

**SirsiDynix Webinar:
The State of America's Libraries, 2010
April 13, 2010**

Introduction [Slide #1]

My name is Roberta Stevens and I am the President-Elect of the American Library Association.

Annually the American Library Association (ALA) releases its State of America's Libraries report. This report serves as a clearinghouse for library trend reports released from across the nation within the previous year and for the data collected from various ALA divisions and offices.

During this Webinar I will be discussing key findings from the 2010 State of America's Libraries Report. As I go through my presentation please feel free to submit your questions. I will answer as many as possible afterward.

About the American Library Association [Slide #2]

- As you are probably aware the American Library Association is the voice of America's libraries and the millions of people who depend on them. Our goal is to see that all Americans have the information they need to live, learn, and work.
- ALA has more than 62,000 members, most of whom are librarians, but they also include trustees, publishers, and other friends of libraries. ALA is the oldest and the largest library association in the world.
- We represents all types of libraries—school, public, special, and university—and all types of librarians, including reference librarians, children's librarians, and young adult librarians.
- ALA's mission is to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship with a goal of enhancing learning and ensuring access to information for everyone.
- ALA's State of America's Libraries Report is essential to our understanding the library trends taking place across the country. It is also a resource to support advocacy efforts in communities large and small.

A 'Perfect Storm' of Growing Demand and Shrinking Resources [Slide #3]

- As one of the worst recessions since the Great Depression maintained its steely grip on the economy, Americans continued to turn to their libraries in increasing numbers for access to resources for employment, continuing education, and government services.

- The local library, a traditional source for free access to books, has been transformed into a lifeline for many communities by offering free access to technology training and workshops on a wide range of topics including résumé-writing, job-searching, and interviewing skills.
- With more than 16,600 locations serving people of all ages in communities of all sizes, the nation’s public libraries have a wide reach and a vital mission to connect people with the resources they need.
- Research conducted by ALA and the Center for Library and Information Innovation at the University of Maryland suggests a “perfect storm” of growing community demand for library services and simultaneously shrinking resources to meet that demand.

Their study found:

- More people are relying on public libraries for technology use, particularly to find employment and connect to online government services, which are now often available online and sometimes only online.
- Almost all public libraries support those looking for jobs with specialized electronic resources, software, and assistance from library staff.
- The public use libraries to complete online job applications.
- A majority of states report cuts in state funding to public libraries and to the state library agencies that support libraries and statewide library programs.

Yet even as libraries have increased their role in assisting users during a difficult economic time, they are challenged by a lack of staffing to assist those who need the help so much:

- In fact, the top challenge affecting public libraries’ ability to assist job-seekers is an inadequate number of staff.
- Complicating the situation is the impact of funding on the hours libraries are open...almost 15 percent of public libraries reported their operating hours had decreased from the previous year and that the reduction in hours open is increasing as cuts bite into the budgets of their libraries.

Library Usage [Slide #4]

- Data from a January 2010 Harris Interactive poll provide compelling evidence that a decade-long trend of increasing library use is continuing—and even accelerating during economically difficult times.

- The national survey indicates that some 219 million Americans feel the public library improves the quality of life in their community, an increase from 209.8 million reported in 2006.
- Survey data also indicate that more than 223 million Americans feel that because it provides free access to materials and resources, the public library plays an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed.
- In the past year, 80 percent of people 18-24 years old, 73 percent of those 35-44, and 70 percent of those 25-34 used their library. Nearly 80 percent of teens have a library card and the number of youth under 18 participating in library programs has continued to grow.
- And with more businesses and government agencies requiring applicants to apply online, job-seeking resources are among the most critical and most in demand of the technology resources available in U.S. public libraries.
 - Nearly 90 percent of public libraries provide access to job databases and other online resources.
 - Three quarters provide civil service exam materials.
 - Nearly 70 percent offer software or other resources to help users create résumés and other employment materials.
 - Two-thirds of public libraries help their users complete online job applications.

Growing Funding Challenges [Slide # 5]

- But as the demand for critical library services increased, many state and local libraries faced growing funding challenges.
- New shortfalls opened up in the budgets of at least 41 states for fiscal 2010, which in most states began in July 2009.
- In November 2009, the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies reported decreases in local funding to public libraries with the majority of them in the 5-10 percent range.
 - Twenty-four states reported cuts in state funding for public libraries from fiscal 2009 to fiscal 2010. Of these, nearly half indicated that the cuts were greater than 11 percent—almost four times the number that reported this was the case in the previous fiscal year. Also:

- Eleven states reported there had been no change in funding from fiscal 2009 to fiscal 2010.
- Only three states reported an increase in funding for public libraries.

Here are some examples:

A case in point is the Washoe County Public Library in Nevada, which has lost nearly 40 percent of its operating budget over the past two fiscal years. The county is reporting declines in property and sales taxes, and the Nevada State Library and Archives reports state funding decreases of more than 11 percent in each of the past two fiscal years. As a result, Washoe County Public Library has cut its operating hours by 25 percent. Staffing was cut by 30 percent.

Nor is the Nevada State Library unique: Almost three-fourths of the state library agencies reported reductions in their budget.

Georgia has seen state funding reductions of more than seven percent each year for the past three years.

Service Hours Lost [Slide #6]

- Cuts at every level have resulted in an increase in the number of libraries reporting that they are open fewer hours each week.

The survey found:

- Nearly one-fourth of urban libraries and 14.5 percent of all libraries reported that operating hours had decreased since the previous fiscal year.
- Nationally, this translates into lost hours at more than 2,400 public library branches. The trend will probably continue unless funding is restored or new funds are identified.
- Every service hour lost in our libraries means lost opportunities to connect people to distance education, unemployment benefits, and hands-on help.
- Libraries are depending more and more on soft and unpredictable funding sources like fees, fines, donations, and grants for their operating expenditures.

School Libraries [Slide #7]

- Americans value libraries of all sorts.

- For their part, school libraries received a solid “A” in these categories, according to the study:
 - School library programs are an essential part of the education experience because they provide resources to students and teachers—224.5 million people or 97 percent of Americans agreed.
 - School libraries are important because they give every child the opportunity to read and learn—222 million people or 96 percent of Americans agreed.
 - School library programs are a good value for the tax dollar—that’s 92 percent of Americans or 213 million people agreeing with this statement.
- In spite of these ‘high marks,’ “School Libraries Count! AASL’s National Longitudinal Survey of School Library Media Programs” showed that a majority of schools received less funding for information resources in 2009 than they had in 2008. The survey also revealed that there was no increase in the average number of teachers who are also school librarians, and that school librarians worked an average of almost an hour a week more in 2009 than in 2008.

Academic Libraries [Slide # 8]

- Academic libraries have also experienced a surge in usage.
 - According to the most current data available from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), during a typical week in fiscal 2008, U.S. academic libraries had more than 20.3 million visits, that’s 1.5 million more than in fiscal 2006.
 - Staff answered more than 1.1 million reference questions.
 - Illustrating the digital trend, 72 percent of academic libraries reported providing library reference service by e-mail or the Web.
 - Project Information Literacy found that nine out of 10 students relied on the online scholarly research databases and valued the credible content and in-depth information in them.
 - The ALA Office of Research and Statistics also noted the rise in the increasing number and cost of electronic serial subscriptions: from \$691.6 million in 2006 to \$1 billion in 2008.
- According to more than 2,400 academic and research librarians surveyed in May 2009 by the Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of the ALA:

- Managing funding constraints and budget cuts and demonstrating the return on investment are the leading issues facing academic and research librarians.
- Shrinking budgets are affecting everything—from staff to collections, equipment, and facilities.
- One respondent indicated that “budget cuts have created a culture of fear at my institution,” while another commented that budget cuts and hiring freezes have resulted in an inability to pursue desired projects and materials due to a lack of funds and that their workload has increased since vacancies are not filled.
- In an effort to cut costs and consolidate services, many research universities closed small specialized branches.

Examples include:

The University of Washington closed several libraries early in the year.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology closed two special science branches.

The University of Iowa announced that closing its mathematics, psychology, geosciences, and physics libraries to save approximately \$1 million a year.

The University of California at Los Angeles was considering closing its art library.

E-Government Resources [Slide # 9]

- Many government agencies are eliminating print forms and even closing satellite offices, and public libraries find themselves connecting more and more people with essential government resources.
- Continuing a trend that we saw in the 2006-2007 *Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study*, libraries report providing an increased range of e-government services for their users.
 - Eighty percent of public libraries report providing assistance to users applying for or accessing e-government services, a 23 percent increase from the prior year.
 - Fifty-four percent of the libraries provide assistance in completing government forms.
 - One in five public libraries are partnering with other agencies to provide e-government services, half again as many as a year before.

Here are two examples:

During Hurricane Katrina and the other hurricanes that hit the Gulf States, libraries served as information centers regarding health, recovery, and other critical information. Displaced families and first responders used library computers and wired and wireless Internet access to reach online federal (FEMA) and state recovery assistance programs.

And in a direct quote from a user, Elsie Werdin, “For anyone without a computer, you’re really out of luck without the library.” Elsie spent almost two weeks on the telephone trying to get the information she needed to enroll herself and her husband in a Medicare plan that would cover her husband’s expensive medications. With assistance from the Pasco County Library System’s e-government librarian in Florida, she was able to complete an online Medicare enrollment form in less than 30 minutes. The Pasco Library provided e-government services to more than 9,100 people from October 2008 to March 31, 2009, up 177 percent over the same period one year ago.

Why Libraries Need Broadband [Slide #10]

- Libraries continue to support workforce development, small business creation, life-long education, and access to government resources.
- ALA filed comments with the Federal Communications Commission in December 2009 on the importance of public-access computers and broadband access in libraries. The filing was in response to an FCC call for comments regarding the relationship between economic development and broadband.
- The filing highlighted the following major points about public libraries today:
 - They serve as community hubs, playing a key role in creating and supporting economic opportunity. Library services commonly include job training and continuing education, résumé-writing, career counseling, and basic information literacy training, including digital literacy. Access to broadband is needed for these services to be effective.
 - Libraries are critical institutions in supporting local economic development.
 - Libraries are broadening the outreach of local workforce development agencies by contributing to a stronger community network for job readiness and worker “retooling.”
 - Information literacy skills are critical to navigating online social benefit forms. Many libraries report that the official websites and the forms required for government services are often so complex that many patrons cannot successfully complete an application. This problem is probably exacerbated in vulnerable populations that may be accessing the Internet for the first time when filing for social services.

- Librarians are experts in search techniques and know that with the move to online resources, individuals seeking employment, business information, and skills training may need added assistance.
- Specific populations, such as people recently laid off from long-term employment, non-native English speakers, the older workforce, and new graduates often need targeted support. Libraries not only provide access to federally supported job training and placement programs, they are also creating locally relevant employment services, often in conjunction with local or regional employment and workforce development agencies.

Here are two examples:

The Career Center, based in Cuyahoga County Public Library's Maple Heights Branch in Ohio offers free access to Career Counselors. Counselors provide guidance to adults in career decision-making, constructing effective résumés, job searching strategies, interview preparation, and education and training.

Bethany Pisanchyn of Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania, is one of many people who recently turned to the library when she was looking for work as a music teacher. She said that she found herself “at the Abington Community Library for many hours a day, four to five days a week.” If you ask her why, she quickly responds that she was “finding a job.” Pisanchyn applied to over 70 different schools using library computers after her home computer stopped working, and she was unable to afford replacing it.

Web Resources [Slide #11]

- We have seen double-digit growth since 2007 in the online services libraries make available to their users.
- According to ALA’s Office for Research and Statistics, more than 71 percent of public libraries provide their community’s only free public access to computers and the Internet.
- Data drawn from responses to the Public Library Funding and Technology Access Study and its predecessor Public Libraries and the Internet Study show the number of libraries offering Web homework resources in 2009 was almost 80 percent, while 73 percent offered audio content, 62 percent virtual reference, 55 percent e-books, and 51 percent video content.

As an example:

Nancy Borell, Executive Director of Davidson Works, the North Carolina County Workforce Development Board, said that “The numbers of people that need services are larger than our capacity.” For them, the Davidson County Public Library is a natural partner because they are

located in all corners of the county and have the space, computers and trained library staff needed. Borell said “we’re reaching areas of the county we’ve never been able to reach before.”

Technology in Libraries [Slide #12]

- Wireless access in public libraries continues to grow, increasing from about 54 percent in 2007 to 82.2 percent in 2010. Even libraries in the smallest communities are using this option to increase access for their users.
- Not surprisingly, library staff play a key role in helping people become successful technology users.
- Ninety percent of libraries are offering formal and/or informal technology training.
- Urban libraries are more likely than rural libraries to offer classes, 52.5 percent and 24 percent, respectively, while public libraries in smaller communities are more likely to provide informal and online training.
- In 2009, libraries overwhelmingly reported an increase in usage of public library computers over the previous fiscal year. In fact, more than three-quarters of all public libraries reported increased computer use.

As an example:

The Appleton Public Library in Wisconsin reported its public computer use was up as much as 52 percent over 2008. “It really took a jump as the recession hit us,” said Library Director Terry Dawson, as reported in Appleton’s December 12 edition of the *Post-Crescent* newspaper. “It’s something we’re seeing on a national level with more employers requiring electronic applications to apply for a job. With this economy, more people are losing their high-speed Internet subscriptions, and they are relying on the library now.”

Diversity [Slide #13]

America’s libraries continue their efforts to serve diverse, underserved, and disadvantaged populations.

For example:

- Since its inception in 1997, the ALA’s Spectrum Scholarship Program has awarded more than 600 scholarships to members of underrepresented groups to help them pursue master’s degrees in library and information science. The Spectrum program is a priority ALA fundraising effort that provides minorities access to a network of library professionals, support in finding a position in the

field of librarianship, and free admission to national and local professional development events.

- In 2009, ALA announced its Spectrum Presidential Initiative, a renewal of the association's pledge to promote diversity. Its goal is to raise \$1 million.

As an example of the importance of this program:

Spectrum Scholar, Angela Barnes an Assistant Manager for Library Services and Young Adult Librarian at the Flatbush branch of Brooklyn Public Library said the following: “Receiving the Spectrum Scholarship has transcended my expectations. Not only did I receive money that enables me to pursue my dreams of becoming a librarian, the program taught me (among other things) leadership and self confidence. Most importantly, it has given me the opportunity to become actively involved in a great profession. In my dual roles as Young Adult Librarian and Assistant Manager with the Brooklyn Public Library, I serve as an example that librarians come in all shades. I love the looks of surprise on the kids’ faces when I walk into a classroom to promote library programs or do book talks. I also get a kick out of hearing their whispers ‘She doesn’t look like a librarian.’”

- Library associations and the Library Copyright Alliance continued their efforts in 2009 to ensure that people with visual disabilities are afforded the same access to copyrighted materials as sighted persons.
- Students with disabilities often wait weeks or months for their textbooks to be specially formatted, but now a new higher-education partnership could make these books more widely available to students by scanning them into an online library. Bookshare, a non-profit company, announced in April that 11 colleges and universities would contribute thousands of books to students who are blind, have low vision, or are unable to turn pages, and therefore reducing duplication and proofreading costs.
- Thirty-four libraries got a boost in 2009 in their efforts to develop innovative and exemplary literacy services for adult English-language learners. The American Dream Starts @ your library initiative served urban, rural, and suburban libraries with patron populations ranging in size from 850 to more than a million. The American Dream Starts @ your library is funded by the Dollar General Foundation and administered by the ALA.

Privacy [Slide #14]

- It has long been a core value of the ALA and of librarians to preserve, protect, and defend the First Amendment and the corollary right to receive and consider ideas, information, and images.
- One of the most significant issues this last year was the reauthorization of three sections

of the U.S.A. PATRIOT Act, including Section 215 on access to business records. Since the original passage of the PATRIOT Act following the attack on September 11, this section became known as the “library provision” because of historic concerns of the library community questioning access to user records without court oversight and due process.

- Section 215 and the sections on “roving wiretaps” and “lone wolf” provisions were scheduled to be either reauthorized on December 31, 2009 or “sunset.” The ALA Council passed a resolution at the Annual Conference in 2009 advocating for a sunset or retirement of Section 215. However, the Congressional debate clearly was moving toward reauthorization of the three sections.
- ALA continued this year to seek improved judicial review for warrants and “particularized” suspicion for law enforcement to have access to the user, Internet, reading, and customer records in libraries and bookstores. The association worked with various coalitions to improve these legal standards and some very modest improvements looked likely.
- However, Congress ran out of time and extended the three sections “as is”—first until February 28, 2010, and then again until December 31. These extensions allow for further debate on the three sections during the remainder of the 111th Congress this year.
- The library community lost Judith Krug, a champion of First Amendment rights who died on April 11, 2009. Judy was admired and respected for her efforts to guarantee the rights of individuals to express ideas and read the ideas of others without governmental interference. As director of the Office of Intellectual Freedom and executive director of the Freedom to Read Foundation for more than 40 years, she advised countless librarians and trustees in dealing with challenges to library material and was involved in multiple First Amendment cases that went to the United States Supreme Court. In addition, Judy was the founder of Banned Books Week, an annual weeklong event that celebrates the freedom to choose and the freedom to express one’s opinion.

Other Trends [Slide #15]

- Among other developments discussed in more detail in the State of America’s Libraries Report are:
 - The increase in social networking and the skills that librarians should possess as social networking-literate information professionals capable of implementing library services and using information at social networking sites.
 - The growing need for skills to interact with users within the sites and to understand and articulate the nature of social networking sites and their potential roles related to library services, creating presences and content, evaluating and

applying information, and being able to help users also acquire and apply these skills.

- Library construction fared better in 2009 than many expected during the recession, especially given the unreliability of funding for programming, materials, and hours. Money earmarked years ago was seeing construction through to conclusion. State-level support helped out in some cases but defaulted in others. And many of the new libraries and renovations showed a timely concern for the environment.

For More Information [Slide #16]

For more information on the ALA's State of America's Libraries Report, please visit the ALA Web site at <http://tinyurl.com/State2010>.

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