines, or handouts about information on the Web would also be useful.

LIBRARY B

This library has a total operating budget of \$95,000, of which \$1,100 is budgeted for books and \$2,500 for serials. It is attractive but small (5,400 square foot), relatively new (built in 1974) and located in a municipal complex. There are three full time staff at 35 hours per week and two part time staff at 15 hours per week. The library director and staff are considerably underpaid -- especially the library director who has a MLS. The library is open 50 hours per week. Participants described the local area as economically "stagnant." The school district is the major employer in town and agriculture comprises much of the local workforce and the population is an "aging one."

Interview with Director

The director was very pleased to have received the grant for participating in the OnLine PA project -- oftentimes it is difficult to compete against the bigger libraries for grants and resources. She noted that all information technology (IT) at the library had come from grants or gifts of one kind or another as there was no budget for IT available. Her district librarian has been "superb" in helping the library with getting them this grant. The director was very aware that the library was "well behind" in IT use and she saw this grant as a way to "get up-to-date."

Workstation and Connectivity

The workstation is in a prominent location very close to the main reference/circulation desk. They had no difficulties in setting up the computer. During January 1997 it was used by staff for training and in early February the workstation was made available to the public. A local Internet Service Provider donates the connection and provides unlimited use. The library does pay for the additional telephone line.

Training

Staff had very limited knowledge of the Internet, the PC workstation, and telecommunications. The first training session the director attended, sponsored by the project, had content that oftentimes was "over her head" with unclear terminology. Terms like "dot com" meant nothing to many of the participants. They needed basics on how to use the computer *before* learning how to use Internet applications. It probably would have been more helpful if staff could have been trained at this time. The second training workshop was much better and more helpful but probably should have been scheduled earlier since it dealt with reference resources.

Staff provide users with basic information only on using the workstation. Only one member of the staff is really "into using the workstation and the Internet." This person has trained other staff and also helps the director. She also has set up special bookmarks for "important or key" websites. There have been discussions at board meetings to have a training session for the public. They are considering a weekend and evening session to get all types of users. They are also

trying to get community volunteers to help with community training. The director believes that they have some users who would be very good as trainers.

The director noted the importance of ongoing training for both staff and users but also noted the lack of time, difficulty in motivating staff -- especially the elderly staff-- to participate in training. What they need most is the time to simply sit at the terminal with someone who really knows what they are doing and get "one-on-one training and help." She concluded that "there never will be enough training" done or available.

Users

There are clear generational issues with computer use: both staff and patrons. Many do not see the value to computer use just yet -- both software applications and Internet. In addition, lifestyle factors seem to affect who uses the Internet workstation. Professionals, younger folks, and kids that have access in school seem to be "typical" users. A number of the users came to the library and needed little help in using the workstation. There appears to be a number of repeat users and a set of core or regular users of the Internet workstation.

Policies and Procedures for Use

There is a sign-up sheet for users to access the Internet workstation. Users have a 30 minute time period to use the workstation. If no one is in line or has signed up, then they can stay on longer. There is a written consent form that children under 18 have to sign with their parents (while parents are present) if they are to use the terminal. As of early June the library had 47 such signed forms on-hand. A sign on the workstation states "No Chat Rooms." They have encountered only one "problem patron" in the use of the workstation -- having to do with chatrooms. There have been no problems with pornography. The director believes that having the workstation so close to the main desk and "watchful librarians" helps to minimize any such problems.

Increased Visibility and Credibility

The library is an unknown resource in general. The OnLine at PA Libraries project seems to have increased credibility/value of the library. She believes that there is increased community awareness of the library as a result of the project. There has been some press coverage (one article in the local newspaper earlier and one currently being written by the director). The director also noted that increased community awareness and visibility take time. While use of the Internet workstation is increasing, the full potential of the terminal still may not be realized by the time the project ends.

Role of the Board

The library board is a governing board that reports to city council. The library board has had some interest but has not been particularly active in the project. The board, like the community, is not technologically savvy. The board has a good

relationship with the school district which might help in working with the schools in the future regarding the Internet project. While the board is supportive about the terminal and Internet access, they have not made an effort to come in and learn it.

Too Much to Do

The director pointed out that learning to use the Internet workstation, helping users, integrating the Internet access into other library services is *in addition* to everything else that they are trying to do. Other responsibilities did not “go away” with the arrival of the workstation and Internet access. Indeed, as she noted, were it not for dedicated staff (underpaid staff at that) they could not get done what they do. So, the arrival of the Internet workstation needs to be seen in the context of all the other responsibilities they are trying to complete -- with inadequate staff, time, and budget.

Conclusion

The director stated that having the equipment or getting the equipment is always an issue. But the real issue is knowing how to use it. She recognizes that she and the staff really do not know how to take advantage of the new computing technology. They need, in her opinion, a champion/super user to really cull the resources on the net, set up bookmarks, and help the library staff better use the Internet connection.

The State Library did an excellent job in starting this project. Bell Atlantic also should be congratulated for funding the project. If it were not for this project the library would not have an Internet connection nor would they likely have one in the near future. Although there were problems with mechanics (training, use, time, etc.) this project was well worth the effort. The director stated that follow-up projects that build on the success of this project will be needed, however, if the library “is to continue to use computers and new technology.”

Group Interview with Staff

Four staff members participated in this interview session. One was full-time during the day, the other three were part-time and worked primarily in the late afternoons or evenings. Two of these staff are paid by a federal program, otherwise the library could not afford to hire them. All worked in the library prior to the OnLine at PA Libraries project. They had very mixed perceptions and expectations about the project: some were frightened and did not want to learn it; others found it a welcome tool. One staff member clearly was a “champion” for the Internet connection and workstation -- others deferred to her views and comments.

Barriers

For a number of the staff, simply using a computer and a mouse was a big first step. One participant stated, “look, we’re old and set in our ways, it’s very hard to

change and use these computers.” They all noted that they were “overloaded” with work and things that needed to be done. The Internet workstation, although it might be neat, also is simply more work. One person indicated that this whole “Internet stuff” was beyond her!

Success Stories

The one staff member, especially, is discovering Internet access as an important tool. She told of an instance where a class needed information on the environment and everything in the library was already checked out. She used the Internet to a number of Web sites and was “amazed” at all the information available and in full text. The students would never have had access to this information had it not been for the Internet connection. She noted that the connection really expands access to resources and tools; she would not be able to help some patrons without it.

Training

The one staff member really took to the Internet access. She is now getting a connection at home as well. This person and one other (not present at the interview) provide training to others on the staff. The other staff and the director generally rely on these two staff members to answer questions about both Internet and equipment. They estimate that they have provided staff with approximately 20 hours of training -- most of which they have learned on their own.

In terms of training users, most users already have some skills. The library policy is such that users do not receive much training due to lack of time. However, during the day they do answer some basic questions for those that are not familiar. In such instances they may spend 5-10 minutes and users are generally off and running. Once connected, many users easily figure out how to use the Web. In fact, the staff oftentimes learned from the users.

Users and Use of the Workstation

The staff reported that users are very positive about the Internet and are amazed at how far they can go with obtaining Internet resources. There are many repeat users. They characterized the users as young students and young men and some women. Users especially liked printing capabilities so they can immediately obtain copies of important information. One stated that the “range of resources I can access on the Internet is very impressive.” One staff member has gone out and found “important reference resources” and has bookmarked many. She does not really use the Mansfield Library homepage but has her collection of favorites.

When asked for examples of topics they have found to be especially good for patrons, a flood of responses came, including:

- Financial information;

- Sports;
- Recreational;
- Genealogy;
- Employment (very high use in this area); and
- E-mail (out only).

They thought the workstation was generally in use most all the time. There had been no problems thus far with pornography, vandalism, etc.

On the other hand some users think they can do more than they actually can and had unrealistic expectations. Some have the view that “one button for everything” and were disappointed when it took more effort. Patrons want more terminals and faster access -- the 28.8 baud modem just is too slow. The schools are just starting to have Internet and to teach it.

The schools accept Internet-based resources as sources for papers. Students are starting to expect the library to have the Internet sources since some have this in school. Staff expect significantly increased student use in the future once the schools are more online.

Visibility

Generally, the library relies on word of mouth to publicize the Internet access. Notices, etc., would come from the board and director -- the staff is really not involved in this and, as a result, they did not know of any publicity to date. They found that word of mouth is helping to bring new users/patrons because of the OnLine at PA Libraries workstation.

Conclusion

The staff, and especially the one individual who was “into” the Internet believed that the OnLine at PA Libraries project was an exceptionally good project and, despite extra work, thought it was a very good thing for their community. In terms of specific impacts on the library, they thought Internet access had the potential to reduce ILL since a number of items found in full text would not have been available in the library. In addition, they believed that Internet use may be increasing circulation since people would find information on topics and want additional sources that they could take home with them. They had the following recommendations for future activities:

- Increase the number of computer workstations -- it was becoming increasingly difficult for the staff to have access to the workstation for reference uses.
- Obtain faster modems or obtain better connectivity through leased lines.

- Provide more in-house, hands-on training; the District Library should be more involved in training; they could provide in-house “roving” trainers.
- Improve the ISP connection -- it oftentimes “times out” and the next patron may not know how to re-connect.
- Provide more time for staff to be trained and use the Internet.

One staff member said that she was really pleased that Bell Atlantic funded this project -- that patrons did notice Bell Atlantic sponsorship (through signs on the terminal, the OnLine PA mousepad, and explanations). They liked the State Library for doing this (but did not know that the State Library organized it!); everyone was a winner on this project.

Luncheon Focus Group with Neighbor Librarians

The luncheon focus group session contained nine librarians and one student intern from near-by libraries including the librarian from the site library. One participant was from the District Library and another was a staff member, all others were directors. One participant had not been involved in the project as yet but had an application in for “round two” participation. These individuals represented libraries with budgets from \$20,000 to \$130,000 per year. The focus group session lasted approximately an hour and a half and was extremely lively.

Overall Perceptions of Project

Generally, everyone had very positive views of the project, its operation and administration, and the impacts on their libraries and the community. The telephone charges they paid for connectivity were in the range of \$15-\$29 per month and this really was the only ongoing expense they had to cover. Except for one who had previously had text access, they strongly agreed that “if it had not been for this grant we would not now have Internet access.” One library had text only access to the Internet prior to the project, and the grant provided a significant upgrade in the quality of the access provided.

Leveraging the Grant for Local IT Support

The participants were very clear that while there were numerous benefits and impacts from these grants, they did not result in obtaining additional resources for IT and computing from local government for their library. “The reality is that there is no extra money in my local government and they think that too much already goes to the library.” Local government officials were “pleased” that the library got the grant -- if they knew at all -- but saw it as an “extra” for the library.

The participants agreed that the only way they would be able to upgrade this technology or build upon it would be with future grants or other types of assistance from the state. Thus, the model that providing rural public libraries with Internet connection would “hook” local governments to provide additional

support for the library in general or IT in particular simply is not accurate. Other benefits and leveraging of the connection did take place (see below), but not in terms of obtaining additional local support (as yet).

Uses and Users

Participants saw the Internet connection as supplementing and enhancing their resources and also recognized that the access provided them with resources that otherwise they could never hope to acquire and use. Many had specific stories or anecdotes about locating resources on the Internet that were “astounding,” “fabulous,” or “unbelievable.” Specific topics of useful resources included:

- Government documents;
- Medical and health information;
- History (anecdote about person interested in the Civil War);
- Job opportunities; and
- Genealogy.

The nature and types of users seemed to vary somewhat from library to library. There were divergent views as to whether the Internet connection was used most by “repeat users” versus new users; but all agreed that new users had been attracted to the library because of the Internet connection. Most agreed that the younger, more professional, and kids who knew about the Internet from school were “typical” users.” All had printers available at the rate of 5¢ - 25¢ per page and patrons took advantage of printing information they found on the Web.

Role of Library Boards

Here too there were very different views about the interest and role of the boards in the project and in Internet use and access. The reality is that many of the board members were elderly and simply did not understand the new technology and why it was needed in the library. Although they may not have been anxiously supporting the Internet access they generally “went along” and thought it was OK -- especially since it did not cost them any money. The participants doubted if the board members could be proponents for additional library IT projects since they understood little about it. Most participants agreed that only a very few of the board members had come in to use the Internet workstation or see (ask for) a demonstration.

Problems and Issues

The participants identified a number of problems and issues related to the project that might require additional attention and thought:

- Original default settings on the workstation and modem. A number of the participants commented that the workstation arrived with settings that they wanted to change or improve (i.e., baud setting on the modem, system configurations, colors available on the monitor etc.) and were told that they could not be changed by the IU. Most were quite passionate about not being able to obtain the “password” to disable the software program Fortress.
- State Library’s support for rural public libraries. The group agreed that the State Librarian really went “out of his way” to help rural public libraries with this project and it was really welcome since some thought the larger urban libraries tend to get more attention. This project “really made the State Library look good” and participants hope others will come along as well.
- Role of IU 29 in the project. There were some comments (not by all) regarding the amount of money that went to the IU to administer the project, provide support, training, etc. Also many felt that the administrative structure of the project was somewhat rigid and did not allow flexibility at the local level.
- Training and support. The only “real” training was at the second training session where they learned “what to do” with the Internet connection. Information and advice from the IU oftentimes did not help them much. One person commented (with others nodding agreement) that they just quit calling with questions and found someone locally to help them. In addition, provision of some small amount of resources for each library, like \$500 each, for software, other applications, and to help in travel to the training would have been very helpful.
- Budgeting and Planning for IT. They need assistance either from the state or their district library center on how to budget and plan for future IT, computing, and telecommunications costs. In addition, they need to know “what next?” in terms of how to integrate the Internet access into overall library services and resources. One person commented, “it’s great that we have this [Internet workstation] but now what do we do after we learn to use it?”
- State aid formula. There was some discussion about the complexity of the state aid formula and how rural public libraries “competed” effectively with other libraries in the state. Some thought it would be good if the formula allowed some additional support for the rural public libraries to better support IT and upgrade their workstation. A number of participants saw “no way” that they could find resources to upgrade their workstation from the grant in the future.

Participants identified these issues and problems in a positive and constructive manner as a means for them to continue IT development in their library and to maintain the momentum from the grant.

Benefits and Impacts

When participants considered the range of benefits and impacts that had, or were likely to result from the project, they identified the following:

- Improved communication via e-mail with other librarians, the District Library and others.
- Access to an “astounding” number of additional resources that they did not have access to at their library.
- Access to those additional resources that were very current and up-to-date as compared to many of the print sources they currently owned.
- Access to those additional resources was full text and very often free.
- Increased visibility of the library in the community -- for some, the library had the only public access Internet connection in the entire community and increasingly, folks were becoming aware of this.
- Increased credibility of the library due to the appearance and use of the Internet workstation made the library seem more up-to-date.
- Productivity of library staff in areas of reference and referral and perhaps later in collection development may increase.
- Saving the cost of some expenditures for resources since they did not update or replace print sources if they knew they were easily available on the Internet.
- ILL costs may be decreasing since users can oftentimes get full text of whatever they want *right then*, and not want to wait for an ILL later.
- With purchase of additional CD Rom reference products instead of print sources could possibly save money.
- The presence of the Internet workstations in the libraries leveraged the ability of the District Library to write and obtain grants; she reviewed the list of grants issued in the last year and estimated that some 12 grants (that resulted in approximately \$35,740) resulted or were significantly strengthened because of the Internet workstations throughout the District.
- The OnLine at PA Libraries project “jumpstarted” many of these libraries into the Internet world of information resources which would not have occurred otherwise; librarians are now becoming computer literate and are leading their communities in the use of computers and the Internet.
- One librarian noted that they hired a 20 hr/wk staffperson to operate the Internet workstation as a result of the grant (others were very jealous!).

An interesting theme throughout the discussion of benefits and impacts was the oft-stated view that it may be too early to identify all the possible benefits and impacts from the project. Participants noted that some libraries have only had public access Internet available since February (note that others had it available since November). But they were very positive that we are only “just beginning” to see the various impacts and benefits from the project. They suspected that a year from now, more benefits and impacts than those listed above would result.

Conclusion

Participants noted that the State Library computed the value of the workstation they received at \$2,500. The investigators pointed out that if they had had to buy that same configuration without the large scale purchase done by the state, the price would have been considerably more. Nonetheless, they noted that for that investment, they thought they had provided significant time, effort, travel, training, etc. Thus, the \$2,500 investment resulted in considerable return on investment for the state, Bell Atlantic, and their local community.

These librarians were especially interested in “next steps” with this project. One asked: “what is the plan in the future for computing development at my library? does the State Library have another grant program planned? will the district library center be more involved in assisting us in IT planning?” For some participants, there was a sense of “now what?” and what was “Phase II” going to be!

Users Focus Group

The focus group session was, in itself, a dynamic and evolving situation. At the outset, five individuals arrived to participate in the session who had been contacted earlier. However, a number of Internet users were present in the library at the time of the focus group and were “ushered” into the session by library staff. In addition, half way through the session a man passing through the city used the Internet workstation and joined the session. In addition, some of the teenagers that joined the session after about 10 minutes into the session left after another 10-15 minutes. The session lasted about an hour.

Overall, there were 8 participants who were fully engaged in the focus group for the majority of time the session was held. This included five adults and three teenagers. Adults included a teacher, a teacher’s aid, someone in automotive sales, and an inventory analyst. The adults were between 30-50 in age. The adults characterized themselves as beginners, used the Internet connection 1-8 times during the past month, and had no formal training in the use of the Internet or the workstation. They ranged from having received high school education to graduate education. The teenagers reported using the connection between 10-15 times in the last month and saw themselves as “intermediate” users. They also had received no formal training.

Users and Uses

The participants reported a variety of uses of the Internet. They use it for a range of reasons: doing homework, book reports and games for the teenagers; recreational uses such as tourism for adults; checking on competition for business purposes (inventory and sales of car parts); CNN and other news sources; job information and employment; and genealogy -- to name a few. The participants thought that there was a generation gap of who used the Internet workstation -- younger people more likely to use it.

One teenager commented that it was "faster and easier to get information off the Internet than it was to find it in the library." He did not use print sources much anymore. A woman said that she notes the URL from television advertisements and finds out sites that way. A parent of one of the teenagers commented that she simply could not believe the amount of information available and was "amazed." In addition, she relied on her son to help her find "stuff" when she needed it. Another teenager commented that "my Mom has to pull me away [from the terminal] when we have to leave." Each had some success stories about finding information on the Internet that they otherwise believe they would never have found.

Pornography

The focus group participants indicated that they had not been aware of any problems with users trying to obtain pornographic information or using the connection for inappropriate uses. A teenager said that with the terminal so close to the librarian's desk and closely monitored by the librarians, it would be difficult to "get away with watching pornography anyway." There was also the sense from the teenagers that they knew they had signed an agreement to not access pornographic material and knew that the consequences of being denied use of the connection were significant.

Connectivity Issues

Four of the participants had connections to the Internet at home. One stated that she came to the library to use the Internet because the phone line at home "was always tied up." One stated that she had very poor phone service where she lived and could not use a modem because she had to tell the operator her ID number in order to get a connection. This person indicated that she would pay for being able to use the Internet since she could not access it from home.

Training

None of the participants had any formal training in how to use the Internet or the workstation except, some noted, some introductory information from the librarians. One teenager proudly stated that he knew "a lot more" about the Internet than the librarians did and that he often helped them find information. One of the adults said that she relied on her son for help, another learned by "trial

and error,” and still another said he “learned by doing it.” The local schools either are just starting or do not provide access to students.

One of the participants was a member of the library board and asked the teenager who was very good at the Internet if he would be willing to help in giving training sessions to the public if such could be organized. He indicated that he would and there seemed to be some impetus to develop training sessions for the public offered by the library and volunteers in the future.

Recommendations/Conclusions

They thought that additional terminals were needed both for the public and for the librarians. This would be especially true now that Summer has come and school is out. In addition, as the schools begin providing Internet access and training, that will drive additional use by students. A potential “invasion” by students seemed to concern one of the adults as to her ability to access the Internet at the library. They thought that the cost of paper was not problematic (after 3 pages, 5¢ per page). One teenager noted that the speed of connection could be bad and wanted to know if the library could obtain a faster connection.

This group of users was especially interesting in that it included a very wide range of individuals including a number of teenagers. One teenager, age 15, was especially knowledgeable and interested in the Internet access from the library. He seemed to have been responsible for training other teenagers and helping library staff as well. Overall, however, the users were just getting started with the Internet. They believed that the Internet connectivity was a “great thing” for the library, they are “amazed” at the sources that can be found and obtained, and have told others in the community about the new service.

LIBRARY C

The library's budget is \$236,000 with approximately \$58,000 for materials. There is the main library as well as two branches. The library is located in a county with a population of 32,000 and with a very high growth rate. The growth rate is attributed to families moving to the county from New York and New Jersey to "avoid taxes and live in a more rural setting." The facility is an old historic landmark building in the town with very small cut-up rooms and cramped quarters with only 2,100 usable square feet. There are nine staff of which three are full-time. The director reports to three county commissioners and a board that is advisory in nature. Despite the growth in population, some thought the area was economically depressed with the school district being the largest employer.

Interview with Director

The director is relatively new to this position although she has worked in Pennsylvania libraries a number of years. She was very supportive of the Online at PA Libraries project from the beginning, believing that public access Internet services would be especially good and useful in this county. They received the workstations and equipment and connected to the Internet in November, 1996. She participated in both training sessions provided by the IU, thinks the project has been extremely successful, and is appreciative to the State Library and Bell Atlantic for supporting the project.

Context of the County

The county is experiencing rapid growth without much economic development. There are two key groups of individuals in the county. The first group might best be referred to as the natives -- folks who have lived in the county most of their lives. They may own large amounts of land, some of which is being developed for resorts or vacation homes. The second group are recent arrivals who are fleeing high taxes from New York or New Jersey and are willing to do an hour and a half commute (each way) to the NYC-NJ area from the county. They may also have second homes in the county but live in NYC-NJ area. Thus, both groups do not want tax increases and are very conservative about how money is spent and for what in the county. The growth, however, has an effect on the county infrastructure and need for services.

Connectivity

The library pays \$40 per month for the phone line. After some initial problems with the ISP, a new one has been very good and provided reliable service. The ISP donates the service to the library and also has provided some assistance on general maintenance of the connection and the computer. One of the employees of the ISP was a heavy library Internet user who until recently knew nothing about the Internet and learned about the Internet from the library (see users section below). As an employee now at the local ISP he helps the library out from time to time with a range of assistance.

The library has a second Internet connection on a 14.4 dial-up on a 486 workstation not available to the public. This workstation is "the workhorse" for administrative and other office support. There also is an automated circulation and catalog system which is networked with five terminals.

Support from County Commissioners

She noted that the county commissioners, while supportive of the OnLine at PA Libraries project, were not actively involved in it -- although one has come by the library to "try it out." Thus far, the project has not directly resulted in additional funds or support for the library from local government. While she is certain that the commissioners are pleased about the library's participation in the project, the message of "get *more* grants" is likely to be the response from participating in the project rather than let us give you more money for IT at the library.

Training

The director attended both the IU training sessions and thought that both were excellent and very helpful. Upon return from the first, she provided a training session for her staff and sat with each providing a hands on, one-on-one session as to how to use the new workstation. She estimated that about half the staff had "taken to" the workstation and using the Internet. She noted that she did not think "forcing" staff to use the workstation was the best approach, but instead facilitated and supported their learning efforts. There was one staffmember who really has gotten involved in the Internet and that person has helped the director mount training sessions for the public.

Once a month the director and a staffmember provide a training session for the public. These have been well-attended. The director tells those who attend the training session that she expects each attendee to provide at least 2 hours of volunteer help to others in the library on how to use the workstation and the Internet. She believes that this approach has been very successful. Most of the attendees at the training have given back more than two hours of volunteer help to the library.

Importance of Volunteers

The director plainly stated that "without the involvement of the volunteers, we never could have been as successful with the OnLine PA project." She could not provide enough praise for the volunteers and their help with training, working with users, and being involved in the project. In a session with two of these volunteers (see below) their interest and involvement in the project was obvious. A number of the volunteers regularly provide 10-12 hours per week assisting the library, many others provide 2-3 hours per week.

The director made a very interesting point that a number of these volunteers volunteered less to help the library and more because they were interested in the

Internet, computing, etc. Thus, to some degree the training program for the public and the resulting volunteers produced new users for the library -- users based primarily on their interest in the Internet. Many of these volunteers had sophisticated knowledge and interest in the Internet. The director commented that "these volunteers have saved us both with training and in some maintenance of our workstation and connection."

Pornography and Use Policy

The library currently has a use policy which they ask *everyone* to read and sign prior to their use of the public access Internet workstation. This policy statement covers a range of topics and makes the policy for use of the workstation quite clear. Users under 16 have to have their parents sign the policy; those 14 and 15 may be exempted from the parent being with the child while using the Internet -- otherwise, the adult is expected to be present while the child uses the Internet.

Although the workstation is a bit hidden from the main desk, there have not been any incidents regarding pornography or inappropriate use of the Internet connection. The workstation, however, is very public and it is easy to see the screen as one passes by the area. The director reported that adults had not complained about having to sign the policy statement prior to using the Internet connection.

Marketing

The director provided the study team with a number of stories that appeared in the local paper, announcements, etc. related to the Internet connection. These had occurred about the new service, about training, need for volunteers, etc. The director had some concern about doing much more marketing as the terminal use had rapidly increased. There were many people using the connection, in fact, it was becoming increasingly difficult to use it without making a reservation in advance.

Work Load

The director noted that the workstation and Internet connection came with no additional staff to help operate them. Thus, she had successfully ("Thank God") been able to rely on volunteers for assistance. But the reality is that overall the project resulted in an increased work load for the library and primarily for her. She was not complaining or whining about this -- just stating it as a fact. She also noted that she is paid for 35 hours of work per week and typically provides 50 hours and sometimes more like 55. She is concerned how the library will transition successfully into this new information and computer age without additional staff and staff who have computing and networking skills.

Benefits

Without a doubt, the director stated, the arrival of the workstation and Internet connectivity has been a major boon for the library and its community. The library has received significantly increased visibility in the county and new users have come to the library "specifically to use the Internet." She also was convinced that the connection gave the library a sense of being "with it" in terms of having current technology -- thus, adding to the library's credibility as "key player" in the information age. She thinks that this new image of the library has helped it obtain some additional donations and gifts.

She also pointed out that for a small library such as hers, the access to an unbelievable amount of information and reference resources was phenomenal. She related numerous success stories of finding information or assisting users with the Internet connection that never could have occurred were it not for the Internet connection and workstation.

Issues and Recommendations

The director would like to have another terminal that is primarily for staff use since it is very difficult for staff to use the public access terminal for training and reference use -- given its heavy use by the public. Indeed, the main desk is in a different room from where they had to place the OnLine PA workstation. Although it is clearly a project objective to provide "public access" to the workstation, she wants to be better able to use the Internet for reference assistance.

This library would not have been able to purchase a workstation and provide Internet connectivity without the grant from the OnLine at PA Libraries project. Nonetheless, the library has raised some expectations for library services in the county that the library may not be able to meet in the future. It is unclear how the equipment can be upgraded in the future or how additional information technology can be obtained at all for the library. The bottom line, however, is "it is a very good thing that the State Library and Bell Atlantic were able to do this grant."

Meeting with Volunteers

Originally, this meeting was to include two staff members and two volunteers who have been actively involved with the OnLine at PA Libraries project. The two staff members, however, were unable to attend the session. Thus, the interview occurred with the two volunteers and in the presence of the director. Both volunteers were retired, one a man, and one a woman. Both had professional level experience in previous work, and both were extremely active and interested in the Internet connection at the library.

Types of Users and Uses

Both volunteers agreed that it was very difficult to describe the “typical” user of the public access Internet connection. One commented that he was surprised at the number of elderly users at the workstation. The other commented that the users “come from all walks of life.”

Each had a number of success stories about helping people find information that could not have been obtained except via the Internet “and certainly would not have been available here at the library.” The types of topics they mentioned that were heavily used included:

- Financial information;
- Health and medical information;
- Jobs and employment opportunities;
- Individual research questions;
- Government information;
- Genealogy; and
- Student papers/assignments.

Again, they noted that they were surprised by the range of topics and subjects that people used the Internet access to obtain.

Library Internet as Social Equalizer

One volunteer commented on how impressed she was that access to the Internet and being able to search it for information was “a great equalizer” among people in different classes of society. She pointed out that public access to the Internet gave “anyone who wanted it” access to the world of information -- regardless of race, social class, etc. This, she said was an important role for the library. The other volunteer agreed emphatically. They both thought that this role of the library was especially important given the make-up of residents in the county.

Being a Volunteer

Both were very pleased to have been serving as an Internet volunteer. Both had attended the public training provided by the director and one said he had been “hooked” to help out at the library. He estimated his weekly involvement with volunteering at the library to be about 12 hours per week. This particular volunteer was extremely knowledgeable about the Internet and very engaged in being a volunteer. He told of instances when he would see patrons “stumbling” to find the information they needed and directed them to the Internet connection, helping them to find what they wanted “almost immediately.” One could see how

his presence in the library would be a positive dynamic supporting the use of the connection.

They both felt that it was somewhat of an "honor" to be an Internet volunteer at the library. They both provided quite a bit of "word-of-mouth" advertising about the Internet connection. They had a great deal of praise for the director in supporting the project and the volunteer effort.

Benefits

The volunteers noted that there was no institution for higher education in their county and without the Internet connection at the public library one would have to travel some distance to an academic institution to be able to have such access. In fact, one reported that a user commented that with the Internet connection at the public library she could "escape from this county." Both thought that bringing in the global wealth of arts, information, history, etc. to *their* county was a significant improvement on the quality of life.

They also agreed with the director that the connection had significantly increased the visibility of the library. The library now had a "technological presence" in the county. They recognized that the range of information they could get, in full text, and "right now" was unbelievable and provided information that the library could never, otherwise, obtain.

Recommendations and Issues

The volunteers said that the library needed two more terminals and connections: one for the public and another for the reference staff. They also would participate in additional training efforts if available. As an example, one of the volunteers noted that if they had been told about how to download Adobe Acrobat sooner, they could have been presenting information in pdf format (actual print page presentation).

They would like to promote the service more, but as with the director, are concerned that the library may not be able to meet the additional demand resulting from such promotion. They both agreed that the library needs "much better" connectivity and that reliance on a 28.8 baud modem was "clearly inadequate." One was especially interested to know what the "follow-on" project would be that would build on the success of this effort.

Luncheon Focus Group with Neighbor Librarians

Lunch included a total of nine librarians knowledgeable about the project including the director of the site library and two librarians from near-by district offices. Those managing libraries had budgets ranging from \$101,000 - \$360,000 with populations served ranging between 5,400 to 50,000. Of the nine responses by the participants regarding their assessment of the overall success of the project (1=very unsuccessful, 5=very successful), eight responded with a 5 and one responded with a 4. On average the participants have 11 years experience in their

current library position. Most had experience with computers prior to the project. This was a group of very committed, dedicated, and involved librarians.

Users and Uses

As a group they estimated that 20-25% of the users to the Internet connection were new to the library and came because of the availability of the public access to the Internet. They all rely on a sign-up sheet to control use of the workstation, although some vary in amount of time for which users can sign-up. They found it hard to describe a "typical" user and pointed out that students, seniors, young professionals, and others were regular users of the workstation. Most said that the workstation was "occupied" most of the time the library was open.

Their users generally "could not believe" the range of resources and information that they could access via the Internet. Users were especially delighted to be able to print out full text of interesting articles and other sources. In two cases, local teachers assigned students to obtain sources for papers from the Internet connection at the library -- which also increased use. High use topics that the librarians saw users accessing regularly were:

- Financial information;
- Genealogy information;
- Real estate and relocation;
- Drug prevention information (especially among teenagers);
- Medical and health information;
- Political information/current affairs; and
- Foreign source information such as international newspapers.

They agreed that it was difficult to single out specific topics since the range of information obtained through the Internet was extensive.

Control over Workstation Access

In terms of keeping track of who the users were, one librarian told that at her library, first you had to be a registered borrower with a library card to use the workstation. Then, to use the workstation, the librarian would "swipe" the card through a circulation barcode indicating that the "Internet" was now checked out. The desk retained the library card until the individual was done using the workstation. She noted that this approach made it very clear who was using the workstation, how long, and contributed, she thought, to a lack of pranks or problems developing in the hardware and software. The approach also provides excellent record keeping of who was using the public access terminal since it was linked to their library card.

Gaining Additional Support for the Library

All the librarians agreed that having the workstation and the Internet connectivity while “very good and beneficial” would not pry loose additional resources for the library from local government. Each thought their local government was less likely than the others to provide additional financial support given local sentiments against any type of tax increases. Three of the participants noted that the workstations may have helped them in their local fund raising efforts or otherwise helped in obtaining some gifts and contributions.

Success Stories

Participants each had various success stories from users who accessed the Internet through their library. One told of a user who, when quickly finding “exactly” what it was she wanted, shouted “Ta Dah,” as if this were the normal procedure. Another told of finding information about the effect of coffee on people with Lime Disease. Still another told of obtaining some government statistics related to economic development in another state that “I never could have gotten -- or even known about -- from the library.” Finally, one told of how they had the Web sites bookmarked for Federal and three different state sites that provided tax forms -- “this really saved us a lot of time and effort.” While there also were instances when patrons did not find what they wanted, it appears that there were many more instances of success.

Use of Volunteers

Some participants had developed a volunteer program to assist the library in training and use of the public access Internet service, others had not. There were divided opinions on the usefulness of such an approach. As stated earlier, the director at the site visit was very positive about her experience using volunteers. Other librarians related experiences that were not as positive. The group generally agreed that it is hard to generalize about volunteer programs as they were very situation dependent, and dependent on the personality of the librarians and the volunteers.

Benefits

The librarians discussed a number of benefits that resulted from the Internet connection in their library, including:

- Expanded collections. Librarians reported being able to access resources that significantly expanded the size, quality, and extent of the collections that they had in the library.
- Savings by not purchasing materials. Librarians noted a number of government resources available via the Internet that they would no longer purchase; another noted that she would not renew her *Books in Print* since she was able to get most the information she needed from Amazon.com (web-based bookstore).

- Visibility, credibility, and respect. The librarians were especially pleased with the increased visibility and credibility that came to the library as a result of being in the technology “forefront” of their community. One person commented that it was more than just visibility and credibility -- “the library has increased respect in the community and is seen as a very important institution, more so than before the workstation.”
- Community equalizer. The Internet connection makes it possible for *anyone* to have access to an expanse of information; it benefits everyone.

They also commented that a recent announcement from Microsoft that Bill Gates would provide \$400 million in support to public libraries over the next five years has had a positive impact on the library’s visibility in the community -- especially since these libraries already had some level of Internet access. Overall, they noted that the workstations provided their community with links to the rest of the world that simply would not have occurred without the grants.

Issues

While the introduction of the public access workstations clearly had numerous benefits, it also raised a number of issues that participants identified:

- Workload. The librarians agreed that overall, they now have more responsibilities and workload because of the workstations. They believed that there was nothing they could “stop doing” and that (except in one instance) they received no additional staff to help out on the grant.
- Workstation and telecommunication upgrades. They wondered how they would be able to obtain upgrades to the workstations they now had or otherwise obtain financial support for additional IT expenses related to the Internet.
- Raising unrealistic expectations. One person commented that the workstations and public access to the Internet had raised the community’s expectations of what the library could and should be able to provide electronically. Additional service demands were being placed on the library for which they had no resources to meet. Others nodded in agreement.
- Access to the workstations by library staff. One public access terminal clearly is not enough in the library. If staff are to use the Internet effectively for reference services, a second terminal at the reference desk is needed.
- Technical support. They need to have someone available to help them with technical support, maintenance, etc. Most readily admit that they do not have the needed skills, nor can they afford to hire someone who would have the skills. Thus, they are dependent on volunteers or the goodwill of their ISP.

Recommendations

This group of librarians had a number of ideas and recommendations based on their experience with the project thus far:

- Financing public library information technology-based services. One individual noted that the public library community in Pennsylvania, as a group, and with the assistance of the state library, needed to rethink financing issues related to public libraries in general and IT more specifically. The group referenced a series of articles in a Philadelphia paper that discussed this concern (“Libraries in Distress,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 1 - June 4, 1997).
- Need for better connections. Everyone agreed that 28.8 baud modems were “the pits” and simply took too long to download information off the web. One person had a 56K line into the library and said that even that was inadequate. What we need, he said were T1 connections and “we need it now!”
- Ideas for the “next” project. There was no lack of ideas for what the State Library might do as a follow-up project. Some of the suggestions were:
 - *Technology maintenance circuit rider.* Have one person per district that had the responsibility of going out and helping member libraries with technology maintenance, repairs, and general troubleshooting.
 - *Loaner laptops and projectors.* Each district should have a loaner for a laptop and a projector so that the librarians could do demonstrations to appropriate organizations and groups.
 - *Information Technology planning.* The librarians need assistance on how to develop an overall IT plan for their libraries, a better understanding of the library IT components and configurations that might be possible, and how to help finance the implementation of the plan.
 - *Training.* They offered a number of topics that would be appropriate for training sessions in the area of Web-based reference services, building and maintaining a library homepage; how to train users; developing a library IT plan; and providing web based services (i.e., interlibrary loan requests from home).
 - *Additional terminals.* Everyone agreed that a follow-up program that provided additional workstations with Internet connectivity would be a good idea. They agreed that minimally a library needed three workstations, two for the public and one dedicated for staff use.

- *Faster Printers.* The demand on the printers at the workstations is significant and it takes “forever” to print out long documents. “Can we have a program to upgrade and enhance the printers?”
- *Tutorials for users.* The development of basic or introductory tutorials either online or on video that all public libraries in the state could use to train users would be very helpful and save a significant amount of time for the librarians.
- Better sharing of project information. They thought that much could be learned in the sense of “best practices” from others who had participated in the project, but that there really was no mechanism in place to share such information, successes, ideas, and recommendations.

This group of librarians was eager to extend the initial project and hoped that some type of formal follow-up project would be developed and funded.

Interviews with Users

The interviewer had an opportunity to meet with two users of the public access workstation. A number of users had previously agreed to meet with the member of the study team during the afternoon but only one arrived for the meeting. Earlier in the day, during the meeting with the volunteers, a “heavy” user of the public access workstation stopped and chatted with the interviewer for about 15 minutes. These two interviews constitute the interviews with users at this site visit.

User No. 1

This user was a young man who had done construction work in the past but had been injured and could no longer work construction. He became very interested in the public access workstation once it arrived, participated in a training session, and spent “many hours” learning to use the Internet and helping others in the library. This experience spurred his interest into telecommunications and computers and he taught himself related skills -- becoming quite proficient.

In the process of helping out as a volunteer at the library, he applied for a position at a local ISP and was hired; the library director wrote him a letter of recommendation. He commented to the interviewer that he had more than a job, “I have a career now” -- because of his introduction to the public access workstation at the library. He went from knowing nothing about the Internet to having a job with the local ISP between February to June, 1997 -- for which he thanks the library. He continues to assist the library with some technical support -- in fact, during the interview he provided some guidance to the director about a technical problem the library currently had.

He was very enthusiastic about the public access workstation at the library and pointed out that he was “a success story” as a result of the Bell Atlantic grant.

When he first began to use the Internet access he was as much entranced with the range of sources and information that could be found as well as “how it all worked.” He noted that the library needed additional workstations that one terminal was not enough; that it needed a better connection than the 28.8 baud modem; and that the presence of the Internet workstation was a “very positive thing” for the community.

User No. 2

This user was a retired woman who had attended a training session and described herself as “just getting to know my way around” on the Internet. She came to the library one day, saw a sign advertising the availability of the Internet service, and went to the training session. She thinks the service is “wonderful,” and believes it should be expanded into the branch libraries (the branch closest to her does not as yet have Internet access). She lives in a rural part of the county, some distance away, and could not afford a computer herself. So, were it not for the public access terminal in the library, she would never be able to use the Internet.

When asked about her use of the public access workstation she replied with a broad range of topics:

- Information about the Council of Trent (found something immediately)
- Financial and stock quote information
- Gardening and “outdoor” information
- Personal research
- Civic information.

She talked about the importance of the Internet connection in conjunction with a local issue related to computers in the schools. She had been able to obtain information from various web sites that informed her as to the need for and use of computers in schools which she intended to use when she participated in the discussion about the issue. She said it was “great” to be able to obtain additional views and information to bring to bear on this particular local issue.

While the service was great, she was frustrated by her inability to use e-mail via the workstation and other interactive web-based services. She pointed out that a number of services on the Internet would provide you with information or updates, etc. if you subscribed to the service. In addition, she would sometimes get the e-mail address of someone to contact but could not. She recommended that users be able to have e-mail addresses so they could “take full advantage of the Internet connection.”

In one sense she felt proud of the library for providing this service. She believed that the library’s involvement in this project was the perfect role for the

library: educating the community, providing training for new computer-based services, and providing Internet access to *everyone* who wanted it. The service, in her opinion, had greatly increased the visibility of the library throughout the county, more people were using the library, and the county now had access to global information and perspectives that it never had before the project.

She was surprised to learn that the project was “soft money” and that there were no resources for upgrading and continuing the project. She thought that such a project was a very important thing for the State Library to be doing and wondered why future resources would not be dedicated to continuing the project since, in the scheme of Pennsylvania’s budget, this was a “drop in the bucket.” On the other hand, she doubted that residents of the county would provide additional tax support for the library as a result of this project. Nonetheless, she thought the project was a “great success,” hoped it would be continued and expanded, and recommended that the library needed more workstations, at least one more for the public and one dedicated to staff use.

LIBRARY D

While this library is classified as rural in terms of population density, it is actually suburban in nature due to its proximity to the state capital. The county population is 204,000, and continues to grow. Growth is fueled by the county's proximity to a major urban area, a power utility, Sprint (although Sprint is currently downsizing), a law school, and a liberal arts college which is directly across the street from the library. With such employment opportunities, the county has the lowest unemployment in the state.

The population served by the library is approximately 45,000, although the director stated that "we serve the entire county with our federated library system" (more on that below). The library budget for FY1997 is \$450,824, of which over half comes from state and local funds. Indeed, the library received \$192,913 of its budget from a county library tax -- only nine of the 67 counties in the state, including this one, have such a tax.

Of further interest concerning this library is that it is part of a seven-member federated library system. The seven member libraries within the county are independent of one another in terms of funding and management. The libraries, however, coordinate numerous services and are in the process of installing a common on-line public access catalog (OPAC).

Interview with the Director

The director had been in her position for nine years, and had witnessed a great deal of change during that time -- from installing the library's first OPAC to installing a new OPAC within all seven federated libraries to gaining access to the Internet. Interestingly, the OnLine PA terminal was not the library's first connection to the Internet. The local newspaper, which now is also an Internet service provider (ISP), donated a computer and dial-up Internet connection to the library back in October 1995. With the arrival of the OnLine PA terminal in October 1996, the newspaper removed its donated computer but continues to provide an Internet connection free of charge to the library.

Overall, the director is "very happy" with the OnLine PA project, and considers access to the Internet a "wonderful tool." While the director did not participate in the OnLine PA training sessions, she made sure that appropriate library staff did.

Context of the County

The county is experiencing both growth and high employment. It is unlike many counties in the state as it has sustainable industry in the area, and also serves as a suburb to the state capital. Thus, the county is not currently experiencing any financial difficulties.

The county is also one of only nine in the state that has a separate property-based library tax. This tax provides the library with nearly 43% of its budget,

serving as a significant source of funding for the library. The funding is distributed to each of the seven federated library system members using a population served- and hours of operation-dependent formula.

The county is in the process of substantial automation projects. Indeed, the county has two full-time technology staff -- a network administrator and a computer technician -- that also serve the library system. The computer technician splits his time with the county and the seven libraries of the federated library system. The network administrator is configuring and maintaining the OPAC for the library system, and is currently training library system staff on the use of the OPAC.

Although the consultants were unable to meet with county officials, it appears that there are significant efforts to automate the county that include strategic information technology planning that is conducted through an automation planning committee. This committee is headed by the County Automation Coordinator, who reports directly to the county commissioners. The director considered the automation process within the county to be open with input from the library welcome.

This emphasis on technology and automation by the 3 county commissioners has resulted in some direct and tangible benefits to the library/library system. For example, the library system was able to persuade the county to provide an additional \$120,000 for the library system OPAC upgrade by tying into the county's automation efforts -- particularly county records (e.g., deed records). The library, through the new OPAC, could serve as a public access point to county documents.

The county population seems supportive of the library, as witnessed by the large number of computer (old) donations to the library. Many of the donations were recycled throughout the federated library system as OPAC terminals. Indeed, the donations served to significantly increase the number of OPAC terminals available to the public.

The Federated System

The federated system consists of seven libraries, each with its own board. The system reports to the 3-member county commission.

The library system had a collaborative process in place for book loans and returns. The new OPAC, however, solidified the cooperation between the system members, as the members had to agree to centralized patron and loan records, as well as a plan to implement the new OPAC in all libraries. This included assisting two library members to automate, as they were not automated prior to the new OPAC. The OPAC is to be installed over the next several months throughout the federated system.

Funding for the OPAC (approximately \$800,000) comes from LSCA/LSTA money, county funding, and each library member (in proportion to their budgets, size, etc.). LSCA/LSTA funds provided \$200,000 for the OPAC.

Connectivity

The library receives its Internet connection free of charge from the local newspaper through the newspaper's ISP component -- "Cumberlink." The newspaper has even offered to provide the library with additional free accounts should the library desire to connect additional computers. Reliability of the ISP has not been a factor at this library. The library pays \$320 per year for the phone line (about \$27/month).

The director envisioned a time in the near future when patrons would be able to access the Internet through the new OPAC. Such discussions are currently on hold due to "getting things up and running," but are clearly being considered.

Training

Although the director did not attend the training sessions herself, members of her staff did. The individuals who did go were both engaged and willing to use the Internet in library activities. The consultants were able to speak to one of those individuals who commented that the training was generally helpful, but limited in scope and too far apart (more on this below).

Those staff who did attend the training continued to provide some training to staff who did not attend. One staff member in particular seems to provide the rest of the library staff with technical and Internet-based assistance.

The director noted that there is no on-going training program in the library. However, the director is working to develop a small training room in the library that would provide Internet training to both staff and the public. There is currently a temporary training facility in the library for training various member library staff on the use of the new OPAC. The computers, however, will be distributed to the library system members for use as OPAC terminals.

The director commented that training staff to update their technical and Internet skills was critical to the success of the library's Internet use. The director remarked about the "frustration" that she and her staff felt over the public's, particularly students, higher degree of technical and Internet skills. The disparity between the skill sets of library staff and the public created a serious problem -- both practical and psychological -- for the library: librarians wanted to help patrons with the Internet, but in many cases had only limited knowledge themselves. Moreover, librarians found it incredibly difficult to gain the expertise necessary as the workstation was constantly in use.

Use and Acceptable Use Policies

Prior to installing the OnLine PA workstation, the system member libraries agreed to a one hour use limit. The libraries are in the process of changing the use limit to a half hour. Patrons must register to use the workstation, but do not need to possess library cards.

The system members also developed an acceptable use policy. This policy is currently being revised to more clearly limit the libraries' liability with regards to use of the workstations by minors. The member libraries do not require parent signatures or supervision for children to use the workstation.

Interestingly, this library uses filtering software. However, as discussed in the user section, savvy users (particularly underaged) know how to circumvent the software. The director intends to use the new policy under development, as well as the recent Supreme Court order striking down the Communications Decency Act, to remove the filtering software. Thus far, only one user has presented any problems with regards to accessing pornographic material.

Marketing and Expansion

The library received a myriad of press and word-of-mouth concerning the OnLine PA terminal. The director is, however, reluctant to pursue additional publicity as the workstation is in constant use. Without additional workstations for both patrons and staff, the director is not actively seeking "more press."

With a college directly across the street from the library, the director expressed her desire to forge a cooperative agreement with the college for Internet connectivity. The college has better connectivity, and it would not be difficult to tie-in to its backbone. With a more robust Internet connection/service, the director would more actively promote the library's connection.

Work Load

The director commented that the Internet workstation required additional effort, training, and service provision by the library's staff -- without sacrificing current/regular library services. Indeed the librarian who happened to be working the reference desk also assisted users with the workstation to the extent that they could. Too often, however, the librarian could provide only momentary help to individuals using the workstation as a line would form at the reference desk or the phone would ring. The director saw no immediate solution to this problem, since it was unlikely that the library would be able to hire additional staff.

A related, but key issue, is staff value. At present, staff starting salaries are \$5/hour with a maximum of \$6.50/hour. With such low salaries, the director felt it difficult to motivate staff to jump onto the Internet (although many were interested on their own).

The director was in the process of seeking volunteers with technical experience to assist the library provide Internet-based services. While the library has access to some technical assistance from the county, the director would like to see more direct Internet-related assistance -- e.g., PC configuration, searching and browsing, reference, etc.

Benefits

The director considered the benefits of the OnLine at PA Libraries project to the library to be numerous:

- It “put libraries on the map” within the community. Libraries had always been viewed as the “step sisters” of network-based information, and the OnLine at PA Libraries project provided libraries with an opportunity to come to the fore.
- It provided an immediate and noticeable expansion of library resources. The library was now able to gain access to a number of previously unavailable resources.
- The library was more actively pursuing technology planning activities. Although this was already underway due to various projects, the OnLine at PA Libraries project increased the necessity for technology planning.
- The library is pursuing new collections development activities to supplement Internet use. Directly as a result of Internet access, the library now subscribes to a variety of Internet magazines and has purchased numerous Internet guides.
- It has brought in new patrons. The library has attracted new patrons directly as a result of the workstation.

With these benefits, the director considered the project a great success.

Issues and Recommendations

While the director expressed appreciation to Bell Atlantic, the Office of Commonwealth Libraries, and the SIU, she had the following recommendations:

- Provide for additional terminals. One terminal, while a good start, is simply not enough to meet the needs of both the public and library staff. Library staff need dedicated terminals to gain proficiency in the use of the Internet as a reference tool, and the public needs additional terminals so as not to endure long waiting times.
- Faster connection. The 28.8 connection is adequate for some searching and browsing, but, increasingly, sites are enhancing their graphics and other features that require greater bandwidth.
- Provide more frequent and targeted training. The director acknowledged that it is difficult to provide all the system member libraries with appropriate training due to the varied technical experience of the library personnel. However, the director recommended two types of training: 1) Technical, which would address general and advanced computing issues -- e.g., computer configurations, printers; and 2) Internet, which would

address searching, navigation, and reference issues -- e.g., collection development, searching techniques, etc.

- Electronic collection development. While the director viewed the Internet and its vast resources as a welcome addition to the library's resources, she did not consider the OnLine PA workstation and the access to the Internet it provided as a substitute for library collection development activities. There is inadequate access, time, and knowledge on the part of librarians at present to forgo existing printed resources.

All the recommendations/issues raised by the director indicate the positive impact that the OnLine PA workstation and access to the Internet have provided the library -- it is simply a case of learning more, getting more access, and having the opportunity to integrate Internet-based resources into library activities.

Library Staff Meeting

This meeting was attended by three library staff members -- a children's librarian, a reference librarian, and a technical services librarian. The three had an average of 6 years experience in their current positions. Another staff member who had substantial OnLine PA experience, including attendance at the spring training session, was on vacation during the site visit.

All stated that they were pleased with the addition of the Internet to the library's resources. Although the library had an Internet connection prior to the OnLine PA project, they found the new computer and connection to be a substantial improvement over the previous configuration/equipment.

Types of Users and Uses

All agreed that it was difficult to classify the "typical" user of the OnLine at PA Libraries project. Users were of all types -- elementary/high school students, working professionals, and retired. The only "missing" users were college students, but the librarians attributed that to the better Internet connectivity, access, and equipment that the college provided its students.

The reference librarian has kept some monthly workstation use statistics demographics. For the months of February-April 1997, an average of 193 users per month used the workstation. Of those, a vast majority, 144 (75%), were 16 or older. Interestingly, an average of 62 (32%) users per month were new users, while the rest were repeat users. Thus, the workstation steadily attracts new users while simultaneously maintaining a solid repeat clientele.

The types of information sought by users of the workstation reflected the diversity of the user community itself. Overall, however, the librarians found users to generally search for information on the following topics:

- Job and employment opportunities;

- Financial/investment;
- Travel/vacation;
- Medical and health;
- Research for various school assignments;
- Individual research; and
- Government information.

The range and scope of the researched topic areas reflected both typical and expanded uses of other library resources.

Internet as a Library Resource

Due to training, access, and familiarity issues (discussed below), the librarians did not use the workstation for routine reference questions that could be answered through existing library reference material. Rather, the librarians used the Internet to get answers to hard-to-find/obscure questions. Examples include:

- Why are school buses yellow?
- Why are there those signs with 3 crosses on the highways?
- What was the content of the Vincent Foster (author's note: President Clinton's council that committed suicide) suicide note?

The librarians would not have been able to answer such questions for patrons without the Internet.

The librarians had not engaged in any formal Internet-based resource/collection building activities. At most, they create and organize selected bookmarks for particular information. One noteworthy, but irregular, activity that the librarians engage in is tracking reference questions (the question, and URL used to answer the question). Due to the lack of time, however, not all requests are logged or shared with other librarians.

Training, Use, and Frustration

The librarians lamented the training situation for use of both the computer and the Internet. One of the librarians attended the spring training session and found it to be "excellent." The 3 complaints raised about the training session regarded 1) timing -- it was too long after the workstation was up and running; 2) distance -- the training sessions offered were located at a "great distance" from the library; and 3) level of instruction -- although the librarian from this library did

not have difficulty in the session, it was her impression that others did due to the level of Internet familiarity that was expected from the attendees.

The librarians were frustrated by the Internet situation within the library. While all found the Internet and the OnLine at PA Libraries project to be of great value to the library, none could really sit down and learn either well. The library is open 62 hours per week, and the workstation is in use for nearly all 62 hours. Librarians, therefore, can rarely, if at all, practice what they have learned or read about. As one librarian commented, "the best way to learn the Internet is by doing, and we never really get a chance to do that because it's always being used."

The lack of familiarity with the Internet and computer made the librarians often "feel like idiots" because patrons generally knew more about both than did the librarians. This was an uncomfortable turning of the tables for the librarians who were used to being the relied-upon experts.

For the librarians, there is a need for two types of training: 1) General computing skills -- during which librarians would be instructed in computer use, hardware, etc.; and 2) Internet searching and use skills -- during which librarians would gain much needed "Internet as a tool/resource" instruction. The computing skills training was particularly important as users were constantly finding ways to circumvent the Fortress security program and change the workstation's settings.

In terms of patron training, users currently receive "quick and dirty" introductory sessions that consist of basic use skills -- mouse movement, use of Netscape, and basic searching. The sessions typically last 5-10 minutes.

Interestingly, however, the librarian who could not attend the meeting had organized a variety of user training sessions that were conducted by outside corporate sources on a volunteer basis. The training sessions ran monthly for a period of 2 years and covered both introductory material as well as courses on specific material (e.g., medical information). The courses were offered in the library, with the trainers demonstrating course content through a single terminal with an overhead display. These sessions no longer run.

Marketing and Expectations

The librarians expressed concern over the use of the terminal and marketing. Basically, the library could not sustain any more users than the current level. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, the library was in the process of adopting a half-hour use policy rather than the current one-hour use policy.

Another draw-back to the publicity -- both about the Internet in general and the library's connection in particular -- was that many users came to the library with false expectations of the scope, nature, and reliability of information available through the Internet. Librarians found themselves having to educate users, as best as possible, about the Internet itself and the availability of Internet-based information. Simply put, users expected the Internet to provide them with everything they wanted to know about a topic instantly.

Work Load

The librarians viewed the OnLine at PA Libraries project as an increase in their work load. The librarians provided patrons with Internet instruction, tips, and assistance while simultaneously performing their reference desk duties. There was no release time from other activities to pursue Internet instruction, etc. As a result, the librarians viewed the workstation as a work generator.

Benefits

The librarians pointed to several tangible benefits derived through the OnLine at PA Libraries project. These include:

- Access to a wide source of information that the library could never afford to purchase or maintain in its collection;
- Provision of answers to questions “without having to go outside the library;” and
- Enhancement of the library’s image as an information source in the networked environment.

The librarians considered these benefits to be tremendously important and indicators of the project’s overall success.

Issues and Recommendations

The staff essentially had two recommendations:

- Provide librarians with their own workstations. At present, librarians were in competition with users for the workstation and the patron was given preference. Librarians, therefore, had little chance to hone their computing and Internet skills.
- Provide more frequent and targeted training for staff. The librarians felt that they needed regular training sessions that would increase their computing and Internet skills to “keep pace with users.”

Access to more technology and training to gain a better understanding of those technologies would serve to “keep the library a vital resource” in the community.

Luncheon Focus Group with Neighbor Librarians

The lunch included librarians from three federated system libraries in addition to the visited library. One was a library director, one an assistant director, and the third was a reference librarian. Each had been in her current position between 4 and 12 years. They represented libraries had budgets that ranged between \$125,000 and \$500,000, the population served for the libraries

ranged between 9,000 and 67,000, and the circulation ranged between 85,000 and 450,000.

For two libraries, the OnLine PA workstation was the first library access to the Internet. One had received the same Internet workstation/connection from the local newspaper as had the case site library. All considered the OnLine PA project to be successful, a "good thing" for their library, and a tremendous resource.

Users and Uses

Although the libraries were members of the federated system within the same county, they served very different populations: rural, urban, and suburban. As such, the libraries served a diverse set of patrons, and the use of the OnLine PA workstation reflected that diversity.

The group estimated that 25-33% of the workstation users were new to the library, with the rest being regular library patrons who found the addition of the workstation to be of great value. The users ranged from white collar professionals who had access to the Internet elsewhere to blue collar workers for whom the library was the only source of access to the Internet to students who used the Internet to complete school assignments.

The workstations were in constant use in all the libraries. Two had instituted sign-up policies that limited use to an hour at a time. As part of a federated system policy, however, all were moving to a half-hour use policy.

Typical types of information for which users search includes:

- Job/Employment information;
- Research activities, both work- and hobby-related information;
- School assignment-related information for various report and research projects;
- Government information; and
- Consumer information, such as travel/vacation and automobiles.

The librarians noted, however, that the range of topics continues to increase as users gain in their understanding of the Internet as an information source.

Use Policies

As mentioned above, the libraries, through the federated system, are adopting time limit policies of a half hour. In addition, the libraries, once again through the federated system, are in the process of modifying the workstation's acceptable use policy.

The new policy is essentially an attempt to limit the libraries' responsibility/liability when users, particularly minors, access inappropriate material. The policy shifts the responsibility from the library to the parents. The librarians expressed concern over using filtering software (as does the case site library) that broadly limits access to Internet-based information and did not want the role of determining *who* could access *what* material on the Internet.

Gaining Additional Support for the Library

As mentioned previously, the federated library system, due to the county commission's emphasis on technology/automation, has been successful in gaining additional technology-related funding for the systems's new online public access catalog. The participants were optimistic that this support would translate into additional support specifically for Internet access. It is unclear, however, as to whether this will happen.

Librarian Access

All librarians commented that the terminal is "in use all day every day," clearly speaking to the success of and demand for a public library-based public access terminal. Because of this success, however, the library staff could not get access themselves. As a result, the participants lamented their inability to truly hone their Internet skills. This left librarians unable to provide patrons with all the assistance that they (both librarians and patrons) wanted to.

Training

All the participants had attended the Spring training session and found it to be informative and well conducted. They suggested the same two-fold training approach that the case site librarians had: 1) Technical training that would address general computing use issues including the management of the computer through Fortress; and 2) Internet training that would provide "tips and tricks" for searching, browsing, and resource location.

The consultants suggested the creation of a notebook for libraries that could be updated at regular intervals. All thought that it would be a great resource for the SIU (or Commonwealth Libraries) to create and distribute such a "tips, tricks, and resources" notebook to each participating library. The idea of this notebook would be to have several sections -- e.g., searching, government information -- for which updates could be distributed on a regular basis (i.e., monthly). This way, librarians would have a current resource guide to selected Internet-based information tailored to PA library needs.

Only one of the participating libraries provided regular user training sessions. This library provided a weekly half-hour training session for up to 2 users. The session provides for basic computing skills such as mouse use as well as basic Internet browsing and searching skills. The other libraries provide on-demand 5-10 minute introductions to the OnLine PA workstation/Internet.

The 5-10 minute session “satisfies most users.” Librarians commented, however, that the “real problem was when we get a total ‘neophyte’ who needs help.” Such users could not really be helped with such a brief training session, but “we can’t help them more because we’re on reference desk duty or doing something else” in addition to assisting with the workstation.

Benefits

The librarians cited numerous benefits that their libraries attained due to the OnLine PA project that include:

- Expands collections. Librarians were able to gain access to a wide range of information to which they would not have access otherwise. As one librarian stated, “it opens a whole new avenue of resources.” Such information included daily newspapers, government information, national yellow pages, and state and local information.
- Provides access to the Internet for those who would not otherwise have access. Many users of the workstation do not have any other means of access to the Internet. As such, the workstation serves as an equalizer to networked information.
- Serves as a catalyst for library and system-wide technology planning activities. The influx of new technology -- OPAC and the Internet -- to the library system has created a huge incentive for the libraries to engage in IT planning activities.
- Brings new image/new patrons. The very fact that the libraries have the workstation lends them greater credibility within their respective communities. Moreover, the added credibility has served to bring in new patrons.
- Exposes patrons to new technology. Some users were so impressed with the Internet that they purchased computers/Internet accounts for use in the home.

The librarians found such benefits to be invaluable to the library and business community, and expect that there will be future opportunities afforded the libraries because of the project.

Issues and Recommendations

Due to the public access nature of the OnLine at PA Libraries project, the lack of multiple terminals, and the lack of dedicated Internet time or technical support, the librarians confronted the following issues:

- Lack of access for librarians. Each of the libraries only had the one workstation, and this was in constant use by patrons. As a result, librarians could not advance their own Internet and computing skills.

- User expectations. The media had “hyped” the Internet and its capabilities as a vast information resource to such an extent that librarians were put in the position of dealing with false user expectations.
- Technical support. The lack of dedicated technical support put the librarians “on the spot” whenever technical difficulties arose. The librarians acknowledged that they were better off than most as they had some assistance from the county. The SIU also provided help, but this was not always as timely as necessary -- having dedicated technical staff would be a true plus.
- Work load. Rather than the Internet alleviating librarian duties, it served to *increase* them. Access to the Internet required that librarians be technically literate, network literate, and have vast Internet searching skills. None of this made life easier for the librarians; rather, many felt apprehensive as patrons were able to navigate the Internet more readily than they could.

These issues led to the following recommendations:

- Provide additional terminals for librarians. With the public constantly using the workstation, librarians do not get the opportunity to familiarize themselves with either the computer or the Internet.
- Enhance the connection. 28.8 is fine for some types of use, but not for the ever-prevalent graphics and video.
- Provide more training at closer intervals and locations. All commented on the need for continual training sessions on a regular basis. Some also felt that the locations of the training sessions needed to be closer to the libraries' region.
- Create a state-wide resource guide that could be updated at regular intervals. At present, there is very little sharing of information, tips, or resources between librarians and library systems involved in the project. A guide created and managed by central entity with regular updates would be a valuable resource.
- Provide on-premises technical support. When problems arise, help needs to be immediate. This is not the case, and frustrates both the librarians as well as patrons.
- Create on-duty Internet exploration opportunities. The librarians commented that it would be extremely helpful to have some working time to hone their computing/Internet skills uninterrupted and without competing with patrons for access to the workstation.

Acting on these recommendations would, according to the participants, enhance the quality of the OnLine at PA Libraries project beyond its current “wonderful” level. None of the librarians expressed dissatisfaction with the project -- quite the contrary. Rather, they were looking for ways to augment the project and take it to a next level of service.

Focus Group with Users

The user focus group consisted of four users of the public access workstation. The users ranged in age from 27 to 69, and use the workstation between 2 and 20 times per month. The focus group lasted for 90 minutes. One user was retired, one was a kindergarten teacher, one was unemployed, and one was a social services employee.

General Impressions

All participants hailed the arrival of the OnLine PA workstation and access to the Internet in the library. To these individuals, the workstation brought “the world to our community,” as one participant stated. With such access to essentially a “limitless amount of information,” the workstation became a valuable tool to these users. This was particularly the case for these users, as none had or could afford a computer or Internet account of their own, or could use an Internet-accessing computer elsewhere.

These users also noted that the workstation and access to the Internet increased their image of the library as a provider of information and information-related services. One user commented that he was “surprised to find the Internet at the library,” and that it “keeps me coming back.”

Types of Information Sought

All four of the users made different use of the workstation. These uses included:

- Job search information;
- Science information for classroom instruction (e.g., Mars landing information);
- Legal research;
- Technology grant information;
- Medical information; and
- Vacation planning.

Each user considered the vast amount of information and resources available to them via the Internet (workstation) to be “incredible.” One user summed up the

sentiments of the participants when she said "I could never, either through other sources or through the library, have access to all the things I can now find on the Internet."

Uses of the Information

What was perhaps most interesting to the consultant was that each of the users acted upon the information he/she sought. For example:

- The kindergarten teacher actively sought information about the Mars landing, printed a number of images, and incorporated the information into lesson plans for her students. The students "love it" and thought that it was "cool," particularly the photographs.
- The social services employee used the workstation for multiple purposes such as legal and medical research and technology grant information. This individual did volunteer work in a local non-profit organization and used the grant information to successfully apply for a computer for that organization.
- The retired individual planned an entire Hawaiian vacation through the Internet one year in advance. He even used the information found about airfares and accommodations to negotiate with local travel agents.
- The unemployed user was actively searching newspapers nationwide for employment. He applied for jobs based on his findings.

As one participant stated, "there is no way that I could have gotten all this information without using the Internet."

Frustration -- Learning and Training

None of the users was "particularly skilled in computers or the Internet," as one user stated. Some had experience with computers through work or school, but this was mainly for such business applications as word processing and spreadsheets. Moreover, none had experience with Windows 95 (the operating system on the computer).

The participants noted that very little training was available, if any, from the librarians. All commented that the librarians "tried to help," but that "their help was a little here and a little there." All agreed with what the librarians had said in an earlier session -- that "they [the librarians] were helping you while they were doing other things." As a result, the librarians could not provide the needed assistance.

With the training/assistance situation such as it was, the users sought help elsewhere -- either through Internet guide books that the library purchased, or, more often, from the "kids" who were around. All four participants commented that there was a group of "kids" (14-17 years old) who were quite good at using the

workstation as well as the Internet. Indeed, these “kids” provided the users with a variety of assistance such as using the computer, adding bookmarks, searching the Web, downloading information, and printing files. In fact, one user commented that the “kids” knew how to get around the Fortress security program as well as the filtering software. Some even knew how to send e-mail -- a feature that the librarians thought they had turned off.

The lack of training and computer/Internet skills frustrated the users tremendously, particularly given the time limit on the workstation. As one user put it, “it takes me 35 minutes just to find what I want -- every [search engine] is different, and I don’t know how to use them all. By the time I find things, my time is up.”

It is interesting to note that none of the users blamed the librarians per se for the librarians’ inability to help. The users understood that the librarians were performing other duties while also assisting with the workstation. The users, however, commented that regular tutorials would be of great assistance.

Recommendations

The users, while positive and appreciative of the access to the Internet that the workstation provided, had the following recommendations to enhance the library’s Internet services:

- Add more workstations. The users wanted to see more workstations in the library, particularly due to the imposed time limits on the use of the workstation.
- Increase the speed of the connection. Users found the connection to be relatively slow, particularly for accessing and printing images.
- Provide regular tutorials/training sessions. The users commented that the tutorials/training sessions do not necessarily have to be conducted by librarians -- just that there should be training available in the library for the connection there. The training should emphasize searching and retrieving information.
- Provide training for the librarians. The users thought that it would be better for both the librarians and the patrons if the librarians were more knowledgeable in using the Internet and the workstation. Although all commented that the librarians tried to be as helpful as possible, they relied more on the assistance from “kids” who were in the know about the Internet than the librarians.

Such improvements would enhance an “already wonderful resource” in the library, and would keep the users coming back.

DOCUMENTING THE SUCCESSES AND IMPACTS

This chapter documents the successes and impacts that resulted from the OnLine at PA Libraries project as described by participants at four different public library sites around the state. The information presented in this chapter summarizes responses from a range of participants and thus, *reports what they said and thought*. Remarkably, there is much consistency in identifying those successes and impacts as well as identifying key issues yet to be addressed. Indeed, many of the “successes” reported in this chapter are especially powerful as they come directly from project participants. Moreover, the successes identified from the case site visits collaborate findings reported in Chapter 2 from the various surveys. The next chapter provides an overview of key issues, lessons learned, conclusions, and recommendations regarding the project based on the consultants’ assessment of findings reported here and in the previous chapter.