

State Library of Louisiana
Library Services and Technology Act
Evaluation of the 2018 – 2022 Plan

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Evaluation Summary

Background

The history of library development in Louisiana embodies both the history of a movement and the creation of the State Library of Louisiana, in that the development of the State Library and public libraries in Louisiana was contiguous. In 1925, with only five public libraries in the state, the Louisiana Library Commission was created, and Essae M. Culver led the mission to establish statewide public library service through the demonstration method.

By 1968, all 64 parishes had public library service. Today, Louisiana supports 67 public library systems providing statewide coverage: sixty-one of these are parish-wide; one is a system for two parishes; two are city libraries in parishes that also have parish libraries; and one parish does not have parish-wide service, but instead has two municipal libraries and one district library that serves three towns and their outlying areas.

While the State Library led the development of the public library system on request, each local library was created by the parish governing authority, and are still governed and funded locally. Funding for Louisiana libraries ranges from very well-funded to very poorly-funded. All but a few libraries are funded with a dedicated property tax: this makes their funding very stable, if not generous. The other libraries are funded by a partial property tax or a sales tax. The State Library provides strong supplemental support to all 67 systems through its statewide projects and initiatives, including educational and informational databases with access through the public libraries, an interlibrary loan system, continuing education, children's services, and consulting services.

Local public library directors depend on the State Library for information, advice, and leadership. Within the 67 library systems, 16 systems employ no one with a library degree, and 4 systems have only a part-time degreed director. In addition, directors are eligible to be certified when they have an MLIS. While 37 directors are certified, 30 directors are not certified, and of those, only 14 are eligible to be certified. Over the years, directors' highest level of education has ranged from a doctorate to only a high school diploma. The inability of library boards in rural parishes to offer competitive salaries is the primary reason for the number of non-MLIS directors.

Key Findings

The 2018-2022 Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) plan for the State Library was ambitious, but, as Robert Burns said, "the best laid plans of mice and men oft go astray." Throughout this report, recurring themes are budget cuts and staffing issues. Although Louisiana has faced a budget crisis for many years, with a large general fund deficit and subsequent cuts to the State Library budget, the objectives and activities/programs set in the 2018-22 plan were based on the idea that the state would not be making further cuts to the

budget, and would instead increase funding. Also, the State Library anticipated that the staff reductions mandated by the state would be returned to previous levels, and that subsequent vacancies would be filled. Neither of these happened, with the result that the State Library remains understaffed and underfunded. In addition, the travel budget was cut, and a travel freeze across all agencies occurred several times over the five-year period. As a result, despite tremendous effort by staff, specific steps within activities/programs were not fully accomplished because of lack of staff and lack of funds.

Some statewide events during the reporting period had an impact on the State Library and public libraries in Louisiana.

- The COVID pandemic had a large effect on public libraries. In 2020, the main libraries of all parish libraries were closed for up to 38 weeks. Even after libraries were open, hours were limited and different from parish to parish. On top of state mandates for public buildings, local governments put procedures in place that libraries had to follow. In some cases, libraries could not accept patrons in person and could only provide curbside, online, or support by mail.
- Louisiana has always suffered the extremes of weather events, with a near yearly number of hurricanes. While coastal areas are at the greater risk for hurricanes, flooding and damage often occurs hundreds of miles inland. Since 2016 Louisiana has experienced six hurricanes and seven extreme storms. These have had a deep impact on Louisiana communities with some parishes hit by another hurricane prior to recovery from the last one.

In 2016, a prolonged rainfall from an unpredicted storm resulted in catastrophic flooding across most of southern Louisiana. Thousands of houses and businesses were submerged, and property damage was estimated as much as \$15 billion. In following years, seven storms caused damage in Louisiana. In 2020, Hurricane Laura was a category 4 storm and caused widespread damage in southwest Louisiana and further north as it traveled, with \$17.5 billion in damage. Three more storms followed, and in August 2021 category 4 Hurricane Ida inflicted over \$18 billion in damage across Louisiana.

Recovering from these severe storms is difficult, both for the public libraries suffering damage and for State Library and public library staff who see the destruction to their homes and property.

- To complicate things even further, in late 2019 the state government of Louisiana was hit by a large-scale coordinated ransomware attack, which forced the state to take a majority of state agency servers offline, including government websites, email systems, and other internal applications, to mitigate the risk of the malware's infection from spreading. The State Library was hard hit, and the IT department spent months recovering from this attack.

The State Library does not hold back any LSTA funds for administrative costs, and used all LSTA funds for statewide initiatives for public libraries, with two exceptions: the Talking Books and Braille Library, which provides free public library service to Louisiana residents of all ages who cannot easily read standard printed materials, and the Louisiana Book Festival, which is held in Baton Rouge, but brings in residents from around the state.

Beginning in FY 15-16, because of State Library funding cuts, the public libraries were asked to contribute to the cost of the statewide databases. This has helped with the required LSTA match: without this support, the State Library would have had to cut database subscriptions.

The first goal **to develop a competent, literate, and knowledgeable citizenry that can benefit from increased educational opportunities and a lifelong love of reading and learning** was partly achieved. All programs within this goal were affected by state budget cuts, staff reductions, travel freezes, and reduced hours, as well as by the pandemic.

HomeworkLouisiana remains a high use program overall and proved to be invaluable to many during the pandemic with 87,356 sessions in 2019-20. Although use showed a slight decrease in 2020-21 to 83,723, use is still well above the targeted goal of 30,000 sessions.

Because of budget cuts and staff reductions, staff were not able to develop the project to provide five turnkey literacy and life skills programs for public libraries. In addition, because of state mandated budget cuts and staff reductions, the State Library was unable to hire a consultant to focus exclusively on basic literacy.

The Talking Books and Braille Library remains a very popular service of the State Library. Because the statistics used to measure use are misleading, it appears that this goal was only partly achieved. The key measure was set for audio cassettes, but the new digital cartridges hold more content than the phased-out audio cassettes. In the future, the measurement criterion should be revised to reflect titles and not items.

Children's programming continues to be an incredibly successful program. Prior to the pandemic, participation in SLOL sponsored literacy programs for youth surpassed 100,000 yearly. While participation saw a decrease during the pandemic, numbers are already rising to pre-pandemic levels.

Interlibrary loan also remains a popular and heavily used program. While statistics went down during the pandemic, that was strictly due to limitations imposed by COVID.

The Louisiana Library Connection (LaLibCon) virtual library has proven to be incredibly important to library patrons as shown in use, which more than tripled during the reporting period. The design of the LaLibCon portal, to provide easy access to digital information for all users, is an ongoing project of the IT department.

Services to those incarcerated in state prisons was greatly improved with the implementation of the ATLO program, where inmates submit reference questions electronically which are then answered by the SLOL reference department. Training for those running the libraries is

provided for all state facilities, and helps those people provide better services to inmates. ILL is still provided to all prisons, although curtailed by the restraints imposed by the pandemic.

The Louisiana Book Festival continues to grow in popularity. Attendance increased in 2018 and 2019, and although it was not held in 2020 because of the pandemic, the virtual book festival in 2021 proved to be popular and a great success, with over 5,000 views and rising.

The second goal to encourage digital and information literacy among the general population and facilitate Louisiana residents in taking advantage of all benefits of technology, thus decreasing the Digital Divide was partly achieved.

The programs/activities in Goal 2 are accomplished primarily by the Information Technology (IT) department. Staff reductions, budget cuts, travel freezes, elimination of site visits, and reductions in service hours all forced the IT department to change the way they deliver support. Most support from IT is now delivered remotely.

Technology training for public library staff was significantly reduced not only because of budget restraints, but also because of the limitations imposed by the pandemic. Most CE for library staff was delivered online. Technology training for the general public did not happen because of budget cuts and the pandemic. While the IT department was unable to travel to public libraries for site visits to provide support for technology projects, staff did provide support through telephone calls, e-mails, and remote access.

The third goal to increase the capacity of Louisiana public libraries to meet the needs of their communities and to make the public library the center for civic engagement was partly achieved.

The programs/activities in Goal 3 are accomplished primarily through the Library Development Division. Library Development (LD), which was already understaffed in 2018, has lost or been unable to fill several positions and operated with a staff of three. In the years prior to 2018, staff numbered seven. LD was hit particularly hard by budget cuts, travel freezes, and elimination of site visits. LD had to change the way they deliver support. Instead of consulting primarily in person, consultations have been via email, telephone, or online. Continuing education was presented as webinars or virtual meetings, rather than in person. Workshops were also primarily presented by SLOL in-house staff, rather than outside presenters. For the duration of the pandemic, very few site visits were conducted. The E-rate program was least affected: contact has always been primarily through telephone and e-mail.

Due to budget cuts, staffing issues, and the pandemic, only four of the fourteen key measures were fully achieved: five were partly achieved, and five were not achieved.

Critical issues in Louisiana continue to be education levels and endemic poverty. Literacy and early childhood education should be top priorities for the state, but while decision makers often speak of the importance of early literacy, early literacy programs are not funded. Parish libraries have dedicated funding which cannot be touched by local governing

officials, but it is rarely enough money to address these issues. The State Library provides critical additional support to public libraries through its statewide projects and initiatives.

The Annual Survey of Public Library Directors shows that library directors continue to value the State Library in all areas. Often mentioned as most successful and most valued are consultative support for administrators and for technology issues, continuing education and training for staff and administration in all areas, providing and supporting databases and training, and Interlibrary Loan services. These are also the areas most often mentioned by library directors when asked what services would they most like to see three years in the future. Areas with the least success and negative results in Key Measures were the areas most affected by budget cuts and staff reductions.

All State Library programs and activities (including materials acquisitions, interlibrary loan, site visits, IT, continuing education, etc.) are affected by state budget cuts. In addition, the functions of the State Library are affected, including travel freezes, material purchases, and public service hours reductions. Some programs in the 2018-2022 plan were not achieved because the State Library does not have enough staff to implement. In 2005, staff numbered over 80. By 2018, the beginning of the current reporting period, staff was down to 50, and in 2022, staff is at 44 with a few positions waiting to be filled. Some staff vacancies became permanent reductions when the State Library was not allowed to fill vacancies by state government.

While the state mandated reduction of the number of State Library staff is a serious problem, turnover is low because SLOL is widely considered to be a great place to work. When someone does retire or leave, it has been difficult to recruit qualified staff because of the low salary scale, which is outdated and not competitive for the work required. A non-competitive salary scale is endemic to the State Civil Service system. Also, despite low salaries, state government positions were thought to be stable, but since layoffs in 2015 and with all the years without raises, recruiting staff has been difficult. SLOL is addressing this with Civil Service going forward.

Public libraries rely heavily on the support from the State Library. Sixteen library systems do not have an MLIS trained director, while 20 library systems have only one MLIS librarian on staff. In many libraries, the majority of staff have only a high school diploma, with the result that the person working in reference, or doing cataloging and selection, or providing children's services, as well as reader's advisory for children and adults, or supervising other staff, does not have professional library training.

The goals, strategies, programs, and activities were not all accomplished or only partly accomplished as proposed in *A Vision for Louisiana Public Libraries, Library Services and Technology Act 2018-2022 Plan*, submitted to the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The plan "supports a vision for the Louisiana public library as a vital, integral and valued anchor in its community, dedicated to social, economic and technological advancement. Louisiana public libraries are not warehouses of materials, but places of interest, destinations and places to seek help." It is vital that the State Library continue in its quest to achieve this.

The following programs were funded with LSTA funds:

- Literacy programs
- Talking Books and Braille Library
- Children’s programming
- Interlibrary loan
- Louisiana Library Connection virtual library
- Services to prisons
- The Louisiana Book Festival
- Technology support
- Continuing education and consulting
- E-rate assistance

In general, the overarching needs in Louisiana fall into four major categories:

- Continuing education and support
- Improved literacy levels, especially early literacy
- Serving special populations
- All things related to technology

Strategies suggested for addressing these needs include:

- Increased emphasis on partnerships and outreach, especially with other state agencies and school libraries
- Continued leveraging of economies of scale where feasible
- Provision of services and tools to assist in improving the literacy level of Louisianans, especially early literacy efforts
- Enabling libraries to expand outreach and promotional opportunities to gain greater visibility and usage of their services, especially those provided through LSTA funding

In varying degrees, the above programs addressed LSTA’s Measuring Success Focal Areas and Interests of:

- Lifelong Learning
- Information Access
- Human Services
- Civic Engagement
- Institutional Capacity

Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation of the activities of the State Library of Louisiana (SLOL) is based primarily on an analysis of information gathered by the State Library for state reporting purposes for its ongoing operations as well as to support the management of the Library as a state agency. In

addition, interviews with the current department managers who provide these services were held, one on one. In several instances, personnel changed during the period being evaluated.

The evaluator, Dorothy White, worked professionally as a librarian from 1974 until retirement in 2010. (appendix). She worked in a variety of libraries, including university, government, public, and the State Library. She is currently a member of the State Board of Library Examiners. She was not part of the design of the current plan, and provided no services covered by the plan. The cost of the evaluation was \$6,800.

Recommendations

1. Continuing Education should support, strengthen, and expand services to meet the needs of the library's community, and be available on a timely basis to meet the needs of public library staff, administration, and trustees, with topics that are repeated on a rotating basis. It should provide primarily practical training as opposed to theoretical. The State Library should consider offering more ALA-APA LSSC Program courses for support staff.
2. Based on comments from public library directors, it is important to offer a mix of web based and in person training. While SLOL staff are experienced and their presentations are well thought out and prepared, it would be of value to the public libraries if outside presenters were to share information from a broader perspective.
3. Public Library administration and trustees need to be able to access printed information on best practices for running the library. To that end, the Library Directors Handbook and the Library Trustee Handbook are in need of updating. The last updates for both were over 20 years ago, and information contained within is often incorrect or dated.
4. Children's services are vital to Louisianans. To that end, the State Library should promote training particularly for children's services staff who are not dedicated to children's services. If funds allow, return to providing program and publicity materials for cash strapped public libraries. Louisiana should continue to be a member of the Collaborative Summer Library Program.
5. Consulting visits are critical to library administrators and should be increased as soon as staffing and funding allows. It is vitally important for consultants to visit libraries in person, especially in the rural and small public libraries where only one person is a trained librarian. The informal interactions and development of personal connections are important to strengthen the relationship between the State Library and public libraries. A trained professional from outside the organization (local library) will often observe issues which staff either are reluctant to mention or overlook. In addition, consultative visits to provide technology support are essential to public libraries.
6. Interlibrary loan and delivery services should continue so that public libraries can borrow materials they do not own for their patrons. In addition, as funds allow, the delivery service should be increased to deliver materials in more rapid fashion. The capacity to track deliveries is a recent improvement which will make measurement of success more feasible.

7. The number of State Library staff should be increased to provide essential services to public libraries, as well as to initiate new programs not currently offered because of lack of staff.
8. A consultant from outside the State Library should be hired to evaluate the State Library programs, activities, and staffing needs. With the reduction in funding as well as in staff, the existing staff is not able to keep up the pace of accomplishments that was the norm in past years when the staff was double the size of current staff.

Mission and Values

Mission:

The State Library of Louisiana, through technology and its nationwide resource sharing ability, with both print and electronic resources, public/private partnerships, cooperative agreements with other state, federal and local agencies, and its expert staff, employs traditional and innovative strategies to build an informed, educated, computer literate, and employable citizenry of lifelong learners.

The State Library of Louisiana, its Board of Commissioners and staff value:

- Equal access to information for all citizens,
- The literary and cultural heritage of Louisiana,
- Intellectual freedom, and
- Reading.

Evaluation Report

A: Retrospective Questions

Goal 1: Develop a competent, literate, and knowledgeable citizenry that can benefit from increased educational opportunities and a lifelong love of reading and learning.

This goal addressed the needs related to improved literacy levels, especially early literacy, and services to special populations.

LSTA Priorities addressed:

1. Expand services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a variety of formats (including new and emerging technology), in all types of libraries, for individuals of all ages in order to support such individuals' needs for education, lifelong learning, workforce development, economic and business development, health information, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and financial literacy and other types of literacy skills
4. Develop public and private partnerships with other agencies, tribes, and community-based organizations
5. Target library services to individuals of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, to individuals with disabilities, and to individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills
6. Target library and information services to persons having difficulty using a library and to underserved urban and rural communities, including children (from birth through age 17) from families with incomes below the poverty line (as defined by the Office of Management and Budget and revised annually in accordance with section 9902(2) of title 42) applicable to a family of the size involved
7. Develop library services that provide all users access to information through local, State, regional, national, and international collaborations and networks

Goal 1 presents a broad vision and encompasses a broad range of diverse constituencies. Some parts of the goal were achieved; some were not. The following explanation is based on each program.

A-1: Programs and Activities

Literacy Programming

As part of the State Library's efforts to improve literacy, HomeworkLouisiana (HomeworkLa) is provided to all citizens of Louisiana through their public libraries. It is an online, after-school tutoring program available to all students in Louisiana from kindergarten through basic college level, and adult education in more than 60 subjects, including preparation for the GED. In addition, services offered include test preparation, and job search

assistance and resources. As such, it is a well-used and popular service. Sessions increased from 41,948 in 2018-19 to 87,356 in 2019-20. The second half of 2019-20 (January-June, 2020) saw an actual spike in use because of the pandemic, that resulted in an over 100% increase. With the pandemic forcing closure of schools, 2020-21 saw a decrease of sessions, to 83,723, but the State Library anticipates an increase into 2022.

At one time, the Library Development Division included a consultant concentrating on early literacy, who worked with public libraries, other state agencies, and literacy organizations to coordinate and effectively raise the reading level of readers, both young and old. When the position became vacant in 2008, the State Library attempted to fill it, but like many vacant positions in state government, it was eliminated.

Because of continuing budget cuts and staffing cuts across state government, it was not possible to hire an additional consultant in Library Development to focus on basic literacy and work with public libraries, other state agencies, and literacy organizations. The children’s consultant did, however, assume some of these responsibilities and coordinated three presenters offering eight workshops (Storytimes for Everyone; Step into Storytime; and 398.2 and YOU: Becoming a Storyteller) with a total attendance of 371. Also, two presenters offered four webinars (Every Child Ready to Read), with a total attendance of 130.

Key Measure #1 (Goal 1)	Goal Not Achieved
Provide at least 5 turnkey literacy and life skills programs for public libraries by 2022	Because of budget constraints and reduction in staff, no one was assigned to this project.
Key Measure #6 (Goal 1)	Goal Achieved
Tutoring sessions on <i>Homework Louisiana</i> will exceed 30,000 annually.	Sessions easily surpassed 30,000 each year.

Talking Books and Braille Library (TBBL)

This program remains a free service to residents of Louisiana. It currently serves more than 6,000 users of all ages in their homes and in institutions, including those who cannot easily read standard printed materials due to a visual impairment, physical disability, or a reading disability whether it is permanent or temporary. The program is affiliated with the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled. (NLS). Services include information access and talking book-lending, literacy programs, and outreach services. TBBL offers large print materials, digital audiobooks, descriptive videos, Braille materials, and NLS Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD). Louisiana users can borrow braille materials from the Utah State Library, with whom the State Library has a contract. TBBL collaborated with a number of nonprofit agencies and with occupational therapists, social workers, geriatric specialists, and other professionals to enroll new readers. Louisiana citizens living alone or in group care facilities benefitted greatly from the informational and recreational materials included in the TBBL collections.

While circulation of materials to institutions such as schools, assisted living centers, nursing homes, and correctional facilities decreased during the pandemic, TBBL provided direct library service to nearly 6,000 Louisiana citizens of all ages who were not able to read standard print because they had a visual, physical, or reading disability. TBBL staff came into the library throughout the time SLOL was closed during the pandemic, getting materials out to their patrons daily. The FY 20-21 summer reading programs for youth attracted 50 participants, thus keeping reading skills active for blind and disabled students during the long summer holidays. For the adult summer reading program, 188 patrons registered and 163 completed. The Readers' Advisor service of TBBL assisted users in discovering new information sources and obtaining the information resources to improve their general knowledge or skills. TBBL staff also presented five webinars for public library staff.

The Talking Books and Braille Library, with additional support from Mrs. W. Carruth Jones Foundation's funding for materials, was able to establish an early literacy program called "Crib to Crayons" (FY18-19). This special program is for blind and visually impaired children between birth and six years old to help them gain the skills they will need to learn to read. Through the course of the year, books and early literacy materials are sent to children enrolled in the program.

In FY 20-21, TBBL Braille patrons who read braille but could not afford expensive commercial refreshable braille displays were sent eReaders to promote and support braille literacy. In addition, TBBL was one of eight network libraries selected to send NLS bookreaders for pilot testing. Patrons who beta-tested players were asked to follow up with NLS by filling out a survey.

In FY 2020-21, TBBL answered 3,567 reference transactions and their Readers' Advisors had 9,946 consultations. Readers' Advisors assisted patrons via phone, e-mail, mail, and in person. TBBL also published HotLines, their quarterly newsletter that is available in large print, Braille, digital cartridge, and electronic format. As the usage of digital materials and BARD continues to rise, it is necessary for TBBL staff to continually enhance and improve their computer skills. Currently, 616 patrons with 1,936 devices are subscribed to BARD. The key measure #2 should be readjusted to highlight titles checked out instead of the number of physical items.

TBBL staff prepared and distributed information packets about TBBL and its services to all public libraries, and continues to do so as needed.

An activity proposed in the 2018-22 plan was to create a Facebook page for TBBL to further promote its services. This was not done because of an unexpected prohibition of new social media pages under the new Lieutenant Governor.

The State Library has a collection of Louisiana fiction and non-fiction recorded books in analog format, which still need to be converted to digital format. While TBBL has the conversion software, it is a time-consuming process which required more staff time than is available, and this was not accomplished.

Key Measure #2 (Goal 1)	Goal Partly Achieved
Maintain usage of Talking Books and Braille Library (TBBL) materials at 180,000 annually	This goal was not met, due to the lower usage during the pandemic and new digital cartridges holding more content than the phased-out audio cassettes (DT #2).
Key Measure #3 (Goal 1)	Goal Not Achieved
Complete conversion of 300+ Louisiana Voices recordings to digital format by 2022	While TBBL has the conversion software, it is a time-consuming process which requires more staff time than was available.

Children’s Programming

The State Library of Louisiana (SLOL) continues to provide leadership for Youth Services (including children and teens) in libraries throughout the state. Leadership in annual Summer Reading Programs (SRP) and coordination of the Louisiana Readers’ Choice (LRC) awards provides Louisiana librarians with support and education concerning youth services in libraries year round.

During the school year, the SLOL works with Louisiana public, private, and charter schools to promote LRC for reading during the year and SRP to maintain reading during the summer. Education in Louisiana continues to rank low against the national average and the SLOL is encouraging all youth to engage in reading by promoting non-traditional books, such as graphic novels, in various literary programs.

The Summer Reading Program (SRP) has always been one of the State Library’s largest and most successful initiatives. The purpose of SRP is to promote leisure reading and encouraging literacy and educational activities during the summer. All public libraries in the state participate, encouraging children and teens to read and use their public library in the summer. Children and teens registered with the Talking Book and Braille Library also participate.

The State Library continued its membership with the national organization, Collaborative Summer Library Program (CSLP). This has led to multiple Louisiana librarians assuming leadership roles and committee member roles in CSLP’s many subcommittees. Summer Reading Programs (SRP) throughout Louisiana are designed for audiences from infancy to adulthood and aim to promote literacy and educational programs. Children and teens register through their public libraries, as well as the SLOL Talking Books and Braille Library. The SLOL supports public libraries’ programs by purchasing comprehensive CSLP manuals for each system.

The Youth Services Consultant held in-person workshops to promote SRP planning and implementation in 2018, 2019, and 2020. Virtual workshops were held in 2021 due to the

COVID-19 pandemic, but in-person workshops are planned for 2022. From 2018-21, libraries have reported 292,209 children and teens participate in summer reading programs throughout the state. These numbers took a drastic hit in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but 2021 saw unexpected increases despite most SRPs being a hybrid of in-person and virtual.

The Louisiana Readers’ Choice Awards (LRC), which includes the Louisiana Young Readers’ Choice and the Louisiana Teen Readers’ Choice, is intended to promote reading for children from 3rd grade to 12th grade. Children and teens voted on their favorite book from a slate of nominations that are chosen from hundreds of books. This program is done in partnership with the Secretary of State Voter Outreach Division, which provides voting machines to schools and libraries throughout the state free of charge. The LRC exposes children and teens around Louisiana to quality literature and introduce to them books that they might not otherwise encounter.

317,690 votes were cast during FYs 2018-2021, yet this number does not account for those who read the books but declined to vote. The yearly nominees are regularly included in various school curriculums, public library reading programs, and a variety of other agencies that promote youth literacy. A Louisiana Young Readers’ Choice Kindergarten-2nd grade committee was formed at the end of FY 2020 to promote the program in the younger grades and to help encourage early literacy through participation. The SLOL provides posters, bookmarks, stickers, and labels free of charge for all libraries and schools who request materials.

The LRC award is presented during the Louisiana Book Festival. Programs at the Festival include children’s and teen components, as well as presentations by children’s and teen authors.

Key Measure #4 (Goal 1)	Goal Partly Achieved
Continue participation in children’s literacy programs to reach more than 100,000 participants annually	Prior to the pandemic, participation in SLOL sponsored literacy programs for youth surpassed 100,000 yearly. While participation saw a decrease during the pandemic, it is expected to rise to pre-pandemic levels in future years. Total participation: 2018—113,930 2019—109,448 2020—48,061 2021—69,977

Interlibrary Loan

The State Library’s interlibrary loan system (LoanSHARK) provides access for all Louisianans to a wide variety of materials not owned by their local public library, or even a library in Louisiana. It allows public libraries to share expensive materials that some public libraries cannot afford to buy or may not have the physical space to house. This is a huge cost savings for Louisiana taxpayers. All Louisiana citizens have access to ILL services through their local public libraries.

The State Library funds and manages the day-to-day operations of LoanSHARK, including access to OCLC’s Worldcat, an international database of library holdings. This allows access not only to Louisiana’s public, academic, and prison library holdings, but also to thousands of libraries outside Louisiana.

Although reduced in recent years due to budget cuts, the State Library continues to provide courier services to academic and public libraries throughout the state. Delivery of library materials is provided by a contract with a commercial delivery service, paid by LSTA funds, at no cost to the libraries.

The State Library staff continue to provide scheduled training for ILL staff in public libraries as well as training on demand as needed. Prior to the pandemic, workshops were primarily presented in person, but now workshops are presented via online webinars and zoom meetings, with ILL staff providing additional support via e-mail and telephone.

The 2021 Annual Surveys of Library Directors, as in past years, showed that 100% of public libraries were satisfied or very satisfied with the ILL service.

The Key Measure that public libraries will share at least 60,000 items annually among themselves via interlibrary loan was not achieved. When the pandemic began, libraries were closed entirely. Over time they began to open but still had limited patron interactions until they could establish the best way to serve their clients. As a result, use of ILL went down for a sustained period of several months, including during the summer, which is one of the busiest times for ILL. Also, in late 2019 when state government was hit by a large-scale coordinated ransomware attack, the ILL Department was affected.

Key Measure #5 (Goal 1)	Goal Not Achieved
Public libraries will share at least 60,000 items annually among themselves via interlibrary loan.	With the limitations on libraries and patrons during the pandemic, and other problems, this goal was not reached. Items loaned: 2018—53,833 2019—56,582 2020—36,993 2021—43,911

Louisiana Library Connection (LaLibCon) virtual library

The Louisiana Library Connection (LaLibCon) was established in 1998, with a vision of providing a virtual library accessible to all Louisianans: public library patrons, K-12 students, and academic library users. The State Library negotiates and pays for statewide access to educational, research, and informational subscription electronic databases and other electronic materials resources, including information for small business owners and consumers. With a public library card, users can connect from home, work, or within their local library. The State Library also provides technology infrastructure and support for providing these resources through the public libraries.

All of Louisiana citizens benefit from LaLibCon, particularly those in parishes with small public libraries who probably would not be able to afford subscriptions to these databases. The support offered by the State Library is also very important to the public libraries, who may not have a dedicated information technology staff.

The 2018-2022 plan, to fulfill the objective of providing electronic resources to all Louisianans, said that additional work needed to be done to make it even easier to find credible information, whether it be found in licensed databases or on the public web. Specific steps included:

1. License and implement a discovery service to bring together licensed databases, library catalogs and free high-quality Internet resources by 2021.

The State Library did subscribe to Ebsco Discovery (EDS) during a trial period, but discontinued this service because it did not increase use of databases, and also determined that it was not used enough to justify the expense.

2. Institute aggressive statewide marketing and training campaign to create awareness of public library electronic resources.

The State Library provides information to public libraries for individual libraries to market the available databases, but this is not an aggressive campaign. As the vendors send information to the State Library, it is passed on to the public libraries. The State Library falls under a statewide elected official, the Lieutenant Governor, whose office oversees all marketing for five agencies. This often results in agencies not receiving help or approval for marketing efforts or getting lost in their political messaging.

The State Library offers training to public library staff through classes offered by the Reference Department, the IT department, and Library Development.

3. Redesign LaLibCon portal to provide easy access to digital information for all users, customizing it as needed for specific populations such as children and youth. (2022)

The design of the LaLibCon portal is an ongoing project by the IT department.

4. Obtain vendor pricing to extend access to resources to K-12. (ongoing)

The State Library met with representatives of the Department of Education to explore the possibility of offering database access to schools, but the effort failed through lack of participation by DOE and lack of funding.

5. Develop mechanism to survey end users to assess satisfaction with and value of electronic resources. (2022)

While the LaLibCon web page had a survey for some time, it was not filled out by users. The decision was made to remove it from the page, so that it could be redesigned and determined how best to survey users.

The lack of funding, lack of support from the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, and a lack of interest by users, means that these steps were not a success overall.

Use of the LaLibCon databases has continued in general to rise. In 2017-18, total statewide database use was 5,832,573, and in 2018-19, it was 2,468,613. By 2019-20, database use was 23,838,121, a significant increase. In part, this change was because of a change in EBSCO’s method of reporting use data. In 2020-21, use was at 17,273,469. Centralized licensing and management of the virtual library databases represents a high return on investment. If each individual library tried to purchase and manage a virtual library on its own, it is estimated it would cost at least \$10,000,000 across the state, representing an 8 to 1 return on investment.

Key Measure #9 (Goal 1)	Goal Partly Achieved
Implement discovery service for Louisiana Library Connection resources	While the State Library did offer the Ebsco Discovery Service (EDS) during a trial period, the subscription was not made permanent.

Services to Prisons

Currently the Department of Corrections oversees nine prisons. The State Library provides ILL and reference services to eight of these prisons, as well as to some detention centers and parish jails. In addition, the State Library coordinates and assists public libraries in providing services to people who are incarcerated. Services for incarcerated juveniles are provided entirely at the local level.

Eight of the prisons do not have a degreed librarian on staff, but instead rely on inmates assigned to work in the library. The largest prison contracts with a degreed librarian for 200 hours of service per year, which means that the burden of service provision still falls on those who are incarcerated. It has been difficult to get wardens to recognize the benefits of libraries for the incarcerated and education for their library director.

Inmates, including those staffing the libraries, use the ATLO program (see below) to submit reference questions, which the SLOL reference department answers electronically. Prisoners can mail letters to the reference department for answers to their questions. They can also

borrow books through Interlibrary loan, although delivery of physical items as been curtailed since the pandemic and remains a problem. The Hi-Lo collection is used by the prisons, but this collection has not grown because of the state’s reduction in budget for the collection. Library services available to all prisons are identical.

The Department of Corrections does allow training for inmates running the prison libraries: State Library conducted five training sessions for several prisons. The State Library also presented information at a meeting for the prison staff education coordinators, outlining what services the State Library provides. All prisons were represented. After the pandemic, the State Library will resume in person training sessions. State Library staff also presented a program at the annual state corrections conference to highlight the services offered.

The ATLO Software, LLC, program was begun in 2018 as a pilot program, and has proved very successful. It has now been fully integrated as a process for the State Library to provide information services to those incarcerated. Use of ATLO has increased each year. Total questions answered in 2018-19 from inmates were 2,853. For 2019-20, the total was 4,056, and for 2020-21, it increased to 5,859. This was a 51% increase in three years.

At one prison, the inmate coordinating the library has taken an interest in making the library and library services better through ATLO. He asks questions about library practices, such as weeding the collection, assigning call numbers, and other accessibility questions, thus improving library services at his prison.

Key Measure #8 (Goal 1)	Goal Achieved
Increase services (loans, questions answered, number of institutions) to correctional facilities by 5% by 2022	Goal was surpassed with actual increase of 51%.

Louisiana Book Festival

The Louisiana Book Festival (LBF) was established as a project of the Louisiana Center for the Book, which was begun in 1994 to promote literacy and reading. The LBF is a free literary event that takes place around Capitol Park and the SLOL in Baton Rouge. It showcases Louisiana authors, Louisiana publishers, and books about or set in Louisiana. It also includes culinary arts, visual arts, and Louisiana music. The festival artwork is always created by a Louisiana artist. All of these components contribute to Louisiana’s cultural economy.

Since its inception, the LBF has grown in size and popularity, from an initial attendance of 5,400 in 2002 to a record attendance of nearly 30,000. It draws attendees from all over the world, and has become an internationally known festival and a credit to the literary heritage of Louisiana.

Previous LBFs included book talks, panel discussions, cooking demonstrations, live LA music, book sales and signings, database demonstrations, children’s storytellers and authors, teen authors and activities, food booth, art exhibits, and literacy and literary related exhibitors. Award ceremonies include the Louisiana Writer Award presentation and the Louisiana Readers’ Choice Award presentation. The festival is bolstered by a volunteer force of individuals from the community and from schools and civic organizations. Sponsors include the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities and The Historic New Orleans Collection.

“WordShops”, workshops for beginning and advanced writers held the day before the festival, are presented by successful authors and creative writing instructors. Pre-festival outreach programs are scheduled the week before the festival at schools and public libraries. The festival also partners with the Louisiana Writes! Statewide youth writing competition, with winners honored at the festival.

In 2018, the LBF attendance was 26,274, an increase of 1,559 from previous year, and featured 267 authors and panelists, 152 programs, 26 locations. A total of 27 outreach programs had an attendance of 9,712. Having received a Decentralized Arts Funding grant contributed to enhanced promotion and programming, and celebrating it as the special 15th festival also contributed to increased attendance. Hours were also changed from 10 am–5 pm to 9 am–4 pm.

Highlights included the young Oscar-nominated actress, Louisianan Quvenzhané Wallis, with her books for young readers, and Donna Brazile, author of *Queen Sugar*, made into a TV series. As an added feature, a poet provided poetry-to-go, personalized poems composed for attendees on the spot. National Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith presented two “American Conversations” programs coordinated with Lafourche Parish Public Library, and she had a private meeting with members of the United Houma Nation.

In 2019, the LBF attendance was 26,450, an increase of 176, and featured 239 authors and panelists, 139 programs, 23 venues. Authors included the National Book Award for Nonfiction winner, Sarah Broom, and another finalist for the award (both Louisiana authors), an author longlisted for the NBA Fiction Award, and an Americas Honor Book author. The festival was dedicated to a Louisiana native daughter, the late Cokie Roberts, who had participated previous festivals a number of time. There were 20 outreach programs with 6,806 in attendance. Due to success of poetry-to-go the previous year, two poets were invited to meet the demand.

In 2020, the LBF was cancelled because of the pandemic. Several programs were presented instead. The Louisiana Writer Award presentation and author discussion with recipient John Barry was held virtually in January 2021, as well as a Black History Month program in February. Two National Poetry Month programs were the annual “Just Listen to Yourself: Louisiana’s Poet Laureate Presents Louisiana Poets,” as well as an additional “Just Listen” program celebrating the past ten years of the series, which included all previously participating Louisiana Poet Laureates. In 2020, the first component of a cultural initiative

between Louisiana and New Brunswick, Canada, was to have been an author exchange between LBF and the Frye Festival of Moncton, Canada, with a Canadian author attending. As a result, the Frye Festival presented the first exchange virtually with a panel of Louisiana women writers in French representing us at their Spring 2021 virtual festival. The program by the Canadian author Gerard Collins is postponed until our 2022 festival, at which he will also present a writing workshop in addition to appearing at the festival to discuss his novel *The Hush Sisters*.

In 2021, because of the continuing pandemic and safety concerns restricting large gatherings, the 17th LBF was presented virtually with 41 pre-recorded programs and 85 participants: authors, poets, and other presenters. Traditional festival programs were held virtually, including the Louisiana Writer Award acceptance and discussion of Fatima Shaik's work, as well as One Book One Festival book discussion by Dr. Gary Richards on Ernest Gaines's *A Gathering of Old Men*. Two sessions, "The Louisiana Poet Laureate Presents Louisiana Poets," were hosted by Louisiana Poet Laureate Mona Lisa Saloy. The program for the Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Award winning book *Game Changer* featured author Tommy Greenwald.

All festival programs were made available free of charge via the festival's YouTube channel, launched per a published schedule and remaining available thereafter on demand. A federal Rebirth Grant administered through the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities for the 2021 festival allowed an opportunity to award each person a nominal honorarium.

A specific activity for the LBF from the 2018-2022 Plan was to develop an annual comprehensive communications plan for promoting the festival. The LBF uses an established, systematic promotion and marketing plan which begins early.

- A "save the date" announcement and press releases.
- An independent festival website.
- Purchased and in-kind media promotion and topic specific ads.
- Promotion via online articles.
- Interstate billboards promotion.
- TV, radio, and newspaper coverage.
- listing of festival on various calendars.
- Secondary distribution of announcements by festival sponsors and publishers.
- Promotion on social media.
- With funds from the Louisiana Office of Tourism, the LBF engages the services of an advertising agency to work up and execute a digital only media plan that runs for two weeks before the festival.

A Louisiana Book Festival Emergency Management Plan has been developed and is on file with Administration, precipitated by a storm that shut down the festival early one year. Though COVID could not be foreseen at the time, the plan covered the pandemic and lockdown sufficiently well.

The consistent suggestion for improvement is an “abundance of riches”; i.e., that so many good programs are held concurrently on the same day and it is difficult for attendees to attend all the programs they want to attend, with the suggestion that the festival be expanded to two days. Limitations of funding and staffing prevent this expansion to two days. In an effort to address the number of simultaneous programs, from 2018 to 2019 a concerted effort was made to increase the number of panels featuring several authors and cutting down on programs featuring a solo author. From 2018 to 2019, the number of venues was reduced as a result from 26 to 23, resulting in approximately 12 fewer programs yet an increase in number of participants with more panels. We also cut down the number of participants invited by 28 (10%). The reductions did not have a negative effect on attendance; to the contrary, attendance actually increased by 176.

An outside evaluator for LEH said this: “On the whole, the Louisiana Book Festival is a pivotal part of the state’s commitment to promoting intellectual diversity, and to engage in both scholarly and non-scholarly discussions of Louisiana fiction, non-fiction, poetry, popular literature, children literature, and showcasing cooking and recipes. After attending the festival and also talking to several other people at the different panels and events, it is obvious to me that this festival attracts very diverse and different crowds, local, regional, national, and even international attendees and panelists. Each year, citizens, scholars, and authors are looking forward to this educational, informative, and family friendly festival. The Louisiana Book Festival is truly a celebration of Louisiana readers, writers, scholars, and children. I am delighted to have witnessed the enthusiasm and intellectual rigor with which authors discussed and presented their various projects, and the interest and high level of engagement that the audiences displayed throughout the entire day.”

Key Measure #7 (Goal 1)	Goal Partly Achieved
Increase attendance at LBF to at least 20,000 by 2020	Goal achieved in 2018 and 2019, two years earlier than 2020 target year, with attendance 6,274 above goal in 2018 and 6,450 above goal in 2019. However, the LBF was cancelled in 2020 and presented virtually in 2021 because of the ongoing pandemic.

A-2: Measuring Success Focal Areas

For Goal 1, the 2018-2022 Plan listed the following as LSTA Focal Areas Addressed: Lifelong Learning, Information Access, Human Services, and Civic Engagement

Lifelong Learning

HomeworkLouisiana supports students of all ages from kindergarten through basic college level, as well as adult education. Parents are very pleased that their children have professional help with their homework. Louisianans of all ages make use of the test

preparation, and job search assistance and resources to improve their skills and thus create a more employable workforce. It is a well-used and popular service.

The Talking Books and Braille Library supports Lifelong Learning by providing services to those who cannot easily read standard printed materials due to a visual impairment, physical disability, or a reading disability whether it is permanent or temporary. TBBL provided digital and large print books, as well as braille, to 6,000 Louisiana citizens.

The Summer Reading Program and the Louisiana Readers' Choice support this area by promoting reading during the summer to maintain a child's reading level and throughout the school year. Public libraries encourage reading in both fiction and non-fiction.

Interlibrary loan supports Lifelong Learning by providing materials to patrons that their local library does not own.

The Louisiana Library Connection virtual library provides any information available on electronic databases and other electronic materials resources to Louisiana citizens whether they connect from home, work, or their public library.

It is vitally important to persons who are incarcerated to have access to books and other information, in order to improve their lives and have a better chances of success when they are released from prison.

The annual Louisiana Book Festival by its very nature is the epitome of promoting a love of books, reading, and learning. Attendees of all ages meet authors, are able to purchase and then have the author sign their book, and listen to experts discuss a variety of books.

Information Access

HomeworkLouisiana, the children's programs, interlibrary loan, and the LaLibCon doorway to electronic access of information all improve Louisianans' ability to find information resources and then use these resources in a more effective way.

Human Services

Interlibrary loan and the LaLibCon access to a variety of electronic resources improves and furthers all Louisianan's ability to improve and apply information that furthers their personal, family, or household finances, their health & wellness, and their parenting and family skills.

Civic Engagement

The Louisiana Book Festival supports civic engagement by opening discussions among participants. Programs provide opportunities to hear and discuss other viewpoints on current topics. For example, the 2021 festival presented program on LGBTQ topics of interest, the removal of Confederate statues, and a session on social issues affecting us today.

The Louisiana Readers' Choice Awards partners with the Secretary of State Voter Outreach Division, which provides voting machines to schools and libraries. Voting on an actual machine used in statewide elections introduces children to civic responsibilities.

A-3: Groups Served

All groups were served to some extent, but the following programs/activities were aimed at specific communities.

HomeworkLouisiana supports Louisianans who are unemployed or underemployed by teaching computer skills, obtain tutoring, and offering job search help. While most of the use of HomeworkLouisiana is from junior high and high school students, the skills center is also heavily used.

The Talking Books and Braille Library services are targeted to individuals who cannot easily read standard printed materials due to a visual impairment, physical disability, or a reading disability whether it is permanent or temporary.

The Louisiana Book Festival makes an effort every year to invite and attract minorities and children in low income and underserved areas. The Book Festival outreach programs target underserved populations. The Festival is, however, mainly attended by white, higher income, and higher educated persons. The Festival should continue to make the effort to attract a diverse clientele.

The Summer Reading Program and the Louisiana Readers' Choice program directly benefits children, teens, and their families. These programs reach children and youth living below the poverty line, minorities, immigrants, and individuals with disabilities.

Services to prisons reach incarcerated individuals, many of whom have limited literacy skills and who are minorities.

Goal 2: Encourage digital and information literacy among the general population and facilitate Louisiana residents in taking advantage of all benefits of technology, thus decreasing the Digital Divide.

This goal addressed the needs related to technology, continuing education, and literacy.

LSTA Priorities addressed:

1. Expand services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a variety of formats (including new and emerging technology), in all types of libraries, for individuals of all ages in order to support such individuals' needs for education, lifelong learning, workforce development, economic and business development, health information, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and financial literacy and other types of literacy skills;
2. Establish or enhance electronic and other linkages and improved coordination among and between libraries and entities, as described in 20 U.S.C. § 9134(b)(6), for the purpose of improving the quality of and access to library and information services;

7. Target library services to individuals of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, to individuals with disabilities, and to individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills;

Goal 2 addressed the needs of State Library staff, and by extension, the needs of public library staff and the general public. Some parts of the goal were achieved; some were not. The following explanation is based on each program.

Background

In the modern world of telecommunications, the term ‘digital divide’ has been coined to describe the separation between those who have access to the latest technology and those who do not. This divide can be measured in terms of both availability and affordability, both of which are important factors when it comes to high-speed internet access. Digital literacy is defined as the training and ability to use the resources available, particularly important to patrons of the public library.

In 2021 in Louisiana, the public libraries are still very important providers for Internet for the general public. For many rural parishes, the public library is the only place where citizens can access free internet. Louisiana’s population in 2020 was 4.66 million. Louisiana ranks 33rd in the nation for broadband access. And 33.7% of Louisianans do not even have broadband access. In addition, 14.4% of households do not have a computer. Generally, this is a difference from urban to rural areas.

A-1: Programs and Activities

The Information Technology Department of the State Library of Louisiana provides consultations, as well as on-site training and support, to improve public library day-to-day operations, planning for the future, and support for libraries in providing train-the-trainer workshops for library staff to train the general public.

The objectives and activities/programs set in the 2018-22 plan were based on the idea that the state would not be making further cuts to the budget, and would instead increase funding. Also, the State Library anticipated that the staff reductions mandated by the state would be returned to previous levels, and that subsequent vacancies would be filled. Neither of these happened, and so the IT Department remains understaffed and underfunded but highly motivated to support over 340 public libraries.

As a result, some of the specific steps within the three activities/programs for the IT Department were not accomplished because of this lack of staff and lack of funding, and unanticipated statewide travel freezes. During the pandemic, on-site visits were put on hold. IT support is now delivered remotely. This has continued with the approval of public library staff who appreciate this easy method of support.

Additionally, in late 2019, Louisiana state government was hit by a large-scale coordinated ransomware attack, which forced the state to take a majority of state agency servers offline, including government websites, email systems, and other internal applications, to mitigate

the risk of the malware's infection from spreading. The State Library IT Department was hard hit, and spent months recovering from this attack.

Technology Training for Public Library Staff

The level of expertise for technology in public libraries varies from larger libraries with a fully staffed IT department, to libraries who assign a staff member part time to IT duties, to small libraries who rely on a local computer dealer for advice and help.

The train-the-trainer multi-day workshop to enable public library staff to offer technology training to their patrons did not happen, nor did regional technology training for public library staff.

Online presentations and courses were presented by State Library staff, for a total of 49 sessions during 2018-21. Topics included HomeworkLa, a Guide to LaLibCon databases, Introduction to Library Technology, and the LSSC course, "Introduction to Library Technology."

The annual Staff Day conference was held every year with sessions on technology. This is presented as a full day event in south Louisiana and is duplicated in north Louisiana. Tech Fest was held every year except 2020, when libraries were closed.

Technology Training for the General Public

Many of the large public library systems in Louisiana already provide technology training for their patrons, provided by their staff. Smaller libraries do not have staff to provide training, and in many cases, do not have the space or computers.

The 2018-22 plan had specific steps that included State Library staff traveling to regional locations to provide end-user training, State Library staff working with local libraries to identify and train community members to deliver technology training, providing training materials and turnkey workshop materials, and providing funding to allow libraries to hire local community members to deliver technology training. This was not accomplished.

The statewide electronic resources portal does continue to offer links to free, vetted, online technology training available to all public library systems.

Technology Support

In the past, State Library staff have traveled to public libraries to assist with various technology projects such as installation of a new server, re-configuring a network, and training public library staff in maintenance and upgrades to their equipment. Budget cuts, staff reductions, and travel freezes in recent years have resulted in most support being delivered remotely via the Bomgar appliance. The IT Department contacts the public libraries by phone and email. Only two on-site visits to libraries were made during 2018-21.

Key Measure #1 (Goal 2)	Goal Not Achieved
Conduct technology audits of at least three public library networks per year (2018).	Lack of staff and ability to travel prevented achieving this goal.
Key Measure #2 (Goal 2)	Goal Not Achieved
Seventy-five percent of public libraries will offer end-user technology training by 2022	In the fall of 2021, a survey of the libraries revealed roughly 40% of libraries offered user technology training.

A-2: Measuring Success Focal Areas

For Goal 2, the 2018-2022 Plan listed the following as LSTA Focal Areas Addressed: Lifelong Learning, Information Access, Human Services, and Civic Engagement

Lifelong Learning and Information Access

Technology training for public library staff, the general public, and technology support for public libraries directly supports the public library patrons' education, and general knowledge and skills. Clearly, technology training in these areas supports information access, giving users' a better ability to access and use information resources, whether in formal education or in their general knowledge and skills.

Human Services

Technology training for public libraries allows staff to further help their patrons in all aspects of their life, from personal and family general topics, to health and wellness, to parenting and family skills.

Civic Engagement

Technology training for public library staff and the general public gives everyone more knowledge and thus the ability to better participate in community activities and participate in community conversations in many topics.

A-3: Groups Served

Technology training for public library staff, the general public, and technology support for public libraries serves all Louisianans, no matter their circumstance in life. Computers are a part of modern life, and available in every public library, thus to every Louisianan whether or not they have access at home, school, or work. Louisianans are well served by being better equipped to participate in this modern life.

Goal 3: Increase the capacity of Louisiana public libraries to meet the needs of their communities and to make the public library the center for civic engagement.

This goal addressed the needs related to technology, continuing education, and increased educational opportunities for library staff.

LSTA Priorities addressed:

1. Expand services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a variety of formats (including new and emerging technology), in all types of libraries, for individuals of all ages in order to support such individuals' needs for education, lifelong learning, workforce development, economic and business development, health information, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and financial literacy and other types of literacy skills;
3. (A) Provide training and professional development, including continuing education, to enhance the skills of the current library workforce and leadership, and advance the delivery of library and information services; and

(B) Enhance efforts to recruit future professionals, including those from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, to the field of library and information services;
7. Target library services to individuals of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, to individuals with disabilities, and to individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills;

Goal 3 addressed the needs of public library directors and staff, and by extension, the general public. Some parts of the goal were achieved; some were not. The following explanation is based on each program.

A-1: Programs and Activities

Goal 3 is met largely through the Library Development Division (LD). These past several years have been difficult for the division. In 2018, the department was already understaffed because of state mandated reductions in employees. The leadership of the department changed with a retirement and a promotion. The CE consultant, the children/teen services consultant, and the e-rate consultant left their positions during the 2018-21 time frame, all leaving for better pay with other libraries. The result was that these positions remained vacant for 1-2 years each because of the lack of qualified applications received.

The end result is that the Associate State Librarian has been in the position since November 2021, two consultants have been on the job for less than two years, and one position is still vacant. While LD staff are experienced and qualified to perform all the duties of the department interchangeably, they are new staff and their workload has increased to nearly unmanageable amounts.

The State Library, through LD, provides training and advice to public library directors, staff, and trustees, as well as to institutional libraries across the state. Public library consultants are

experienced librarians, and answer many questions from public library directors, staff, trustees, and local government officials via telephone and e-mail.

They consult frequently in-person at a public library, as well as by telephone and email with advice on planning, programs, new services, administration, construction, and management of libraries, as well as answering questions on legal and ethical issues. Consultants facilitate cooperative projects among public libraries, and emphasize assessment and data-driven decision-making with directors, as well as encourage public libraries to make the most effective use of existing resources. Consultants also help library directors and trustees assess and evaluate their own library’s services.

Continuing Education and Consulting

The State Library plans continuing education on a variety of topics to cover all segments of public library services delivery to their patrons. Continuing education is aimed at not only public library staff, but also directors and trustees. It has been listed every year as one of the five most-valued services in the annual Public Library Directors Survey.

LD coordinated workshops for all departments in the State Library. Some CE events are presented yearly, such as Staff Day for all public library staff, Tech Fest for IT public library staff, and Administrative Conference for public library directors and administrators. The State Library is a course provider for the ALA-APA Library Support Staff Certification Program, offering six courses leading to certification.

Workshops were aimed at specific audiences, e.g., youth services. While workshop presenters in the past have included a number of outside presenters, since the pandemic, workshops are generally presented by State Library staff.

While workshops used to be predominately in person attendance with outside presenters, the past several years have led to almost exclusively webinars and virtual meetings presented by State Library staff. Only five in person workshops were presented by two outside speakers, both of which were on early childhood literacy. Outside speakers were also engaged for a part of Staff Day, Administrative Conference, and the New Director Bootcamp.

Year	Workshops and Webinars	Attendance
2017-18	145	3,168
2018-19	135	3,091
2019-20	126	3,868
2020-21	124	2,705
TOTAL	530	12,832

Site visits to the 67 public library systems were reduced as a necessity because of the pandemic. The state mandated budget cuts to travel and state mandated staff reductions also had an impact. In 2017-18, site visits numbered 20. In 2018-19, site visits were 18, and 11

site visits were made in 2019-20. In 2020-21, four libraries received a site visit. So far in 2021-22, 20 site visits have been made, with a total of 30 planned.

The State Library of Louisiana is one of the course providers for the ALA-APA Library Support Staff Certification Program (LSSCP) and the only State Library offering this program. Louisiana has more staff certified (42) than any other state, only California has a number of certified support staff close to that (34). Since its beginning in 2009, a total of 325 people have taken at least one of the six courses. A total course attendance of 542 represents 48 public library systems in Louisiana. Staff from 71% of the public libraries have successfully completed one course. Forty-two staff from Louisiana have completed the national certification – more than any other state. Several library systems now offer additional compensation for staff who are certified – but more importantly, skills from these courses allow staff to provide better public service.

Courses are offered in the following competencies: Supervision and Management, Communication and Teamwork, Reference and Information Services, Foundations of Library Services, Cataloging, and Introduction to Library Technology. All six of these were offered every year. The 2018-2022 plan proposed that at least one new LSSCP course be developed, which was the Cataloguing course first offered in 2018.

New Director and Leadership Training

Library Development began new director and leadership training in 2008 with a Leadership Institute, funded by an IMLS grant to provide a series of workshops on various library management topics, followed by a five-day institute for participants. The goal of this grant was to train not only new directors, but also the next generation of leaders. In succeeding years, State Library followed up with more workshops aimed at directors and top administrators.

In 2018, LD began the New Director Bootcamp, a two-day workshop attended by 38. Presentations included library laws and governance, policies and procedures, bid law and purchasing, facilities and buildings, personnel laws, collection development, and budgeting. It was repeated in 2019 with attendance of 32, but because of the pandemic, was not held in 2020. In 2021, 22 people attended a two-day workshop.

Because of staff reductions and budget cuts, a repeat of the eight one-day topical leadership workshops identified in the 2009 Leadership Institute did not occur.

Along with leadership training for administrators, Library Development offers training for both new and experienced trustees, including basic board training, hiring a new director, and any other topics requested by the libraries. Topics also included Advocacy Basics for Library Trustees, Building Blocks for the Successful Trustee, and Board Training,

Two activities listed in the 2018-22 plan were to (1) develop and deliver a workshop on using data, statistics, and surveys, and (2) develop and deliver courses on Louisiana public library administration and public library management to be offered to library school students in the absence of graduate courses on these subjects. These were not accomplished in a formal

sense only. Training was done one on one on these topics with library directors, staff, boards, and library school students, or on an as needed basis.

E-rate Assistance

The public libraries in Louisiana have embraced the E-rate program from the beginning, which led to very effective use of this program, both for Internet connectivity and for basic telephone service. A specially trained consultant assists all public libraries to apply for E-rate funding. Louisiana has 100% participation in large part because of SLOL efforts. In FY 2020-21, Louisiana public libraries successfully applied for and received commitments of over \$4 million in Federal E-rate discounts. E-rate is always ranked as one of the most valued services offered by the State Library, according to the annual Directors’ Survey.

Key Measure #1 (Goal 3)	Goal Partly Achieved
Perform consulting visits to at least 20% of public library systems per year.	Goal was partly achieved because of pandemic and state mandated budget cuts. 2017-18, 34%.; 2018-19, 30%; 2019-20, 16%; 2020-21, 6%.
Key Measure #2 (Goal 3)	Goal Achieved
Provide at least 75 continuing education opportunities per year for a minimum of 750 public library staff	Goal was achieved. A total number of 530 workshops and webinars were presented, and attended by 12,832 people.
Key Measure #3	Goal Achieved
Develop and deliver one more new LSSCP course	A new course on cataloging was first offered in 2018.

A-2: Measuring Success Focal Areas

For Goal 3, the 2018-2022 Plan listed the following as LSTA Focal Areas Addressed: Institutional Capacity and Civic Engagement

Institutional Capacity

All of the programs and activities of Goal 3 directly supported Institutional Capacity. The library workforce needs to constantly improve their skills and knowledge to most effectively help their patrons. Continuing education programs help increase the knowledge base of the general library staff, and lead to improved services to their patrons.

The Library Development Division provides continuing leadership and guidance for the director, administration, and library board of all public libraries. Consultations with Library Development consultants and IT consultants help public libraries to make better decisions about their library, and avoid costly mistakes in all areas of library management.

The Library Support Staff Certification program improved specific skills for many support staff, and enables them to better meet the needs of their patrons. The New Director and

Leadership Training pushes the bar higher for less experienced directors to do their best for their libraries.

E-rate assistance helps libraries to save money on connectivity, thus making the best use of limited taxpayer dollars supporting the library.

Civic Engagement

Any improvement in public library staff and administration of the library increases the ability to help the citizens of the state to better participate in their community, and in conversations in the community about topics of concern to the community.

A-3: Groups Served

The groups primarily served by Goal 3 were the public library staff, and by extension, the citizens of the state. Intellectual freedom is a guiding principal of libraries. Information at the public library is available to all, no matter their economic status, educational achievements, physical abilities, and so on. When the administration and staff at the public library have the best information and skills available, the public is well served.

B: Process Questions

B-1: State Program Report Use

The annual State Program Reports were read, both for the narratives of what happened and when, but also for the quantitative data included. SLOL looks at these reports along with other data to determine if SLOL needs to expand, reduce, or eliminate programs. For example, a specific step during this evaluation period was to license and implement a discovery service, and while SLOL did subscribe during a trial period, it was determined that it was not used enough to justify the expense. Another example is that SLOL trainers meet twice a year to examine data related to CE workshops and webinars, and to decide what to offer in the next semester. An increase or decrease in the attendance at and evaluations from programs such as the Summer Reading Program, the Louisiana Readers' Choice, and the Louisiana Book Festival gives SLOL the justification for funding for these programs.

The public library director satisfaction surveys were used to determine how effective the programs funded by LSTA are with directors, and how much value the directors place on these programs.

B-2: Modifications

No modifications were made to this five-year plan.

B-3: Data and Information Sharing and Use

The State Library of Louisiana (SLOL) is part of the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism under the Office of the Lieutenant Governor. As a state agency, SLOL collects and submits data to our parent agency and to the Louisiana Performance Accountability System (LaPAS) under the Division of Administration. As such, this information is available on state web sites. In addition, SLOL posts information to the SLOL website, including the most recent five-year plan and the five-year evaluation. The State Librarian offers State of the State Library presentations at the Louisiana Library Association's annual conference, as well as at regional meetings of trustees.

All data collected by SLOL including unpublished measures was made freely available to the evaluator, and was used to assess goals and key measures, programs, services, and projected outputs and outcomes.

C: Methodology Questions

C-1: Selection of Evaluator

This independent evaluator, Dorothy White, is the former Associate State Librarian who retired in 2010. Prior to her promotion to Associate State Librarian, she was a consultant in the Library Development division. As such, she was responsible for numerous programs, including years as the children's consultant and as the State Data Coordinator, and has extensive knowledge of both public libraries and their programs, as well as statistical data, both state and federal. While currently serving on the State Board of Library Examiners, she was not part of the design of the current plan and was not paid with LSTA funds. The outcome of this evaluation will have no impact on her position on the board.

C-2: Types of Statistical and Qualitative Methods

Statistical data used to compile this report include: the census, the LSTA annual state program reports and financial status reports, *Public Libraries in Louisiana: Statistical Report*, the Louisiana Performance Accountability System reports (LaPAS), SLOL quarterly and monthly reports, annual public library director satisfaction surveys, workshop evaluations, biennial TBBL patron surveys, and other one-time surveys by Library Development. Information from these reports and statistics provided information on programs, goals, primary services and users, and projected output and outcomes. These all assisted a great deal in evaluating the activities of SLOL.

Discussions with SLOL department heads provided invaluable information on the programs and activities within their departments, and allowed them to speak candidly about the activities and programs in the five-year plan. Their observations are reflected in the narrative report. These department managers were both long time staff and more recent hires during the evaluation period.

All statistics produced by SLOL are reliable because of detailed definitions for each category, as well as instructions for collection of data. Department heads all have access to a spreadsheet where they post various statistics every month. One staff member is assigned to monitor the spreadsheet, correct any discrepancies, and report the numbers to the LaPAS. These numbers are used to create the monthly and annual state program reports.

C-3: Stakeholders

The stakeholders included in the 2018-2022 plan were the public library directors, boards, and staff; the LSTA Advisory Committee; and SLOL department heads and staff.

The annual public library director's survey allows this group to express their satisfaction/dissatisfaction, provide suggestions for improvement, and offer ideas to implement the suggested improvement. SLOL staff also talk daily with various directors, trustees, and staff. Continuing education events provide an opportunity for SLOL to interact with these stakeholders, and the workshop evaluation forms provide information beyond just the handouts and facilities rating, going into evaluation of content, what was learned, and how will participants use and apply the information presented. Narrative answers to the open-ended questions provide especially valuable input.

C-4: Sharing Key Findings and Recommendations

The key findings and recommendations of this evaluation will be shared with the SLOL administration, department heads and staff; the LSTA Advisory Committee; the public library directors; the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism (CRT); and posted on the SLOL website for public viewing.

Key Findings

According to the annual survey of public library directors, the areas where SLOL succeeded the most are:

- consultative support for administrators and for technology issues
- continuing education and training for staff and administration in all areas
- providing and supporting databases and training, and
- Interlibrary Loan services.

These are areas in which the SLOL should continue to place emphasis.

Areas with the least success and negative results in Key Measures were the areas most affected by budget cuts and staff reductions.

Staff reductions, budget cuts, travel freezes, elimination of site visits, and reductions in service hours all forced all departments in the SLOL to change the way they deliver support. The following programs had partial success.

- Maintain usage of Talking Books and Braille Library (TBBL) materials at 180,000 annually (Key Measure #2 Goal 1)

- Continue participation in children’s literacy programs to reach more than 100,000 participants annually (Key Measure #4 Goal 1)
- Implement discovery service for Louisiana library Connection resources (Key Measure #9 Goal 1)
- Increase attendance at LBF to at least 20,000 by 2020 (Key Measure #7 Goal 1)
- Perform consulting visits to at least 20% of public library systems per year (Key Measure #1 Goal 3)

The following programs were not completed because of lack of resources and the pandemic.

- Provide at least 5 turnkey literacy and life skills programs for public libraries by 2022 (Key Measure #1 Goal 1)
- Complete conversion of 300+ Louisiana Voices recordings to digital format by 2022 (Key Measure #3 Goal 1)
- Public libraries well share at least 60,000 items annually among themselves via interlibrary loan (Key Measure #5 Goal 1)
- Conduct technology audits of at least three public library networks per year (2018) (Key Measure #1 Goal 2)
- Seventy-five percent of public libraries will offer end-user technology training by 2022 (Key measure #2 Goal 2)

Recommendations

1. Continuing Education should support, strengthen, and expand services to meet the needs of the library’s community, and be available on a timely basis to meet the needs of public library staff, administration, and trustees, with topics that are repeated on a rotating basis. It should provide primarily practical training as opposed to theoretical. The State Library should consider offering more ALA-APA LSSC Program courses for support staff.
2. Based on comments from public library directors, it is important to offer a mix of web based and in person training. While SLOL staff are experienced and their presentations are well thought out and prepared, it would be of value to the public libraries if outside presenters were to share information from a broader perspective.
3. Public Library administration and trustees need to be able to access printed information on best practices for running the library. To that end, the Library Directors Handbook and the Library Trustee Handbook are in need of updating. The last updates for both were over 20 years ago, and information contained within the current printing is often incorrect or dated.
4. Children’s services are vital to Louisianans. To that end, the State Library should promote training particularly for children’s services staff who are not dedicated to children’s services. If funds allow, return to providing program and publicity materials for cash strapped public libraries. Louisiana should continue to be a member of the Collaborative Summer Library Program.

5. Consulting visits are critical to library administrators and should be increased as soon as staffing and funding allows. It is vitally important for consultants to visit libraries in person, especially in the rural and small public libraries where only one person is a trained librarian. The informal interactions and development of personal connections are important to strengthen the relationship between the State Library and public libraries. A trained professional from outside the organization (local library) will often observe issues which staff either are reluctant to mention or overlook. In addition, consultative visits to provide technology support are essential to public libraries.
6. Interlibrary loan and delivery services should continue so that public libraries can borrow materials they do not own for their patrons. In addition, as funds allow, the delivery service should be increased to deliver materials in more rapid fashion. The capacity to track deliveries is a recent improvement which will make measurement of success more feasible.
7. The number of State Library staff should be increased to provide essential services to public libraries, as well as to initiate new programs not currently offered because of lack of staff.
8. A consultant from outside the State Library should be hired to evaluate the State Library programs, activities, and staffing needs. With the reduction in funding as well as in staff, the existing staff is not able to keep up the pace of accomplishments that was the norm in past years when the staff was double the size of current staff.

Appendices

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Name	Acronym
ALA-APA Library Support Staff Certification Program	LSSCP
American Library Association	ALA
Braille and Audio Reading Download	BARD
Collaborative Summer Library Program	CLP
Continuing Education	CE
Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism	DCRT
Department of Education	DOE
Homework Louisiana	HomeworkLa
Information Technology Department	IT
Interlibrary Loan	ILL
Institute of Museum and Library Services	IMLS
Library Development Division	LD
Library Services and Technology Act	LSTA
Louisiana Book Festival	LBF
Louisiana Library Connection	LaLibCon
Louisiana Performance Accountability System	LaPAS
Louisiana Readers' Choice	LRC
National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled	NLS
Talking Books and Braille Library	TBBL
SLOL funded, automated Interlibrary Loan System	LoanSHARK
State Library of Louisiana	SLOL
Summer Reading Program	SRP

Library Staff Interviewed

Library staff were interviewed to ask questions related to their area of expertise and the services their departments provide. Further interviews and communications were to clarify the information that the evaluator had gathered. Staff were also asked to explain the meaning of the numbers collected.

Riley Bordelon.....Library Consultant, IT Department
Sheila Coleman.....Coordinator, Special Services
Kytara Gaudin CristopheCoordinator, Access Services
Jim DavisDirector, Louisiana Center for the Book
Michael GolrickHead, Reference
Meg Placke.....Deputy State Librarian
Jessica Styons.....Associate State Librarian
Megan Thomas.....Library Consultant, Library Development
Robby Wilson.....Assistant Director, Louisiana Center for the Book

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State Library of Louisiana, internal files, monthly reports and annual compilation. Access supplied by SLOL Administration.

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LSTA Advisory Committee and State Library Board of Commissioners

2018-2022 LSTA Advisory Committee

Ruth Bond, Director, West Baton Rouge Parish Library

Rennie Buras, Deputy Secretary, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

Barry Bradford, Director, Tangipahoa Parish Library

Georgia Brown, Board of Commissioners, State Library of Louisiana

Bill Cody, Acting Undersecretary, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

Teresa Elbersen, Director, Lafayette Parish Library

Teri Galloway, Director of LOUIS

Susan Gauthier, Director of Library Service, East Baton Rouge Public School System

Marylyn Haddican, Director, Jefferson Parish Library

Florence Jumonville, Librarian and Professor Emerita, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans

James Lee, Board of Commissioners, State Library of Louisiana

Emma Bradford Perry, Professor and Dean of Libraries, Southern University

Stephen Schmidt, St. Mary Parish School System

Stanley Wilder, Dean, LSU Libraries

State Library Board of Commissioners

Georgia Brown, Chair

Louis Covington

David Johnson

James Lee

Argiro Morgan

Evelyn Valore

Gail Waters

Rebecca Hamilton, Secretary

Resume of Evaluator

RESUME

Dorothy J. White
10253 Browning Dr.
Baton Rouge, LA 70815

EDUCATION:

MLS – Master of Library Science, 1974, Louisiana State University
BM – Bachelor of Music, 1972, Louisiana State University

RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE:

State Board of Library Examiners (2013-present)

State Library of Louisiana

Associate State Librarian (2006-10 retired)
Public Library Consultant (1992-2006)
Head, Audiovisual Resource Center (1989-92)
Reference Department, LAGIN coordinator (1988-89)

Louisiana State University

Research Associate, Department of Plant Pathology and Crop Physiology (1985-88)
Intern, Middleton Library, Reference Department (1985)
Graduate Assistant, Department of Geography and Anthropology (1981-84)
Intern, Middleton Library, Government Documents (1980-81)

East Baton Rouge Parish Library

Librarian II, Young Adult Department (1977-80, Acting Head of the Department,
1977-78 and 1980)
Librarian I, Reference Department, Documents and Reference Librarian (1974-77)

Louisiana Legislative Council

Librarian (1974)

Louisiana State University

Trainee, Government Documents and Social Sciences Division (1973-74)

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Louisiana Library Association
American Library Association

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION

Executive Certificate, State Board of Library Examiners (1992-present)