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Traveling to Tomorrow Together

An Assessment of the Needs of
Arkansas Libraries & State Government from the
Arkansas State Library

Keith Curry Lance
Marcia J. Rodney
Bill Schwarz
Kit Keller



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Introduction

In 2005, Carolyn Ashcraft was appointed as the latest and current State Librarian for the State of Arkansas. That makes her still, after only five years on the job, one of the nation's newest state librarians. As part of a new generation of chief officers of state library agencies, Ashcraft recognized the necessity—indeed, urgency—of redesigning the Arkansas State Library (ASL) in order to identify and meet the challenges of the 21st Century. Most members of the ASL Board and the ASL staff and library leaders throughout the state made it clear that they, too, recognized this need. For two to three years, Ashcraft discussed ASL's obvious need to plan for its future, with as much constituent input as possible, with fellow members of the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) and other colleagues nationwide. For much of 2009, the attentions of her, her Board, and the staff were monopolized by the exigencies of preparing for an unanticipated move to a new facility—a move now completed. This move provided yet another impetus for self-examination by ASL and for soliciting input from its constituencies. In 2010, fiscal support for consultants to conduct this needs assessment project was provided by Amigos Library Services as one of the benefits of ASL's membership in that library cooperative. With those resources available and deployed, the stage was set to begin this project with the start of the 2010-11 state fiscal year.

Scope of the Study

The Arkansas State Library (ASL) serves state government employees and through public, school, academic, and other libraries statewide—all Arkansans. This study focused on several key public service units of the state library: Extension Services, Network Services, and State Library Services. It did not deal with the Library for the Blind or the Arkansas Center for the Book. These units were excluded because of their specialized and semi-independent roles and their relationships with major units of the Library of Congress (as a member of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped network and an affiliate of the Center for the Book, respectively). It also did not deal with state library units whose work is less familiar to the public, such as Administration, Cataloging/Collection Development, and Information Resources.

The State Library's two strongest legal mandates are to serve libraries and state government. For this reason, planning for ASL's future is focused in these areas. While, historically, its library mandate was focused on public libraries, its allotment of funds from the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) expands that mandate to all types of libraries and particularly to academic and school libraries involved with higher education and public pre-K-12 education, respectively.

Recommendations

Based on library and state employee surveys and focus group and key informant interviews on which they were based, the following recommendations are offered. Some recommendations are general, applying to ASL's library and state government constituents alike. Others apply only to the library community or state government, and in the case of the library community, to a particular library type. Details about the study's methodology and statistical findings are appended to this report.

General Recommendations

Based on responses to the library and state employee surveys—the answers to the individual questions as well as the comments—it is clear that the strongest general recommendations to ASL must concern communication in the broadest sense.

Representatives of both ASL constituencies want to hear from ASL more often, more specifically, and in more ways. And they want channels and processes of communication that not only facilitate, but encourage, two-way communication. The other clear message from both constituencies is that they want more face-to-face interaction with more ASL representatives (State Librarian, Board, staff), and they want those representatives to come to them instead of the other way around.

The first and most important recommendation of this report, therefore, is:

- **Develop a comprehensive communication plan designed to increase the profile of ASL with both library and state government constituents and to support on an ongoing basis two-way communication between ASL and its constituents.**

While this plan will likely stipulate different types of face-to-face meetings and virtual interactions that need to take place and the schedule on which they will occur, it is equally important that the plan define the style of communication in which constituents should expect to participate. Features likely to be essential to the success of such a plan include:

- Face-to-face meetings and virtual interactions that are at least as conversational (two-way) as informational (one-way) in nature
- More outreach-oriented communications with, and visits to, ASL constituents from more representatives of ASL (Administration, Board, and staff)

- Communications that acknowledge difficult decisions, explain why those decisions were made, and welcome ongoing conversations about future options and possible changes of direction, as circumstances change

This type and style of communication will ensure that ASL remains a vital partner to its constituents, and that constituents feel ASL is responsive to their changing needs and circumstances.

The other major general recommendation concerns the proverbial “elephant in the room”—funding, or rather the limits of available funding for implementing any of this report’s recommendations. Based on survey comments as well as focus group and key informant interview input, it is clear that the Traveler database program is an almost universally lauded and valued investment of ASL. Most of the state’s annual allotment of Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds go to financing this program. It was also made clear by study participants that they would be unhappy if the database program were to be “cannibalized” in order to free up funds for other purposes. So, what options does that leave ASL decision-makers for coming up with the financing required to implement other recommendations? The following strategies are recommended:

- **Based on this study and other appropriate input, determine which recommendations require funding (notably, many do not), and categorize and prioritize them based on the extent of demand and the availability of resources.**
- **Based on those decisions, review ASL’s current activities and identify ones that can be reduced or eliminated, freeing up funding for new purposes. These decisions will likely also free up staff time, possibly whole staff positions, to be re-assigned to new purposes. In this likely eventuality, costs of retraining re-assigned staff should be considered as a critical component of fiscal planning.**
- **Identify recommendations that require new funding, and determine which ones are the most viable candidates for:**
 - requests for new state funding
 - cost-sharing partnerships with other libraries and library-related organizations (including other state library agencies)
 - cost-sharing partnerships with other state agencies
 - grant proposals to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and other federal and state grant-making agencies and charitable foundations
 - funding via partnerships that include library vendors
 - self-funding mechanisms, such as fees, contributions, and donations
- **Pursue each of the above funding strategies as deemed appropriate. Notably, engaging in these types of activities in and of themselves will likely also generate costs associated with training additional staff (ideally, at least one in each division) in proposal-writing and other fundraising strategies.**

- **Document and schedule plans for revisiting lower-priority and funding-contingent recommendations.**

Developing these various financing capacities will require time and effort. Implementing them and becoming proficient enough at them to be successful on a regular basis will also require time and effort. These circumstances should be expected, accepted, and not used as excuses to dismiss this report or any of its recommendations as fiscally unrealistic. One way or another, sooner or later, there is usually funding for anything that is valued enough by a critical mass of decision-makers and their constituents.

Plans, strategies, and regular progress reports on the adoption, implementation, and outcomes of these recommendations should be communicated widely to all constituents, providing when possible timelines, benchmarks, and other clear indicators.

Library Community Recommendations

Respondents to the library survey acknowledged gratefully, and indeed repeatedly, ASL's prominent roles in:

- providing the Traveler databases, both directly and through public, academic, and school libraries;
- offering continuing education opportunities (though mostly to public library staff); and
- coordinating summer reading programs in public libraries.

As more knowledgeable members of the library community are aware, however, ASL does far more—and can do far more still—than fill these more conspicuous roles. It is time to articulate as clearly as possible what ASL's mandate to serve the library community means and how that mandate will be made manifest to its library constituents.

In the library survey, representatives of the library community as a whole—individuals from public, academic, and school libraries—expressed a reasonably strong consensus that they wish ASL to play more extensive and energetic roles in:

- Creating a stronger resource sharing infrastructure
- Making continuing education (CE) opportunities for library staff and decision-makers more widely available via both face-to-face and virtual means
- Raising the visibility of ASL with libraries and the visibility of libraries with current and potential users.

On the basis of respondent consensus and comments in the library survey and input from focus group and key informant interviewees, the following recommendations are offered.

Resource Sharing

Three resource-sharing recommendations would be most responsive to the needs of all types of libraries:

- **Establish statewide reciprocal borrowing that will enable Arkansans to have open and ready access to all library resources.**
- **Provide more information about Traveler and other online databases to libraries and their users.**
- **Support statewide digital archiving and preservation efforts that will ensure that Arkansans have ready, long-term access to online information about their state via libraries.**

Continuing Education

Six continuing education recommendations would be most responsive to the needs of all types of libraries:

- **Create and support an online, searchable, database-driven CE calendar for librarians and their decision-makers.**
- **Create and support an online database of experts available to the library community.**
- **Develop the capacity to host live webinars, and archive them on the ASL website.**
- **Offer face-to-face CE opportunities in each Library Development District (LDD).**
- **Provide funding to encourage participation in CE opportunities (e.g., travel expenses, paying substitute staff).**
- **Schedule and publicize in-service days for library staff (similar to those for teachers).**

Advocacy

Three advocacy recommendations would be most responsive to the needs of all types of libraries:

- **Communicate more frequently with libraries via multiple means.**
- **Promote ASL collections and services to specific potential user groups.**
- **Share more information about libraries with decision-makers and stakeholders.**

Public Library Recommendations

Public library respondents to the survey expressed consensus that ASL pursue specific resource sharing, continuing education, and advocacy roles in relation to that library type.

Resource Sharing

Four resource-sharing recommendations would be most responsive to the needs of public libraries:

- **Create and support a state e-book collection.**
- **Provide more information about e-books and e-readers.**
- **Improve the visibility of Traveler databases.**
- **Coordinate sharing of local IT expertise statewide and within LDDs.**

Continuing Education

In addition to the general recommendations (i.e., funding to encourage attendance at CE events and in-service days for library staff), there is one additional recommendation that would be responsive to the needs of public libraries:

- **Host CE events at ASL's facilities.**

Advocacy

Three advocacy recommendations would be most responsive to the needs of public libraries:

- **Market public libraries to businesses (i.e., “economic gardening”).**
- **Market public libraries to non-profit community-based organizations.**
- **Issue more press releases about major library events.**

Academic and School Library Recommendations

Respondents from academic and school libraries indicated somewhat different priorities than those from public libraries. Their needs will be better addressed to the extent that these recommendations are implemented.

Resource Sharing

To better meet the resource-sharing needs of academic libraries:

- **Create and support a state e-book collection.**
- **Explore opportunities for cooperative purchasing agreements.**
- **Improve the visibility of Traveler databases to library users.**

To better meet the resource-sharing needs of school libraries:

- **Provide more help and information about how to make the most of Traveler databases.**
- **Streamline access to Traveler databases.**

To better meet the resource-sharing needs of both academic and school libraries:

- **Provide more useful, jargon-free information about IT issues on the ASL website.**

Continuing Education

In addition to the general recommendations (i.e., funding to encourage attendance at CE events and in-service days for library staff), one additional CE recommendation concerns school as well as public libraries:

- **Host CE events at ASL's facilities.**

Advocacy

To better meet the advocacy needs of academic and school libraries:

- **Document the value and impact of libraries and librarians with statistics and research.**

State Government Recommendations

The fact that so few state employees responded to the survey suggests that ASL is not “on their radar.” Indeed, as some of the few state employee respondents confirmed, to far too many state employees ASL is, for all practical purposes, invisible or, at best, peripheral—an agency of whose existence they are barely aware, of which they have little or no knowledge, and with which they have little or no experience. So, with state employees, the kind of communication needed is the most fundamental. To ensure that state leaders, state employees, and the general public take seriously ASL’s legal mandate to serve state government, one critical recommendation is offered regarding state government:

- **Mount an energetic and comprehensive marketing and public relations campaign to increase state employee awareness of ASL’s existence and what it offers to make their jobs easier and to help them be more successful in their jobs.**

In years past, such a campaign could have been prohibitively expensive. Fortunately, respondents to the state employee survey believe that such an effort is possible via largely virtual means, eliminating the necessity of multiple costly publications (e.g., posters, flyers, bookmarks) and events (e.g., open houses). The bigger challenge to ASL is not the supplies and logistics of such an effort, but its content (i.e., what to communicate to state employees as potential users of its facilities, resources, and services).

Because the number of respondents to the state employees survey was so small, its findings cannot be regarded as representative; but they do suggest some tentative recommendations for further exploration:

- **Share more information with state employees about Traveler and other online databases available to them via ASL. (The limited survey response suggests that many state employees have little or no awareness of such databases, why they might be useful to them, or how to use them.)**
- **Communicate to state employees that ASL staff are willing to take some services to them, whether face-to-face or virtually.**
- **Communicate to state employees that ASL staff are willing to customize some services to specific job-related needs. (The limited survey response suggests that most state employees do not understand that ASL staff are prepared to be responsive to state employees’ needs for news and information in their specific fields.)**
- **Provide guidance to new state employees about how they can use ASL, whether through a new employee toolkit, a state employees portal to the ASL website, or**

information provided for inclusion in agency employee handbooks—or some combination of these.

- **Introduce state employees to ASL by taking presentations to them and to their professional meetings and conferences.**

Other Recommendations

As stated at the beginning of this document, some ASL divisions were not included in this study. Far from diminishing their importance, the researchers responsible for this study assume that assessments of the needs of their constituencies are happening elsewhere and in different contexts. These divisions include: the Library for the Blind and the Arkansas Center for the Book as well as more behind-the-scenes divisions of ASL, such as Administration, Cataloging / Collection Development, and Information Resources. More than likely, some of the more general recommendations of this study—especially those regarding communication—will benefit them as much as other divisions. Beyond that, those who conducted this project wish to go on record with two recommendations regarding how ASL should assess the needs of constituents of these other divisions:

- **In dialog with staff of these divisions, review this report together, and identify and implement general recommendations that apply to them.**
- **Whether internally to ASL or as part of larger national efforts associated with the Library of Congress and others (e.g., the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, the Center for the Book), take appropriate steps to identify specific needs associated with the specialized constituencies of these divisions.**

For the Library for the Blind, a user survey is one viable option for identifying constituent needs. For the other divisions, however, the specialized nature of their work probably recommends reliance on findings from focus group and key informant interviews. (Notably, in the case of the Library for the Blind, both types of input may be valuable.) Generally, in these cases, input will be needed from a more expert—or at least, practitioner—perspective. Interviewees in such contexts might include local counterparts in administration, cataloging / collection development, and information services—if conducted face-to-face—or state and national experts in these areas—if conducted virtually. Again, however, many of the recommendations in this report will have obvious implications—some general, some more specific—for these divisions.

Conclusion

It seems fitting to conclude these recommendations with some reflections on the impact of this study itself on the participants (focus and key informant interviewees, survey respondents and commenters) and their perceptions of ASL.

At the events associated with this study, in survey comments, and in intervening, one-to-one communications, many individuals expressed excitement, anticipation, and hope that this study augers a new day for ASL. The surveys themselves—and the focus group and key informant interviews that contributed to their design—were identified in several face-to-face remarks, follow-up e-mails, and survey comments as perceived harbingers of a watershed period in the history of ASL.

ASL Administration, Board, and staff have realized for some time that, for ASL and its constituents to thrive, the time for change is at hand. They know that the longstanding model of a state library that provides traditional print-based, library-based services is no longer either desirable to constituents or appropriate to their needs. They know that the model of a state library agency that provides only face-to-face continuing education opportunities and supports resource sharing primarily by offering a collection of “last resort” is outmoded. And now, ASL’s constituents—in both libraries and state government—know that they “get it.”

Change is a scary business to everyone. Risks abound. What “babies” (still valuable services) might be thrown out with the proverbial “bathwater” (outmoded services)? What “good” new ideas might flounder or sputter for lack of sufficient and effective planning or enough resources—human or fiscal--or simply enough time? What unhealthy competition might be engendered between the status quo and that whose principal attraction to some may be its novelty?

On the other hand, it is also a time of opportunity. The hopes of many—including those who commissioned this study, those who lent their voices to it, and those of us who conducted it—are that this will not be one of those documents that is delivered, acknowledged, and shelved, to be forgotten as soon as the next “opportunity” or “crisis” presents itself. It is a heads-up, an invitation, a roadmap, and a ready-set-go! For this document to make the difference for which so many hope, it must be received and engaged, not just by the ASL Administration, Board, and staff, but, by library and state government leaders. Through its existing organizations and individual opinion-leaders, the library community has a big head-start. In the case of state government, ASL will need to be more pro-active and more outreach-oriented to capture the attention of agency heads and their staff. It should be less difficult than usual to get their attention. In times of tight public sector budgets, what agency head or staff member is going to turn down an offer of “free” help whose greatest cost to them is the time required to take notice and to initiate engagement with a welcome new, and much needed, partner?

While most participants in the study called for an increasingly virtual ASL, available to them at their desktops, there is still plenty of interest in both the library and state government communities in face-to-face engagement with ASL staff. That makes the timing of this study—so soon after ASL’s moving into its new facilities—very appropriate. Survey responses and comments provide some good clues about how, and how not, to expect to use those facilities effectively.

By far, the greatest demands this report’s recommendations place on the individuals involved are:

- Considering new options and being open to change (yes, in some cases substantial)
- Communicating with colleagues and constituents—and that includes listening—more frequently, with more open minds, and in new ways
- Embracing rapidly changing technologies as useful tools for achieving perennial goals
- Breathing new life into old structures (ASL divisions, Regional Library Systems, Library Development Districts) that have new opportunities to be key partners in the success of libraries
- Looking beyond “silos” (ASL divisions, library types, state agencies) to see new opportunities for partnerships that benefit all participating organizations and their constituents

Please play your part in the conversations about ASL, libraries, and the state of Arkansas for which this report provides a point-of-departure. It is a starting point on a roadmap with many potential destinations. Which ones are reached may well be up to you.

Appendix A: Planning for the Study

During August and September 2010, several focus group and key informant interviews were conducted. Input from these group and individual interviews provided substantial guidance in the development of two surveys: one of representatives of the library community and another of state government employees.

Focus Group Interviews

In August 2010, focus group interviews gathered input from the Arkansas State Library (ASL) Board (at least 5 members), ASL staff (at least 12 staff members from the Extension, Network, and State Library Services divisions), and Arkansas public library directors (20 or more, representing urban, suburban, and rural libraries from throughout the state). In September, focus group interviews of public, academic, and school librarians (35 or more) were held in conjunction with the joint annual conference of the Arkansas Library Association (ArLA) and the Southeastern Library Association (SELA). Immediately following that conference, a focus group interview of state government users of ASL (5 attendees) was held at its new facilities. Each focus group interview lasted from an hour to an hour and a half.

All of the focus group interviews were guided by the same set of questions:

1. What are the major issues facing you in libraries / state government?
2. What information or help do you need to be successful?
3. To what sources do you turn for that information or help?
4. What information or help can ASL best provide?
5. What are the most promising means of delivering that information or help to you?

The responses to the last two questions in particular were utilized in determining the content of the surveys of library and state government employees.

Key Informant Interviews & Survey Pre-Testing

During the balance of September 2010, key informant interviews were conducted. Twenty-five of 34 library and state government experts identified by ASL staff participated by telephone, e-mail, or both. These participants included:

- Public librarians (6 out of 7)

- Academic librarians (7 out of 9)
- School librarians (2 out of 2)
- Information technology experts (4 out of 8)
- State government users (6 out of 8)

In addition to the questions asked of focus group participants, these experts were asked to pre-test draft survey questions. Their valuable, constructively critical input during the pre-testing stage led to the addition, editing, and elimination of some items and item responses, and resulted in targeted, meaningful survey questions. Any deficiencies of omission or commission that remain in the surveys are the responsibility of the contractors.

Library Issues

Based on the focus group and key informant input, three sets of issues facing libraries were identified:

- Resource sharing
- Continuing education (CE)
- Visibility (i.e., advocacy)

Resource sharing issues included: mechanisms needed to encourage it, issues involved in it that need to be addressed, and projects that need to be undertaken to contribute to and support it. Resource sharing concerns specific to information technology (IT) focused on the popular and far-reaching Traveler database program and continuing education needs related to IT issues. (See page 10 for an explanation of the Traveler database program.)

Continuing education issues included: ASL's role in effectively identifying and communicating about CE matters with the library community, identifying and adopting desirable and effective transmission mechanisms for delivering CE, and facilitating increased access to and participation in face-to-face CE.

The need for increased visibility of libraries and their services was identified as an important element for continued growth and constituent support. Participants in planning this study offered ideas about advocacy efforts that would help to increase the visibility of both ASL and libraries statewide.

Appendix B: Library Survey Results

The online needs assessment survey of the library community was open from November 1-30, 2010. State Librarian Carolyn Ashcraft announced the survey via multiple e-mail lists, principally those of the Arkansas Library Association (ARKLIB-L) and ARKLink Libraries (ARCULI-L). The announcement was forwarded widely within multi-outlet library systems via internal lists (e.g., Central Arkansas Library System) and among informal groups of interested parties (e.g., public library trustees, school librarians, information technology experts). The announcement was prominently displayed on the Arkansas Library Association website, including a link to the survey on SurveyMonkey.com.

Two-hundred-sixty Arkansas library staff and trustees responded to the library survey. The two largest groups of respondents were from public (96, or 37%) and school libraries (98, or 38%), followed by academic libraries (42, or 16%) and others (24, or 9%).

Table 1. Library Survey Respondents by Type

| Library Type | Number | Percent |
|--------------|--------|---------|
| Public | 96 | 37% |
| Academic | 42 | 16% |
| School | 98 | 38% |
| Other | 24 | 9% |
| Total | 260 | 100% |

The Other category is a mix of respondents comprised predominantly of ASL staff and special librarians from both public and non-profit sectors. As this residual category provided less than 10 percent of the total survey response, and as none of its constituent groups were represented in large numbers, separate categories for their responses were deemed inappropriate.

In their survey responses, representatives of the library community shed considerable light on the needs of Arkansas libraries in three areas: resource sharing, continuing education (CE), and visibility (i.e., advocacy). In reporting the results, both the overall response and the varying responses for different library types are highlighted. Generally—though not exclusively—attention is called to the most frequently identified needs—especially ones identified by at least 50% of survey respondents, either overall or by a particular library type. Rankings of responses overall and by library type are limited to the top three or four, the fourth priorities usually being included due to tied rankings (i.e., 1-2, 2-3, 3-4) or to indicate that some priority was given to an option by all library types.

Resource Sharing

Regarding resource sharing, respondents to the library survey were asked to identify :

- Mechanisms that would contribute most to encourage resource sharing
- Resource sharing components that present challenges
- Projects that would contribute most to serving the resource sharing needs of the state's libraries

Resource Sharing Mechanisms Needed

Respondents from different types of libraries had very different ideas about the state's greatest resource sharing needs.

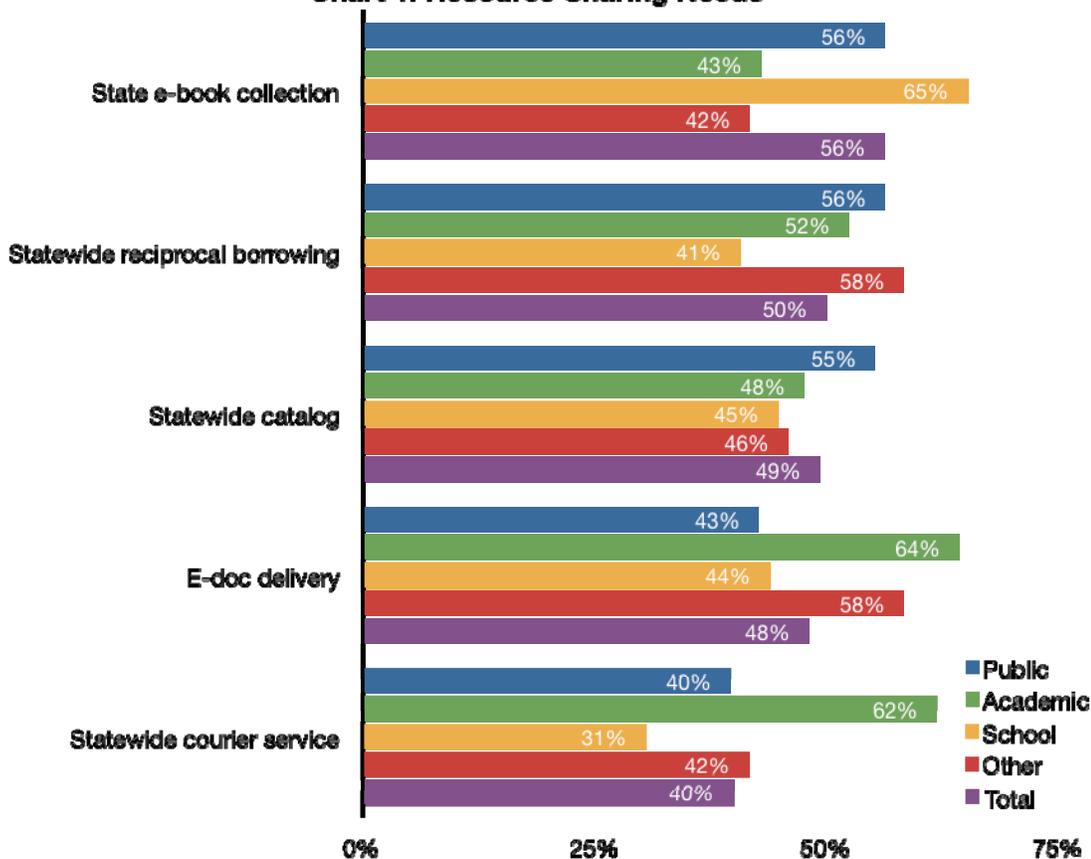
While a state e-book collection was the resource sharing need most frequently identified by those associated with school and public libraries (65% and 56%, respectively—from the two largest groups of respondents), representatives of academic libraries and others did not share this priority.

Statewide reciprocal borrowing placed second among resource sharing needs, identified by more than half of public, academic, and other library respondents. School library respondents did not rank it so highly.

A statewide library catalog ranked third overall, with over half (55%) of public library respondents identifying it as a major need. For the other respondent groups—academic, school, and other—just under half (45-49%) shared that view.

By far the most dramatic differences of opinion, however, concern needs for electronic document delivery and statewide courier service. Two-thirds of academic library respondents (64% and 62%, respectively) identified these as their top two priorities. ~~WeH~~ Fewer than half (31%-43%) of public and school library respondents agreed about the need for these mechanisms to support resource sharing.

Chart 1: Resource Sharing Needs



The rankings of needed resource sharing mechanisms were less straightforward than those for other topics in this survey, owing, in this case, to the library-type splits on a state e-book collection and statewide courier service. A state e-book collection topped the rankings of needed resource sharing mechanisms for public and school library respondents, while academic library respondents were the only ones to rank statewide courier service in the top three (ranking it second).

The “consensus” priorities for resource sharing mechanisms—ones in the top three for all four respondent groups—are:

- Statewide reciprocal borrowing
- Electronic document delivery
- Statewide library catalog

Notably, electronic document delivery outranked a statewide library catalog, owing to its second and third place rankings with other and school library respondents.

Table 2. Top Resource Sharing Mechanisms Ranked

| All | Public | Academic | School | Other |
|--------------------------------|--------|----------|--------|-------|
| State e-books | 1-2 | | 1 | |
| Statewide reciprocal borrowing | 1-2 | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| Statewide catalog | 3 | | 2 | 3 |
| Electronic document delivery | | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Statewide courier service | | 2 | | |

Note: The first column lists the responses by overall rank.

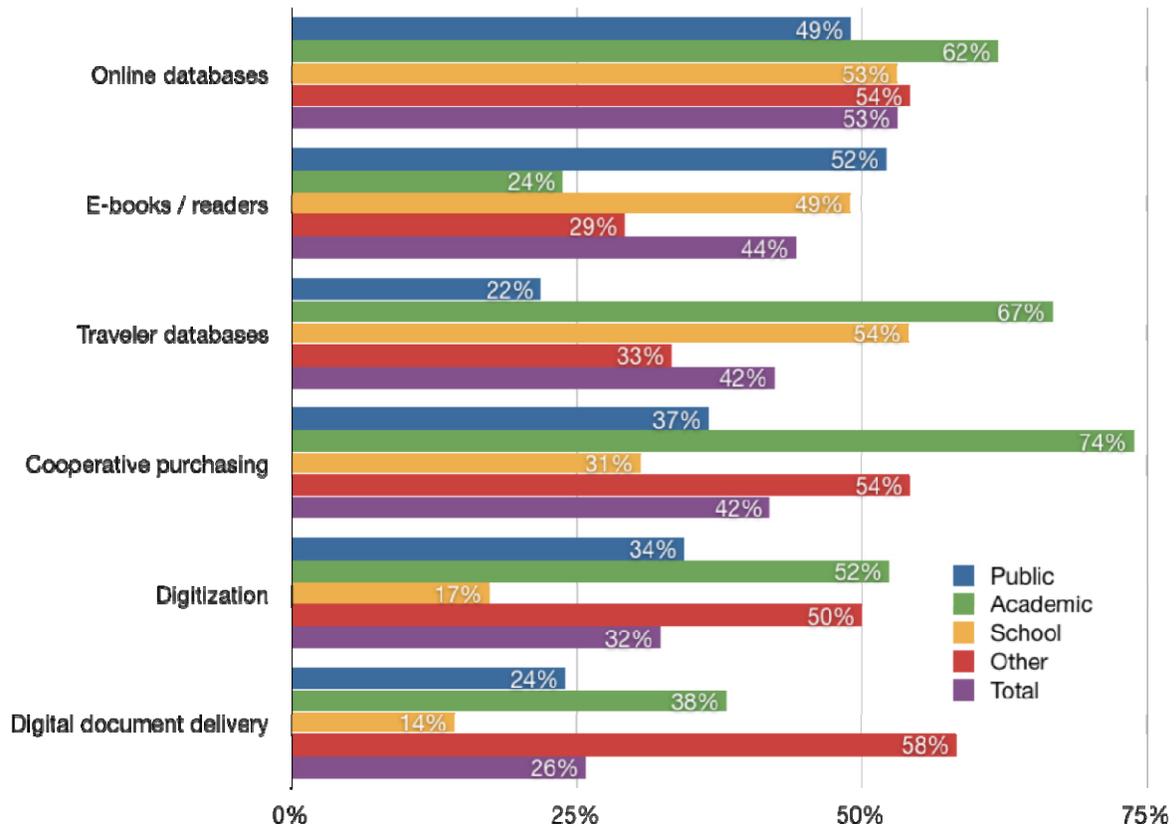
Resource Sharing Issues Needing ASL Attention

The spread of opinion on challenging resource sharing issues that require the attention of ASL was even greater than that for needed resource sharing mechanisms.

Among academic library respondents, three out of four (74%) called for more cooperative purchasing agreements; two out of three (67%) want to see more attention given to the Traveler database project; and three out of five (62%) want more general attention given to online database issues. For public, school, and other respondents, these resource sharing issues inspired far weaker endorsements. For instance, only one out of five public library respondents (22%) felt the Traveler database project should be a priority for such attention. For public and school library respondents especially, no other resource sharing issues garnered concern by much more than half, and often considerably less than that. (See page 10 for an explanation of the Traveler database project.)

Academic and school library respondents also had very different ideas about this issue. Almost half of school respondents (49%) identified e-books and e-readers as a major resource sharing issue; only a quarter of academic respondents (24%) agreed. They disagreed even more about the priority that should be given to digitization of library materials (52% for academic, 17% for school) and digital document delivery (38% vs. 14%, respectively).

Chart 2: Resource Sharing Issues



As with resource sharing mechanisms needed, there was little consensus across library types about components of resource sharing requiring ASL attention. Indeed, the only issue to rank in the top three for all four respondent groups was online databases. Perhaps this is little surprise, considering the general nature of the topic as well as the ubiquity of online databases in all types of libraries. The only other resource sharing issue to rank in the top three for three of the four groups—namely, public, academic, and other respondents—was cooperative purchasing agreements. Given the fiscal climate in the public sector, it is little surprise that economies of scale are on the minds of representatives of most types of libraries.

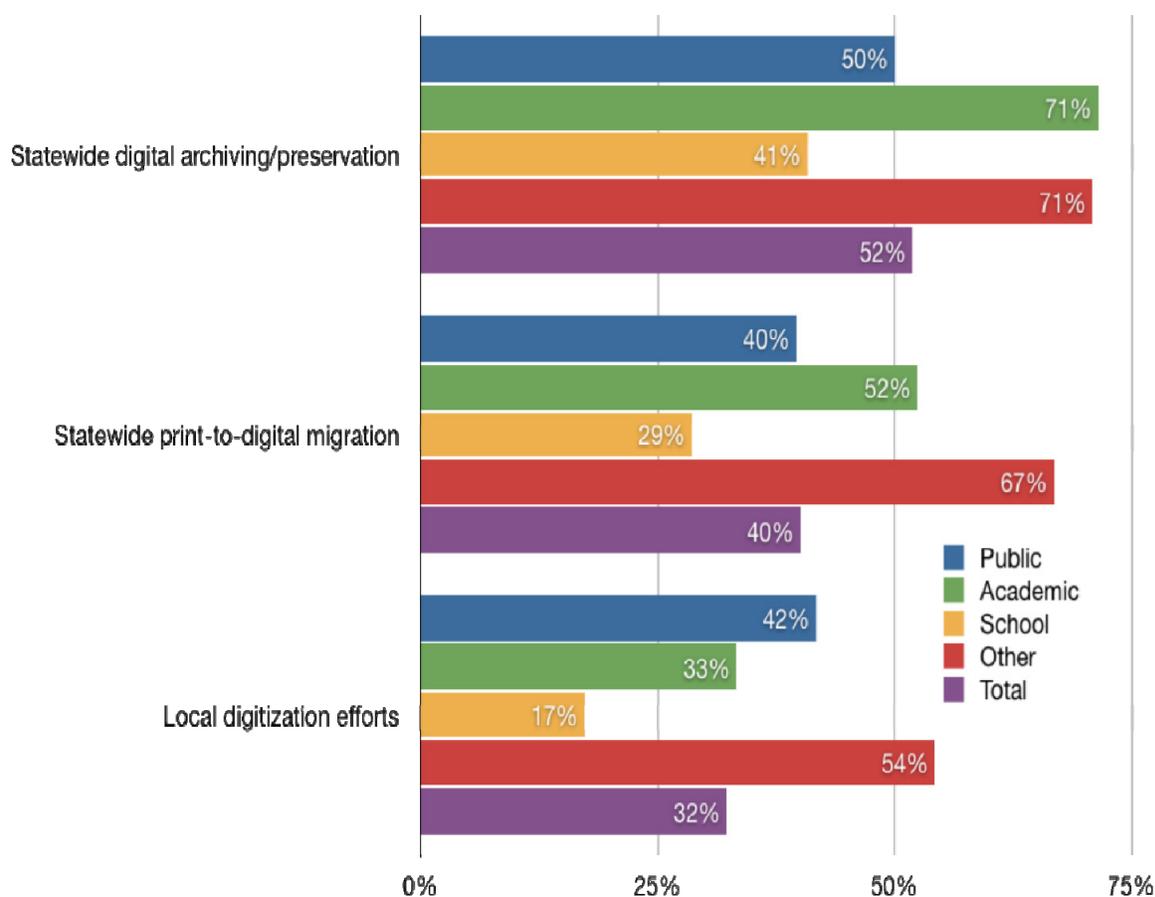
Table 3. Top Resource Sharing Issues Ranked

| All | Public | Academic | School | Other |
|------------------------------|--------|----------|--------|-------|
| Online databases | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| E-books / readers | 1 | | 3 | |
| Traveler databases | | 2 | 1 | |
| Cooperative purchasing | 3 | 1 | | 2 |
| Digitization | | 4 | | 4 |
| Electronic document delivery | | | | 1 |

Resource Sharing Projects Needing ASL Support

When asked what types of resource sharing projects would contribute most to meeting needs of the state’s libraries, respondents from different library types expressed the most consistent views on any of the three survey questions on resource sharing. Despite the similarity in their overall rankings, however, it is noteworthy that the level of enthusiasm for ASL resource sharing projects varied dramatically by library type. The other respondent group was most enthusiastic about all three of the top ranking project types: statewide digital archiving / preservation (71%), statewide print-to-digital migration (67%), and local digitization efforts (54%). By contrast, school library respondents ranked these project types the same, but at much lower levels (41%, 29%, and 17%, respectively). Public library respondents mediated those levels of support—although, by a slim margin; they prioritized local digitization projects over statewide print-to-digital migration.

Chart 3: Resource Sharing Projects



Despite their different scales of support, all four respondent types gave top priority to statewide digital archiving / preservation projects. Academic, school, and other respondents put statewide print-to-digital migration projects in second place and local digitization efforts in third. Public library respondents reversed those second and third place rankings.

Table 4. Top Resource Sharing Projects Ranked

| All | Public | Academic | School | Other |
|--|--------|----------|--------|-------|
| Statewide digital archiving / preservation | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Statewide print-to-digital migration | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Local digitization efforts | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 |

One commenter suggested that ASL itself may not be the state agency with primary responsibility for digitizing some Arkansas documents, especially very fragile, historical documents. This observation indicated that the high priority in all library sectors of statewide digital archiving and preservation may not necessarily reflect a mandate that ASL itself undertake this ambitious project. To be successful in meeting many of the statewide library community’s needs, ASL will likely need to become a partner with other agencies and institutions that have a stake in a particular project. In this case, for instance, statewide digital archiving and preservation, partners might include local and state historical societies, the State Archives, the Legislative Research Bureau, and one or more academic institutions.

Traveler Database Program Improvements

One of the most successful and far-reaching efforts of the Arkansas State Library is the Traveler Online Database Program. This program offers dozens of otherwise-expensive, content-rich databases to Arkansas residents at no charge. These databases offer vetted, authoritative information from some of the major global data vendors, including Britannica, EBSCOHost, Gale, and OCLC FirstSearch. The general public can access Traveler databases via public libraries; teachers and pre-K-12 students, via public school libraries; faculty and higher education students, via academic libraries; and, state employees, via their on-the-job library, the Arkansas State Library.

This program is a conspicuous part of ASL’s existing role in information technology (IT) in the library community. Consequently, it was not surprising that a major area of concern identified when planning this study was to solicit input on how to improve this program.

Two suggested improvements to the Traveler database program received overall support in excess of 50% of library survey respondents: increasing the visibility of Traveler databases to potential users (60%) and streamlining access to the databases (57%).

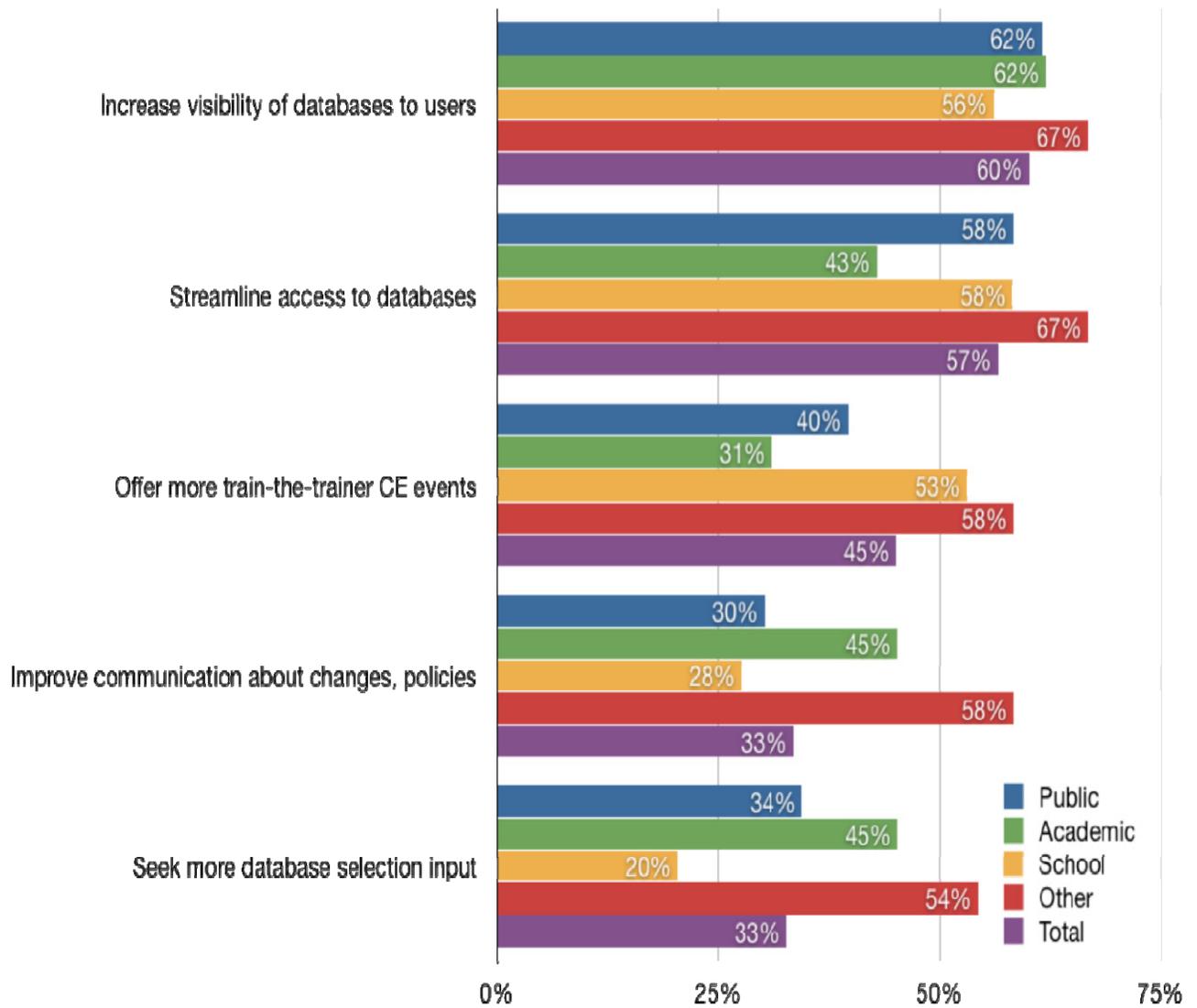
Intriguingly, each of the five highest-ranking improvements was supported by a strong majority of respondents in the residual “other” category, ranging from more than half (54%) for seeking more input for database selection to two-thirds (67% each) for increasing the visibility of the databases and streamlining access to them.

As with the resource sharing items in the library survey, responses to this item varied significantly by library type.

- Streamlining access to Traveler databases was less frequently identified as a desirable improvement by those from academic libraries (2 out of 5, or 43%) than public and school library respondents (3 out of five, 58% each).
- Half of school library respondents (53%) advocated offering more train-the-trainer sessions to increase the pool of potential Traveler database trainers; but only two out of five (40%) respondents from public libraries and less than a third of those from academic libraries (31%) agreed.
- Almost half of academic respondents (45%) supported improving communication with libraries about Traveler changes and policies, but only about three out of 10 from public (30%) and school libraries (28%) felt the same.
- Representatives of academic libraries also led their public and school library counterparts in asking ASL to solicit more input about Traveler database selection (45%, 34%, and 20%, respectively).

These findings likely reflect generally higher levels of expertise in, and experience at, database searching among academic librarians than among their public and school library counterparts. Those who use more of the databases, use them more frequently, and use them more intensively, are likelier to feel that they have valuable input to share and to take a keener interest in how the program is run. Notably, however, academic library respondents were less likely than those representing other library types to advocate “streamlining” Traveler database access. An idea expressed at more than one focus group interview was the desirability of being able to search across databases. Perhaps academic library respondents were less likely to advocate this, because they tend to know better how difficult-to-impossible this would be to achieve. Additionally the audience served by academic libraries (faculty, students, researchers) is more likely to have specific information needs, to have better-than-average search skills, and to be more discriminating in their information source selections. These factors no doubt influence the rankings of academic librarians to these survey questions.

Chart 4: Traveler Database Improvements



Two potential Traveler database improvements ranked in the top four for all four respondent groups:

- Increasing the visibility of Traveler databases to library users and
- Streamlining access to the databases.

Expanding train-the-trainer opportunities to increase the pool of Traveler trainers was a “top 3” priority for public, school, and other respondents. Only academic and other respondents gave higher priority to improving communication about Traveler changes and policies.

Table 5. Traveler Database Improvements Ranked

| All | Public | Academic | School | Other |
|--|--------|----------|--------|-------|
| Increase visibility of Traveler databases to library users | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1-2 |
| Streamline access to Traveler databases | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1-2 |
| Offer more train-the-trainer continuing education events on use of Traveler databases | 3 | | 3 | 3-4 |
| Improve communication about Traveler database changes and policies | | 2-3 | | 3-4 |
| Seek more input from libraries of all types into ASL’s Traveler database selection process | | 2-3 | | |

IT Continuing Education Needs

In the context of resource sharing, library survey respondents were asked to prioritize several IT-specific continuing education needs. Overall, the three most frequently identified needs were:

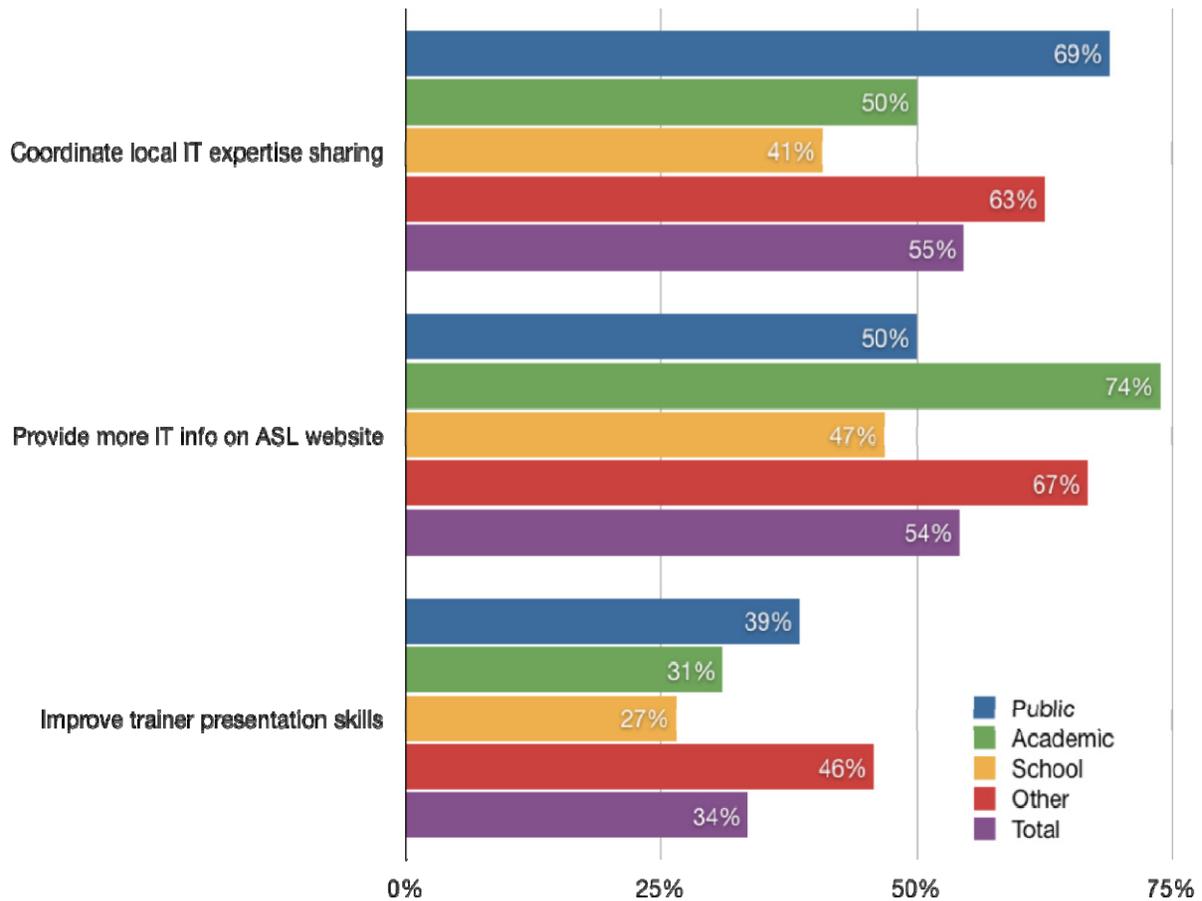
- Coordinating the sharing of local IT expertise among libraries statewide and in each Library Development District (LDD)
- Providing more useful, jargon-free information about IT issues on the ASL website
- Providing more opportunities for prospective IT trainers to improve their presentation skills for “non-IT” audiences.

As usual, the library type with which a respondent is affiliated influenced the relative frequency with which these needs were identified.

Those affiliated with public libraries were more likely to advocate ASL playing a role in coordinating access to local IT expertise than other, academic, and school respondents (69%, 63%, 50%, and 41%, respectively).

Academic library respondents were more likely to encourage ASL to provide more IT information on its website than their other, public, and school counterparts (74%, 67%, 50%, and 47%, respectively).

Chart 5 : IT Continuing Education Needs



There was near unanimity of opinion among library survey respondents about the ranking of these three IT continuing education needs. Academic, school, and other respondents ranked ASL providing more IT information on its website over it coordinating local IT expertise sharing. The reverse was true for those from public libraries. All groups agreed, however, that providing opportunities for prospective IT trainers to improve their presentation skills for “non-IT” audiences was a lower priority than the other two needs. (Note: The next section addresses issues related to continuing education more generally.)

Comments about resource sharing issues—including Traveler databases—included:

- Several reiterations of the need for a statewide courier system that is either subsidized or affordable

- A balance of satisfaction with what the Traveler project provides now coupled with a desire for several improvements to it, such as increased funding to expand its database offerings, more variety in and input into database selection, and more progress on “ease of use” issues
- In isolated areas, the need for affordable and reliable broadband access

Table 6. Information Technology (IT) Continuing Education Needs Ranked

| All | Public | Academic | School | Other |
|---|--------|----------|--------|-------|
| Coordinate sharing of local IT expertise among libraries statewide and within each Library Development District | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Provide more useful, jargon-free information about IT issues on ASL website | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Provide opportunities for prospective IT trainers to improve their presentation skills for “non-IT” audiences | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |

Resource Sharing Highlights

Representatives of all library types agreed that:

- Statewide reciprocal borrowing would enhance resource sharing.
- ASL should give more attention to online database issues

Other priority issues varied by library type:

- Public and academic library respondents supported the creation of a state e-book collection
- Public library respondents were concerned about e-books and e-readers
- Academic library respondents wanted more cooperative purchasing agreements
- School library respondents wanted more help making the most of the Traveler database project.

The only type of ASL-led resource sharing project that garnered universal enthusiasm across library types was statewide digital archiving / preservation. Notably, however, a higher percentage of academic library respondents supported this than public respondents, and public respondents supported it more often than school respondents.

Two improvements to the Traveler database program were favored, though by different groups of respondents. Public and academic library representatives favored improving the visibility of Traveler databases to library users. Those associated with school libraries and others preferred streamlining access to Traveler databases.

When asked how ASL might improve IT-related continuing education, public library respondents favored having ASL coordinate local IT expertise sharing statewide and within Library Development Districts. All other respondent groups preferred that ASL provide more useful, jargon-free information about IT issues on its own website.

Continuing Education

Regarding continuing education generally (i.e., not limited to resource sharing and information technology issues), respondents to the library survey were asked to identify :

- Means of communication that would contribute most to knowledge of continuing education (CE) opportunities for library staff and trustees
- Transmission mechanisms that would contribute most to encouraging participation in CE opportunities
- Steps that would do the most to improve access to quality, face-to-face CE opportunities.

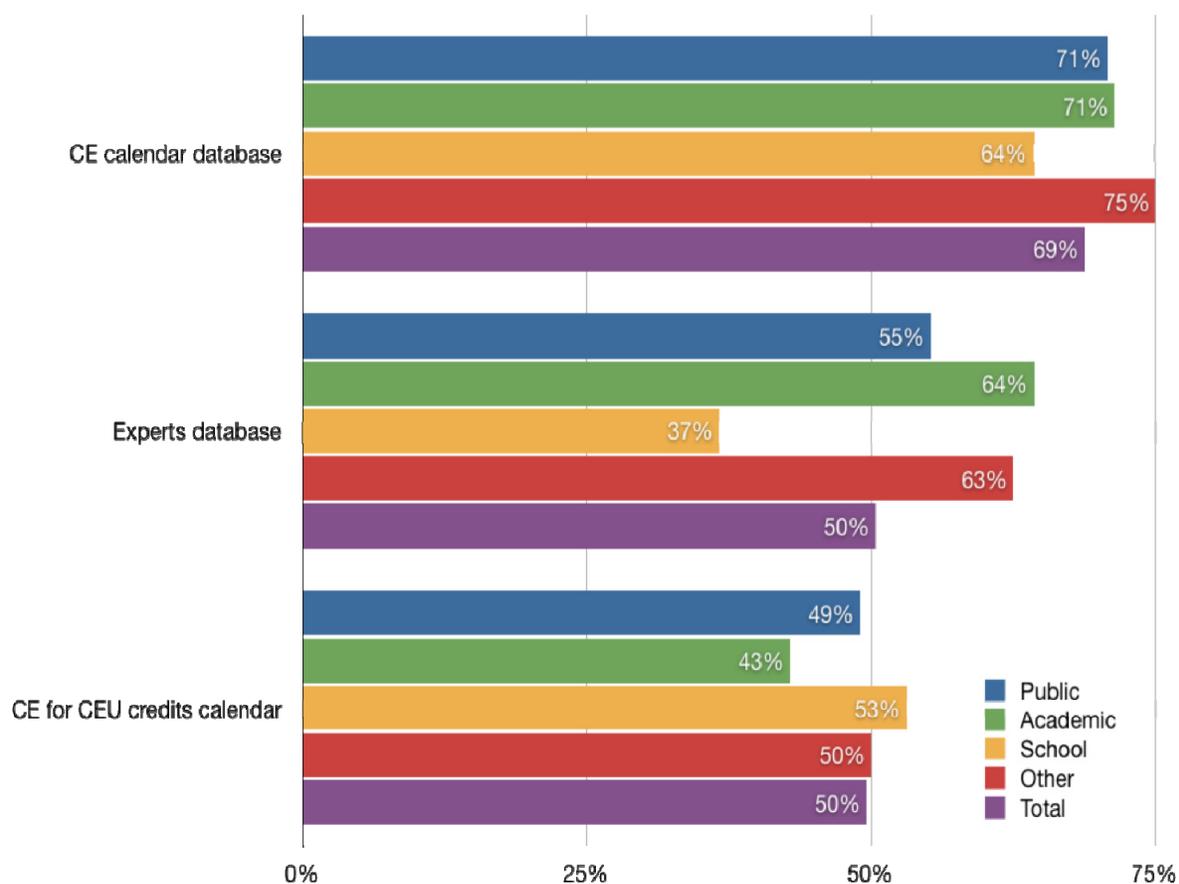
Improving Communication about Continuing Education

Three ideas about what ASL can do to improve continuing education for library staff and trustees statewide that garnered the support of at least half of library survey respondents were:

- A searchable, database-driven calendar of continuing education events
- A database of experts from the library community and beyond who are willing to share their expertise with library staff
- A calendar of continuing education events for which CEUs (continuing education units) are available

Library type differences persist on this topic, although the differences were less pronounced. Public, academic, and other respondents (71%, 71%, and 75%, respectively) were more likely to support an online CE calendar than school respondents (64%). The same groups (55%, 54%, and 63%) were less inclined generally to support an experts database; but, they were substantially more likely to support it than school respondents (37%). Interest in a calendar of opportunities to earn CEU credits had stronger support among school, public, and other respondents (53%, 49%, and 50%) than their academic counterparts (43%).

Chart 6: Improving Communication about CE



Because library type differences were less pronounced on this topic, an online CE calendar was ranked first by all respondent groups. Second place went to an experts database for public, academic, and other respondents and to a calendar of events for CEU credit for school respondents.

Table 7. Improvements to Communication about Continuing Education Ranked

| All | Public | Academic | School | Other |
|---|--------|----------|--------|-------|
| Searchable, database-driven calendar of continuing education events | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Database of experts from library community and beyond available to share expertise with library staff | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Calendar of continuing education events for which CEUs are available | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 |

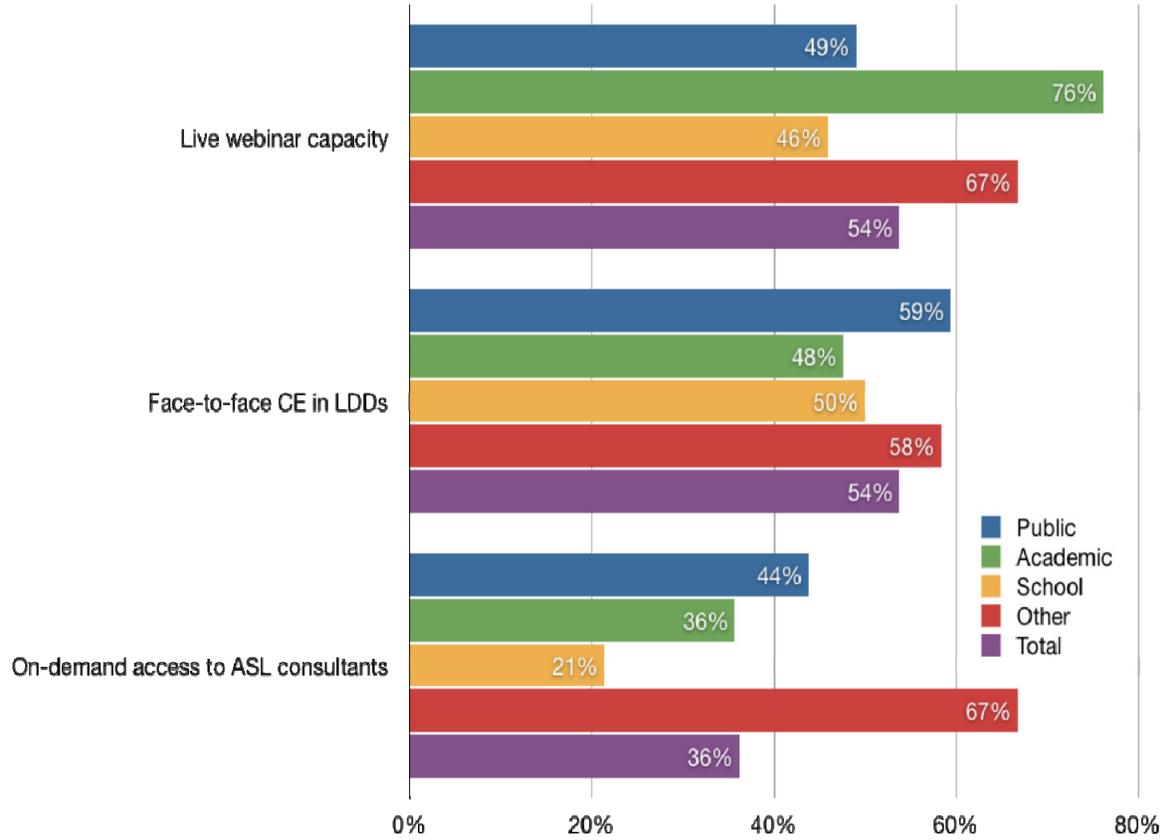
Mechanisms for Transmitting Continuing Education

The three most popular mechanisms for ASL to pursue for transmitting continuing education are:

- Live webinar capacity
- Face-to-face continuing education in each Library Development District (LDD)
- On-demand access to ASL consultants for consultation and tutoring during regular business hours

There is a slight division of opinion by library type about which CE transmission mechanisms would most encourage greater participation by library staff. In their support for ASL developing the capacity to host live webinars, academic and other respondents expressed the highest levels of support (76% and 67%, respectively) demonstrated for any option. Public and school respondents (49% and 46%) were significantly less enthusiastic about it. Support for face-to-face continuing education opportunities in each LDD was strongest among public library and other respondents (59% and 58%). Only about half of academic and school respondents (48% and 50%) advocated this approach. While two-thirds of other respondents (67%)—notably, the group that may have included some ASL consultants—supported on-demand access to ASL consultants during business hours, significantly fewer public, academic, and school respondents (44%, 36%, and 21%) encouraged that as a strategy for delivering CE.

Chart 7: Most Encouraging CE Transmission Mechanisms



Public, academic, and school respondents concurred that on-demand access to ASL consultants ranked third among the top mechanisms for delivering CE. The rankings of the other two options, however, were split, with academic respondents preferring live webinars and public and school respondents preferring face-to-face CE opportunities in each LDD. The fact that these two options earned first or second place from public, academic, and school respondents suggests that, for the foreseeable future, a blended model of CE delivery is desired, to the extent possible.

Table 8. Continuing Education Delivery Mechanisms Ranked

| All | Public | Academic | School | Other |
|---|--------|----------|--------|-------|
| Capacity to host live webinars | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1-2 |
| Face-to-face continuing education opportunities in each Library Development District (LDD) | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| On-demand access to ASL consultants for consultation / tutoring during regular business hours | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1-2 |

Improvements to Face-to-Face Continuing Education

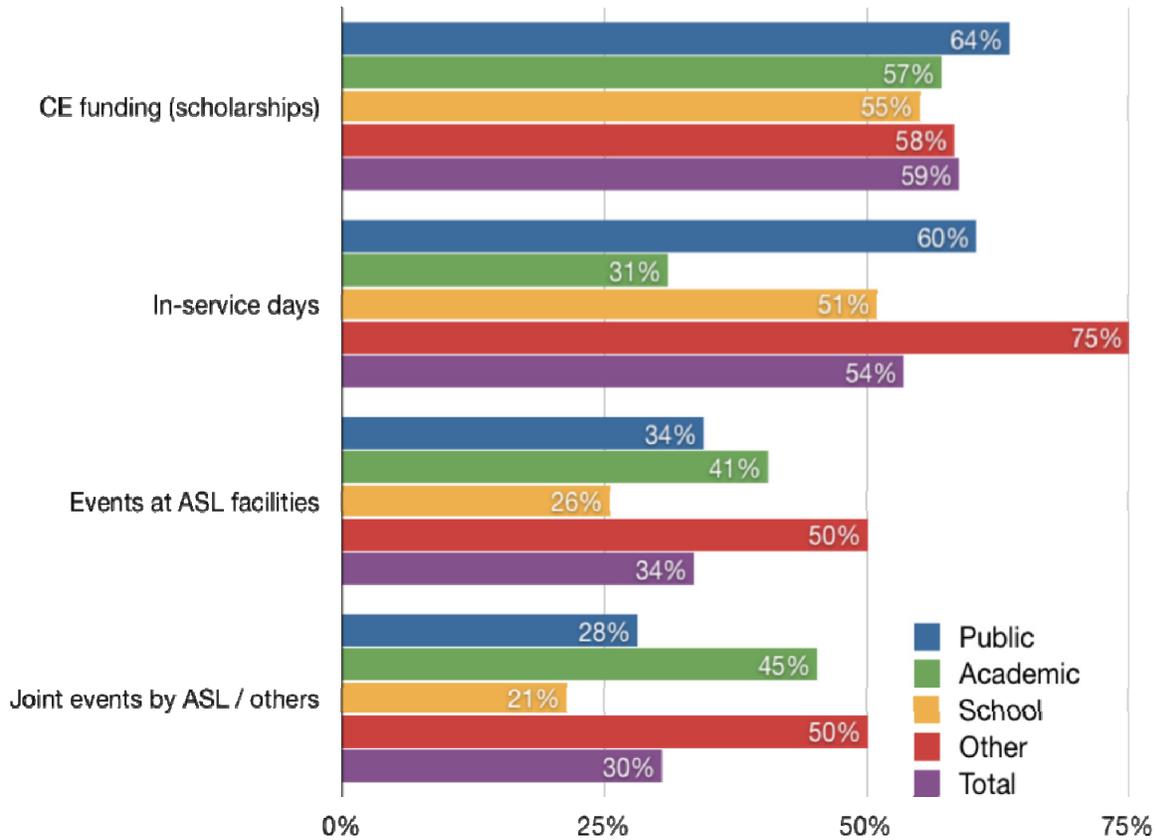
Four ideas about how ASL can improve face-to-face continuing education that received significant support from one or more respondent groups were:

- Funding to encourage attendance at CE events (i.e., “scholarships”)
- In-service days for library staff (similar to those for teachers)
- Events at ASL’s new facilities
- Joint events sponsored by ASL with other organizations

Not surprisingly, the potential improvement with the most consistent support across respondent types was funding to encourage attendance. About three out of five public, academic, school, and other respondents embraced this idea (64%, 57%, 55%, and 58%, respectively).

The popularity of other ideas for improving CE was more likely to be different by respondent type. Teacher-style in-service days set aside for library CE, either statewide or by LDD, were very popular with public and other respondents (60% and 75%); but, considerably less popular with academic respondents (31%). The other two ideas—events at ASL’s new facilities and joint events sponsored by ASL and other organizations—were more popular with academic and other respondents (41% and 50%, 45% and 50%, respectively) than with public and school respondents (ranging from 21% to 34%).

Chart 8: Improvements to Face-to-Face Continuing Education



Public and school library respondents agreed in ranking funding, in-service days, and events at ASL’s new facilities as their top three ideas, in that order, for how ASL can improve CE. Academic library respondents agreed about first and third places in that list, but gave second place to joint events sponsored by ASL with other organizations. Other respondents ranked in-service days first, followed by funding and joint events. After funding’s predictable first-place showing, in-service days (especially for public and school library staff) and events at ASL’s new facilities are the most popular ideas ASL can pursue to improve CE.

Table 9. Face-to-Face Continuing Education Improvements Ranked

| All | Public | Academic | School | Other |
|--|--------|----------|--------|-------|
| Funding to encourage attendance at continuing education events | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| In-service days for library staff | 2 | | 2 | 1 |
| Events at ASL’s new facilities | 3 | 3 | 3 | |
| Joint events sponsored by ASL with other organizations | | 2 | | 3 |

Comments on the topic of continuing education addressed needs for:

- A strong mix of face-to-face and online CE opportunities (e.g., the UnConference)
- Solutions to the time and money barriers to participation in CE, especially face-to-face
- An online archive of CE podcasts on the ASL website
- More avenues of communication about forthcoming CE opportunities
- More communication with local officials and school administrators about the need for their support of staff participation in CE opportunities

Continuing Education Highlights

Respondent priorities for steps ASL can take to improve continuing education (CE) were reasonably clear. To improve communication about CE, an online, database-driven CE calendar and a database of experts available to the library community were desirable. On the issue of how best to deliver CE, respondents supported two ASL strategies: developing the capacity to host live webinars and offering face-to-face CE opportunities in each Library Development District (LDD). Not surprisingly, ASL providing funding to encourage individual CE participation was the most popular idea for improving attendance at face-to-face CE events. After that—with the exception of academic respondents—other respondents supported ASL scheduling in-service days for library staff, similar to the sort available to teachers.

Visibility of ASL & Libraries

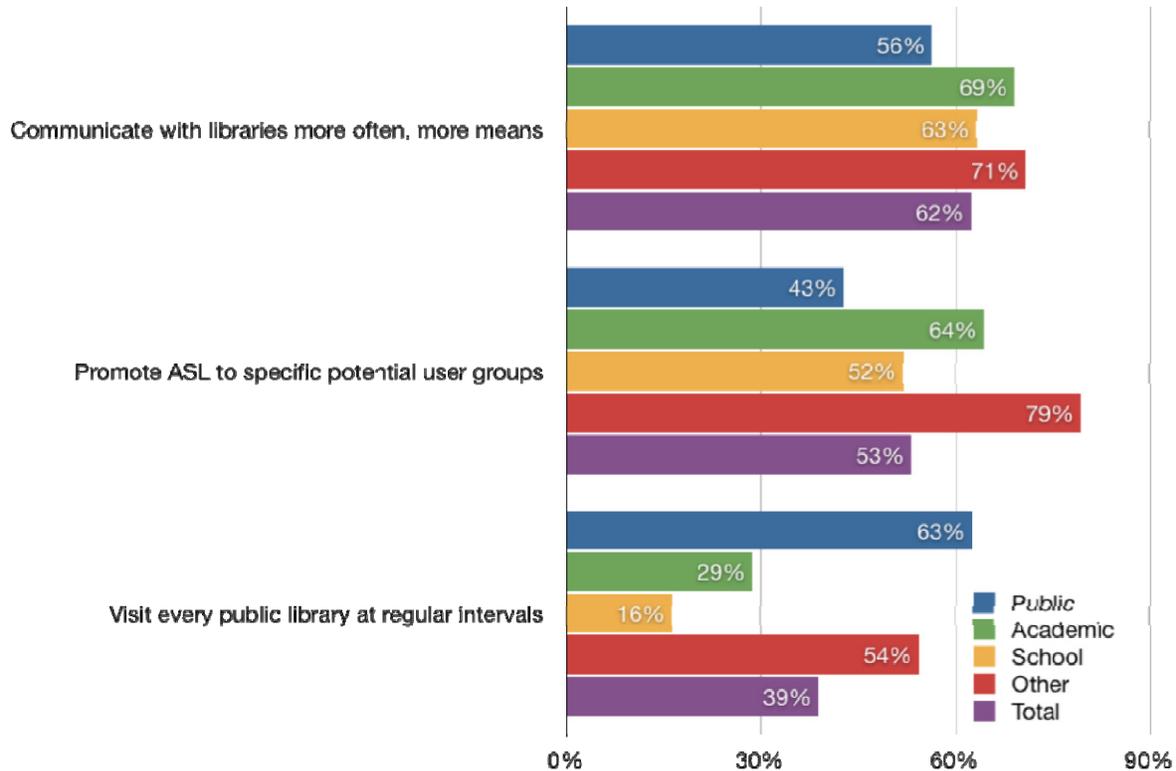
ASL's advocacy efforts must focus on two ends: increasing the visibility of ASL to libraries and increasing the visibility of libraries to their users.

Of several possible advocacy strategies for ASL to use to increase its own visibility to libraries, one was favored by a clear majority of all respondents as well as respondents from each library type: ASL should communicate more frequently with libraries via multiple means.

Majorities of academic, school, and other respondents (64%, 52%, and 79%, respectively) advised ASL to promote its collections and services to specific potential user groups. Interestingly, only two out of five public library respondents (43%) supported this strategy. This may be because, by definition, uses of public libraries and public library users themselves are more diverse than those of other library types.

Two out of three public library respondents (63%) also supported every public library being visited by someone from ASL at regular intervals.

Chart 9: Improving ASL Visibility to Libraries



Rankings of advocacy strategies for ASL to pursue to increase its own visibility varied significantly by library type. The top priority across library types—increased ASL communication with libraries—placed first only with academic respondents, but received second place from other groups. Promoting ASL to specific user groups, the overall second priority, ranked first for school and other respondents, second with academic respondents, and third with public respondents.

Table 10. Improving ASL Visibility to Libraries Ranked

| All | Public | Academic | School | Other |
|--|--------|----------|--------|-------|
| Communicate more frequently with libraries via multiple means | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Promote ASL collections / services to specific potential user groups | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Ensure that every public library is visited by someone from ASL at regular intervals | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 |

Library survey respondents were asked to rank a variety of approaches to promoting the visibility of libraries statewide. The six that ranked highest, with one or more respondent types, were, in descending order for all respondents:

- Sharing more information about libraries with decision-makers and stakeholders
- Documenting the value and impact of librarians and libraries with statistics and research
- Issuing more press releases about major library events
- Marketing libraries to businesses
- Marketing libraries to non-profit community-based organizations
- Hiring or designating ASL staff to focus on library advocacy

Four out of five academic and two out of three other respondents (79% and 69%, respectively) advised sharing more information with decision-makers and stakeholders. Curiously, only about half of public and school respondents (52% and 48%) agreed with them.

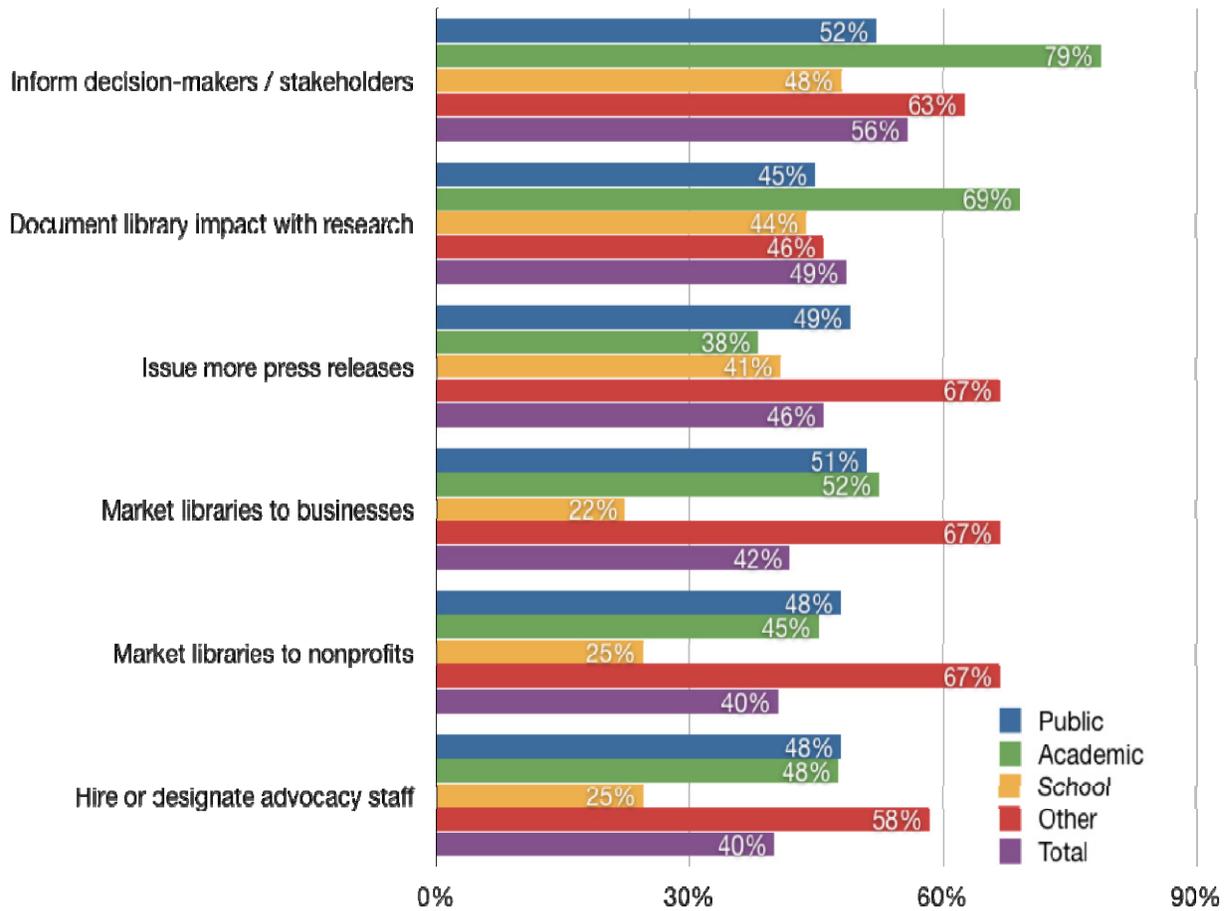
Seven out of 10 academic library respondents recommended documenting the value and impact of libraries with research and statistics. Just under half of public, school, and other respondents (45%, 44%, and 46%) agreed with them.

While two out of three respondents in the residual “other” group (67%) believe the visibility of libraries would be improved by ASL issuing more press releases, fewer than half of public, academic, and school respondents (49%, 38%, and 41%) agreed with them.

Increasing library visibility by marketing libraries to businesses and non-profit community-based organizations appealed to two out of three other respondents (67% each) followed by about half of public and academic respondents (51% and 48%, 52% and 45%, respectively). These approaches to advocacy, however, were popular with one-quarter or fewer school respondents (22% and 25%).

Similarly, school respondents (25%) were far less enamored with ASL hiring or designating ASL staff to focus on advocacy than their public and academic counterparts (48% each). Only other respondents—almost three out of five—favored this approach. Notably, the other respondent group is the one that includes some ASL staff.

Chart 10: Promoting Visibility of Libraries Statewide



Of the approaches to general library advocacy offered, the only one ranking highly with all respondent groups was having ASL share more information with decision-makers and stakeholders. (Note: Its fourth place showing with other respondents was a consequence of a three-way tie for first place.) Both academic and school respondents favored ASL commissioning research to document the value and impact of libraries, though far more academic than school respondents expressed such support. Rankings of other advocacy approaches by different respondent groups varied dramatically. For public library and other respondents, marketing libraries to businesses tied for first place, while for academic library respondents, it placed third. Marketing libraries to non-profits tied for first place for other respondents and third for public respondents. Notably, while, a fairly high percentage of other respondents supported ASL hiring or designating staff to focus on advocacy, even with that group, it ranked in fifth place.

Table 11. Promoting Visibility of Libraries Statewide Ranked

| All | Public | Academic | School | Other |
|--|--------|----------|--------|-------|
| Share more information about libraries with decision-makers and stakeholders | 1-2 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Document value and impact of libraries and librarians with statistics / research | | 2 | 2 | |
| Issue more press releases about major library events | 3-4 | | 3 | 1-3 |
| Market libraries to businesses | 1-2 | 3 | | 1-3 |
| Market libraries to non-profit community-based organizations | 3-4 | | | 1-3 |
| Hire / designate ASL staff to focus on library advocacy | | | | 5 |

The most frequent advocacy comments focused on how ASL can increase its own visibility to libraries. Multiple commenters mentioned each of the following:

- ASL’s need for a coordinated, multi-faceted marketing and public relations effort with multiple public representatives, including the State Librarian, ASL Board members, and ASL staff
- The desirability of ASL staff taking more initiative (i.e., not waiting to be invited) to visit local libraries and other community organizations to promote ASL services and to showcase model local library programs

Advocacy Highlights

To improve ASL’s own visibility with libraries, respondents tended to agree about the value of two approaches: communicating more frequently with libraries via multiple means, and promoting ASL collections and services to specific potential user groups.

To improve the visibility of libraries generally, all respondent groups supported ASL sharing more information about libraries with decision-makers and stakeholders. Academic and school respondents also supported ASL commissioning research to document the impact and value of librarians and libraries.

Overall Comments

Dozens of overall comments from library survey respondents focused on the following needs:

- A more multi-type focus for ASL, involving it with academic and school libraries in particular, in addition to public libraries
- Substantial improvements in communication and partnering throughout the library community, including:
 - Within ASL generally and between ASL divisions
 - Between ASL administration, ASL staff, and the ASL Board
 - Between ASL and all types of libraries (directors, staff, and their decision-makers)
 - Between ASL and the Arkansas Library Association
 - Between ASL and the book/literary community
 - Between ASL and the general public
- A more complete and integrated resource-sharing infrastructure, including, to quote one commenter, “a shared discovery tool, a shared requesting mechanism, and a fast, reliable delivery system” (e.g., Minitex, OhioLink, KILR).

As one commenter put it, ASL is best known to most for providing the Traveler databases, offering continuing education for librarians, and supporting summer reading programs. Many shared the concern that ASL is “invisible” due to its lack of frequent and conspicuous communication and involvement with the above-mentioned stakeholders and potential partners. The desired solutions most often mentioned were:

- Creating and sustaining strong and varied mechanisms for ASL’s internal and external communications
- Increasing the number of “public faces” of ASL, while being sure that they present a unified, coordinated message
- Assuring that all ASL communication mechanisms provide for two-way communication

Appendix C: Public Library Survey Results

ASL has played, and continues to play, a major role with public libraries.

In some areas of public library development (e.g., E-rate, Gates' funding, and summer reading programs), ASL is more active. In other areas, it is less active—or at least, less active than it has been in the past or might be in the future. These areas include better preparation of library trustees for their roles and responsibilities, assuring the quality of public libraries and librarians, and promoting development of more effective Regional Library Systems (RLSs) and Library Development Districts (LDDs).

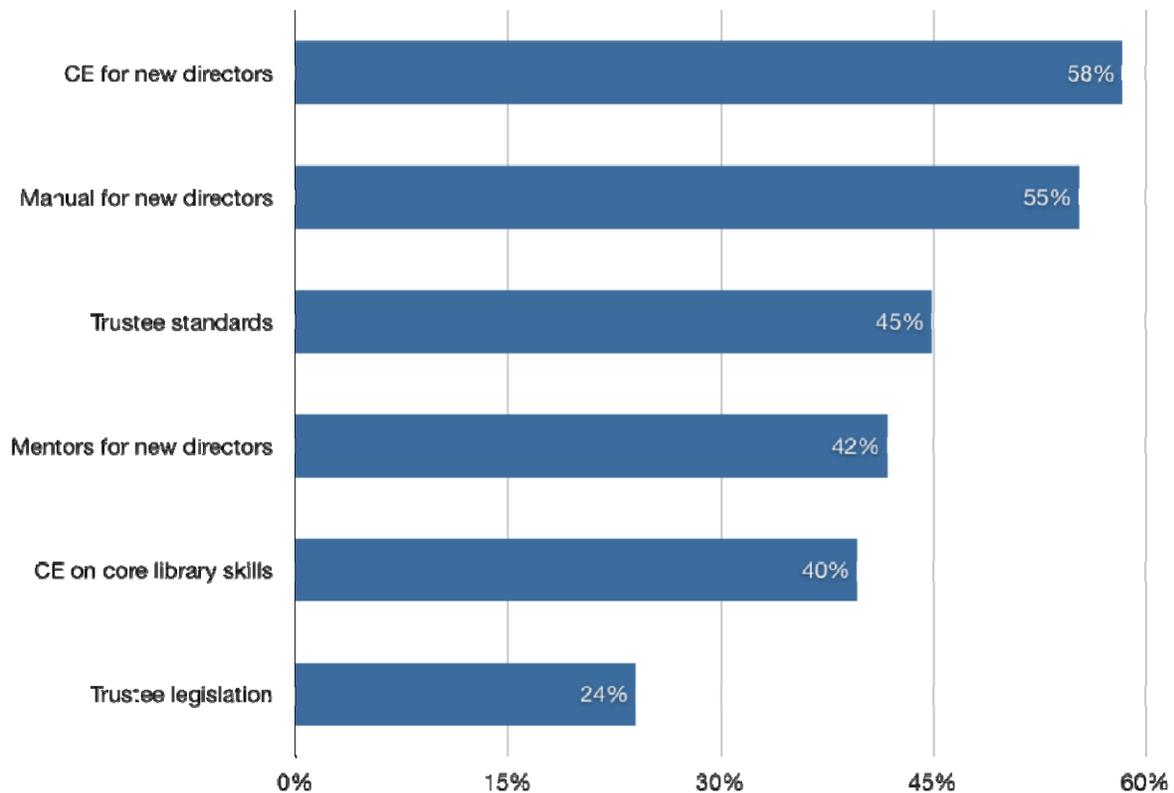
Public library respondents only were asked to provide their views on several key questions about this role:

- Initiatives to improve governance of public libraries statewide
- Certification of public libraries or librarians
- Types of help or information for public library trustees
- Issues on which trustees need more or better information
- Funding priorities for public library development
- Goals for Regional Library Systems
- Goals for Library Development Districts (LDDs)

Improving Governance

To improve governance of public libraries, clear majorities of respondents from that group endorsed ASL offering continuing education (CE) for new and newer directors and a directors' training manual (58% and 55%, respectively). Just under half (45%) advocate the promulgation of standards for public library trustees. Two out of five support ASL assigning mentors to new directors and offering more CE on core library skills (42% and 40%). Only about a quarter (24%) endorsed legislation to improve the quality of public library trustees as a solution to improving governance.

Chart 11: Improving Public Library Governance

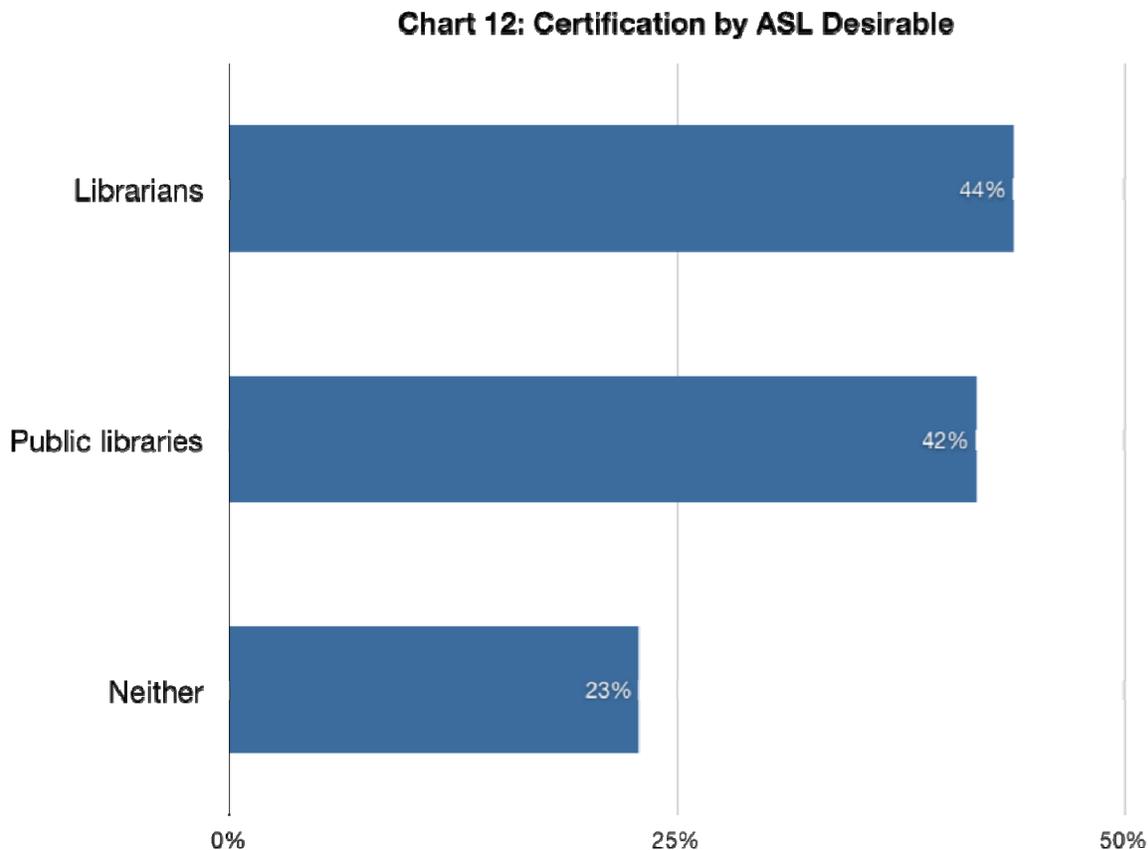


Other ideas for improving public library governance that might be explored were raised by commenters:

- Concentrating CE on core library skills for non-MLS directors
- Giving trustees continuing education units (CEUs) and/or certificates for attending training sessions
- Developing a series of short video presentations to be viewed at trustee meetings

Certifying Public Libraries or Librarians?

Public library respondents were divided almost equally between certifying librarians and public libraries (44% and 42%, respectively). Fewer than one in four (23%), however, believed ASL should certify neither.

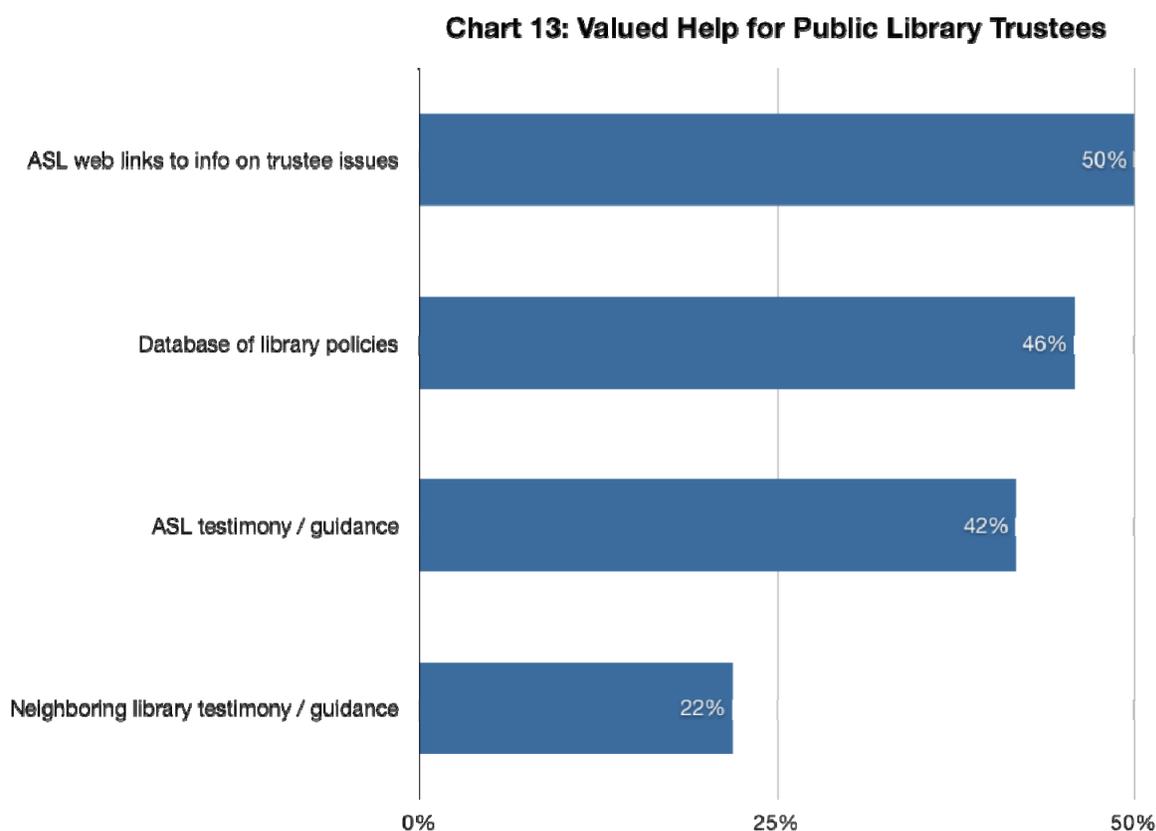


Some commenters felt this question was difficult to answer without more information, such as:

- What standards a library or librarian have to meet to be certified
- How the pros and cons of such certification would be explained to trustees
- How failure to meet certification standards would affect a library's grant eligibility

Valued Help for Public Library Trustees

Half of public library respondents (50%) believed trustees would be aided by more links on the ASL website to information on issues of concern to trustees. Just under half (46%) specifically endorsed a database of library policy statements as a resource for trustees. Only two out of five believed trustees would benefit from access to ASL consultants who are prepared to give authoritative testimony and guidance. Only one in five (22%) believed such testimony and guidance from ASL-endorsed experts at their neighboring libraries would be helpful.



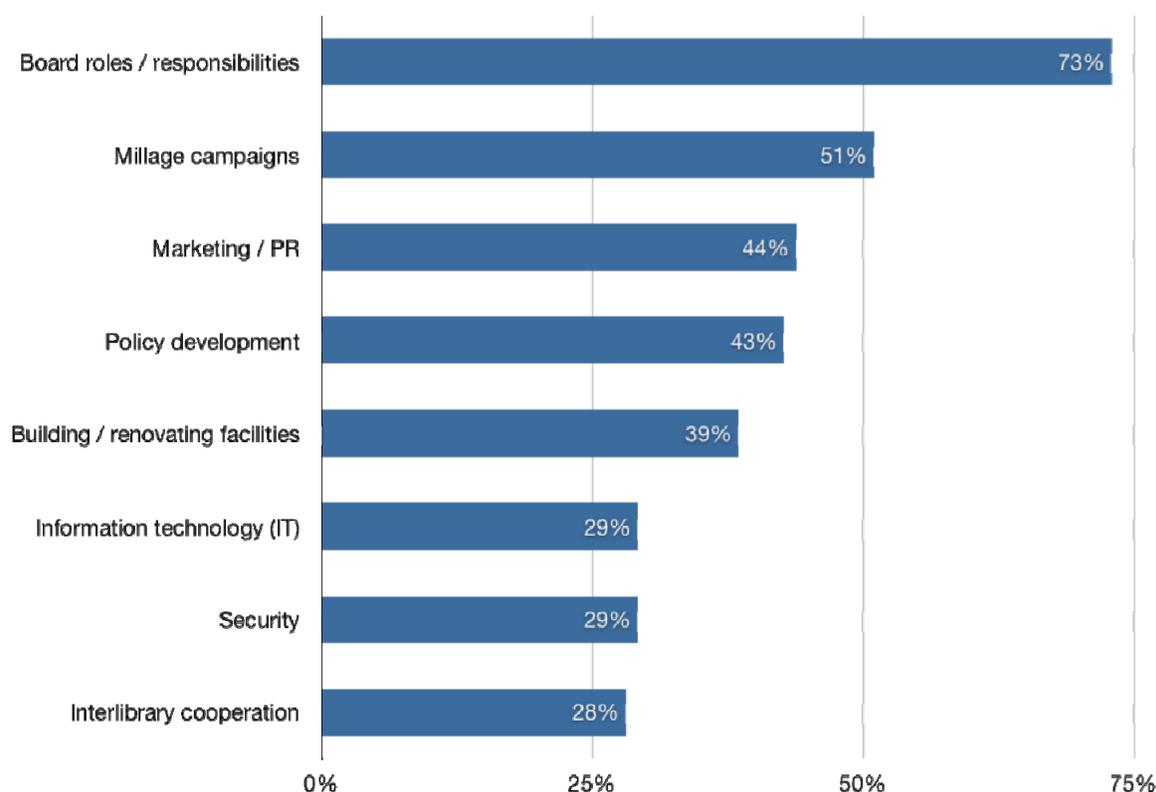
A few commenters suggested other kinds of help that might be valuable to public library trustees, including:

- A legal requirement that trustees participate in basic training opportunities to prepare them for their roles
- Improved ASL and trustees' understanding of city and county funding issues
- Greater trustee awareness of grant programs for which their libraries are eligible

Issues on Which Trustees Need More and Better Information

There was an overwhelming consensus among public library respondents (73%) about the single issue on which trustees need more and better information: the roles and responsibilities of public library boards of trustees. The only other issue garnering majority support—and that just barely—was millage campaigns (51%). Two out of five gave priority to marketing / public relations, policy development, and building / renovating library facilities (44%, 43%, and 39%, respectively). Receiving lowest priority, at about one-quarter each, were information technology (IT), security, and interlibrary cooperation (29%, 29%, and 28%).

Chart 14: Issues on Which Trustees Need More / Better Info



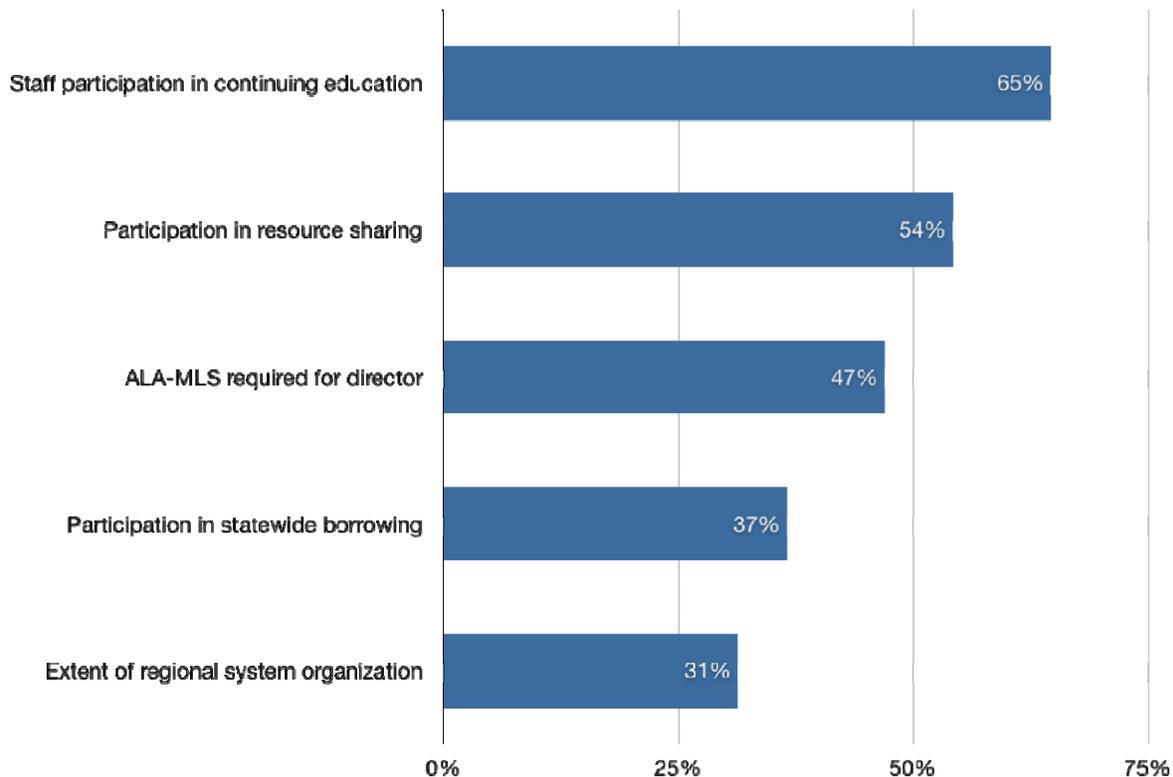
Comments include two additional issues on which more and better information would benefit trustees:

- Fundraising and development
- Intellectual freedom (i.e., addressing censorship issues)

Factors in Library Development Funding

Survey respondents were asked to prioritize potential criteria to be used in distributing future funding for public library development. Two out of three (65%) gave first place to staff participation in continuing education (CE). Just over and just under half (54% and 47%, respectively), gave second and third place to participation in resource sharing and requiring that directors have master's degrees from library and information science programs accredited by the American Library Association (i.e., ALA-MLS). About a third gave fourth and fifth places to participation in statewide reciprocal borrowing and the extent to which a library participates in a regional system (37% and 31%).

Chart 15: Factors in Funding for Library Development

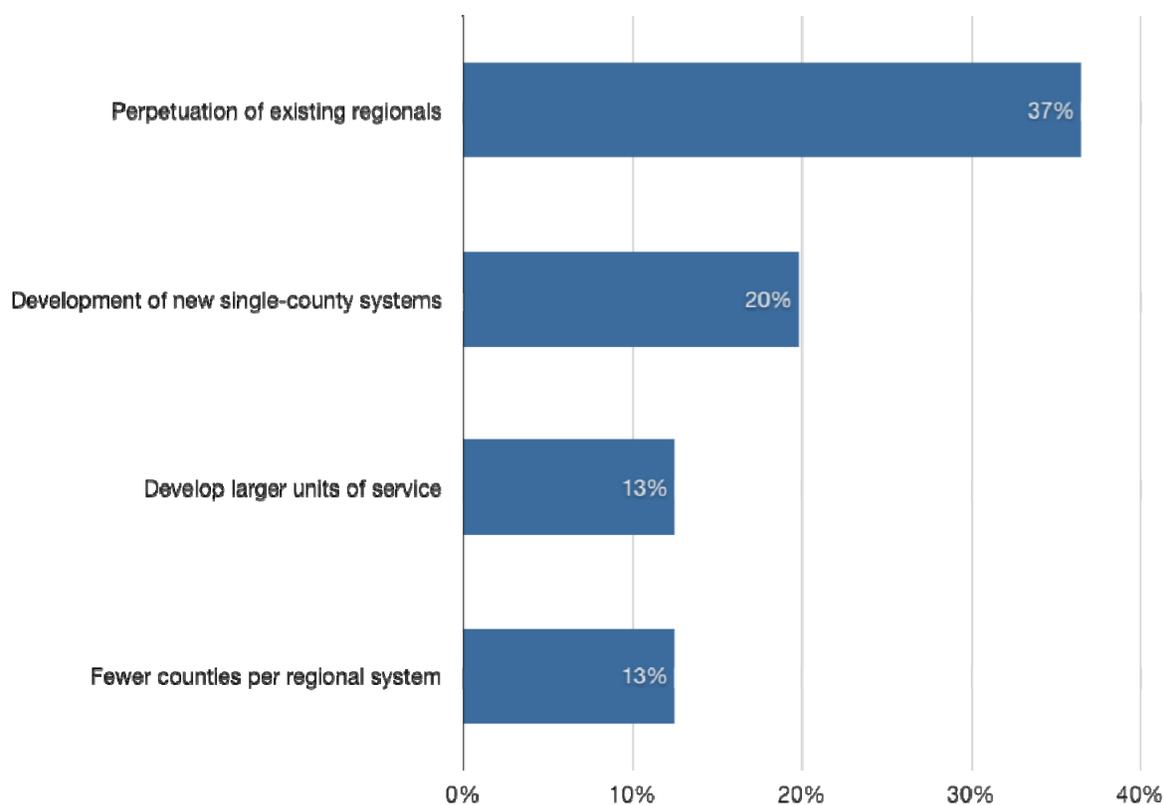


Passage of a local millage at some threshold level was also suggested by commenters as another possible criteria for receiving future funding for public library development.

Regional Library System Development Goals

Based on respondents' views about desirable ASL goals for regional system development, it appears this may be the single issue on which the state's public library community is most divided. A plurality—more than a third (37%)—advocated perpetuating existing regional systems. One out of five (20%) support developing new single-county systems. About one out of eight each endorsed the contradictory goals of developing larger units of service (i.e., more counties per regional system) and fewer counties per regional systems.

Chart 15: Regional Library System Development Goals

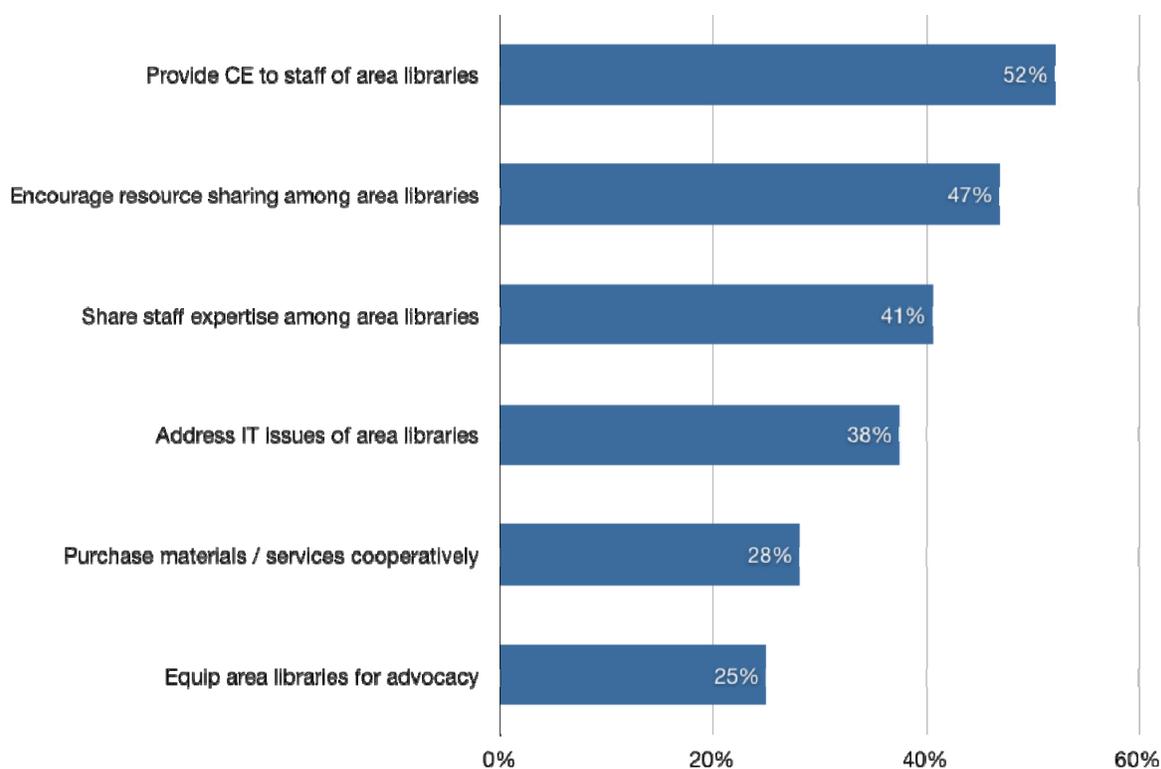


Some additional comments may help to explain why respondent opinion on this issue was so divided. Several commenters expressed the belief that there is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question. They believe that different system configurations are appropriate in different circumstances (e.g., population, actual and potential millage revenue, level of community support). To this point, one commenter suggests the development of a set of criteria to help local decision-makers to determine what kind of RLS configuration would best serve their communities. There is also some sentiment that key roles for ASL to play are helping RLSs assess whether or not their current RLS arrangements are effective, and, if they are not, how to move to a new model.

Library Development District Goals

When asked what goals ASL should encourage Library Development Districts (LDDs) to pursue, just over and under half of public library respondents gave top priority to providing CE to staff of area libraries and to encouraging resource sharing among area libraries (52% and 47%, respectively). Two out of five public respondents gave next priorities to sharing staff expertise among area libraries and addressing IT issues of area libraries (41% and 38%). About a quarter of that group believed ASL should encourage LDDs to purchase materials and services cooperatively and to equip area libraries for advocacy (28% and 25%).

Chart 17: Library Development District Goals



As one commenter noted, LDDs could play some significant roles; but, in most parts of the state, these organizations are inactive. If ASL decided to encourage LDDs to address any of these goals, the first priority would have to be reactivating most LDDs—an ambitious goal in itself.

Public Library Issues Highlights

Public library respondents indicated clear priorities on several public library issues:

- To improve governance, they recommended focusing on new and newer directors, providing a regular CE event and a training manual.
- To help trustees, they advocate ASL expanding links to information about trustee issues on its website, and specifically including a database of policy statements. There is also some support for encouraging them to call on ASL staff to provide expert testimony and guidance, when needed.
- Major trustee topics are led by the roles and responsibilities of library boards, followed by millage campaigns. Other issues of great interest include marketing / public relations, policy development, and facilities development.
- When ASL has funds to use to encourage public library development, the top three factors that should be considered in allocating those funds are staff participation in CE, participation in resource sharing, and ~~requiring~~ whether or not directors ~~to~~ have ALA-MLS degrees.
- Finally, there is clear consensus that priorities for LDDs should be providing CE to staff of area libraries, and encouraging resource sharing among those libraries.

About two issues, however, there was a pronounced lack of consensus:

- Those who believe ASL should certify libraries or librarians were divided almost equally between those two options. Notably, however, only about one in five believed neither should be certified.
- The issue on which there seems to be the least consensus is regional system development. While a plurality supported the status quo (i.e., perpetuation of existing regional libraries), there were sharp divisions between minorities who advocated increasing and reducing the size of existing regional libraries and encouraging development of more small, single-county regionals.

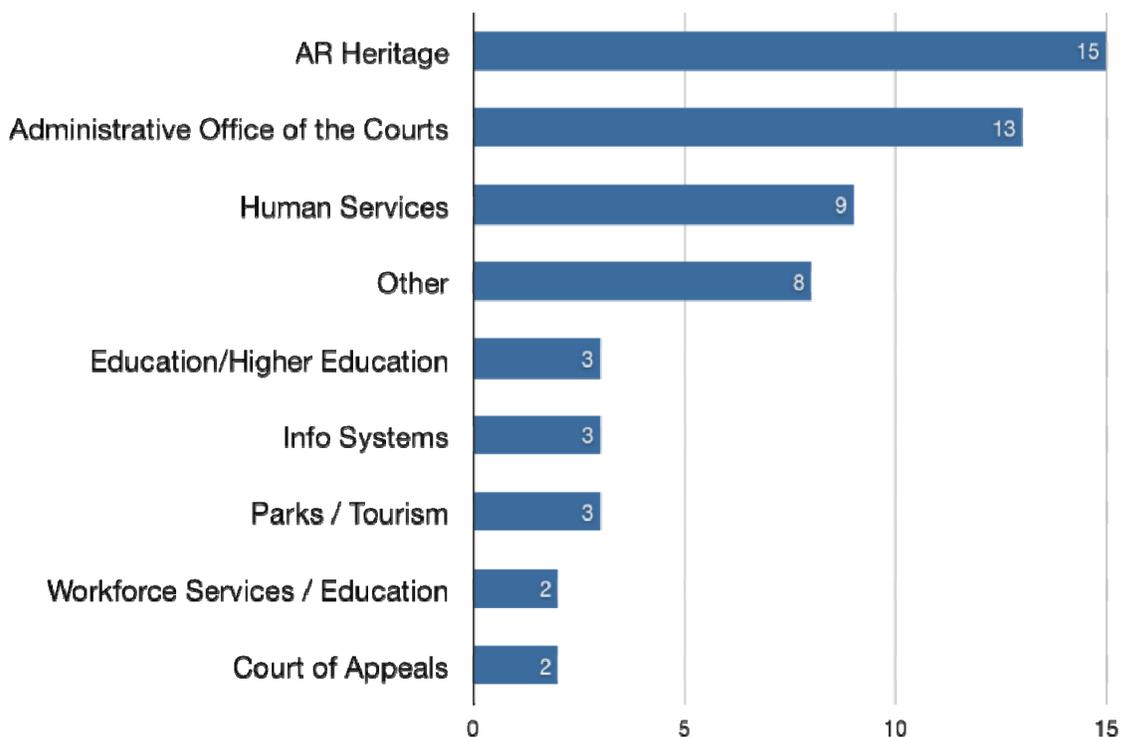
Appendix D: State Employee Survey Results

In addition to the survey of the library community, there was also a survey of ASL's other primary constituency, state government—or more specifically, state employees. Like the library survey, the state employee survey was administered in early November with a November 30 due date. Because full access to the state employees' listserv was not available, State Librarian Carolyn Ashcraft e-mailed the survey announcement to all heads of state agencies, and asked them to forward the request to appropriate staff members. Unfortunately, only 58 responses to this survey were received. (Note: It is impossible to know how many state employees actually received this appeal, as it was sent to agency heads with the request that they forward it to all or appropriate employees.) Further, the response tends to be concentrated in a small number of agencies that already tend to work more closely with ASL. Because the total response was so small and so skewed to a few agencies, the results of this survey cannot be considered representative of all state employees. The fact that so few state employees chose to respond to the survey, however, probably indicates a lot about their awareness of and experience with ASL. As even these impressionistic findings from those better acquainted with ASL suggest, it is an unknown quantity to most state employees—an agency of which they have little awareness and knowledge and even less experience.

For the above-mentioned reasons, the results are reported in numbers rather than percentages.

Of the 58 responses to the state employee survey, 37 are accounted for by three agencies: Arkansas Heritage (15), the Administrative Office of the Courts (13), and the Department of Human Services (9). Three responses each were received from the Departments of Education and Higher Education, Information Systems, and Parks and Tourism. Two responses each were received from the Departments of Workforce Education and Workforce Services and the Court of Appeals. Notably, there were no responses to the survey from the legislative branch of government.

Chart 1: Responses to State Employee Survey by Agency



Other agencies from which responses were received included:

- Arkansas Department of Emergency Management
- Arkansas Department of Insurance
- Arkansas Public Employees Retirement System
- Arkansas State University

State employees were asked to identify:

- ASL services and resources of which they were aware
- Types of information they need most often to do their jobs
- Barriers to using ASL facilities they have experienced
- Approaches to introducing them and their colleagues to ASL most effectively
- Approaches to strengthening ties between ASL and other state agencies most effectively

Awareness of ASL Services

Of ASL's collections and services, the ones most familiar to responding state employees were:

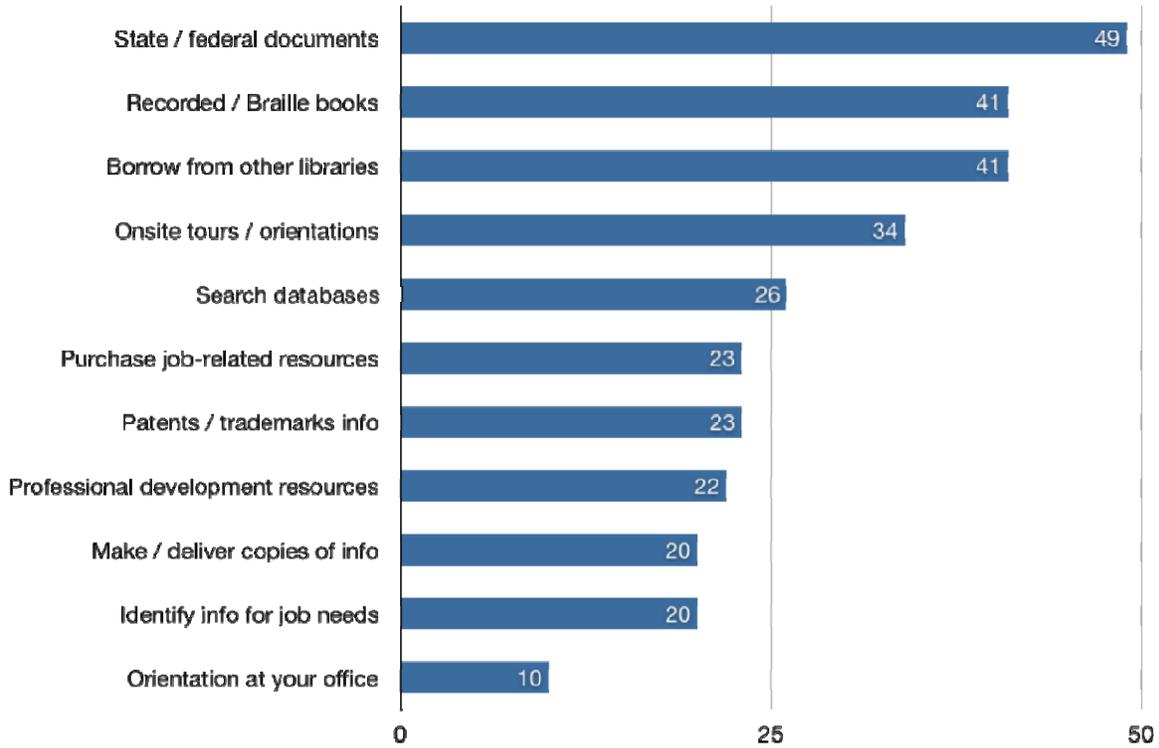
- Comprehensive collections of State and Federal government documents (49)
- Recorded and Braille books for the blind and physically handicapped (41)
- Interlibrary loan services (borrowing books and obtaining photocopies of articles from other libraries) (41)
- Tours and orientations at ASL's new facilities (34)

Less familiar collections and services included:

- Computer searches of subscription databases (26)
- Acquisition of job-related resources (books, journals, databases) in response to state agency staff requests (23)
- Availability of patents and trademarks information in ASL's collection (23)
- Availability of professional development resources in ASL's collection (22)
- Photocopy and delivery services for staff-requested articles and portions of books (20)
- Identification of information and resources to address job-related needs of state agency staff (20)

The least familiar ASL service was the availability of a library orientation program at state agency offices (10).

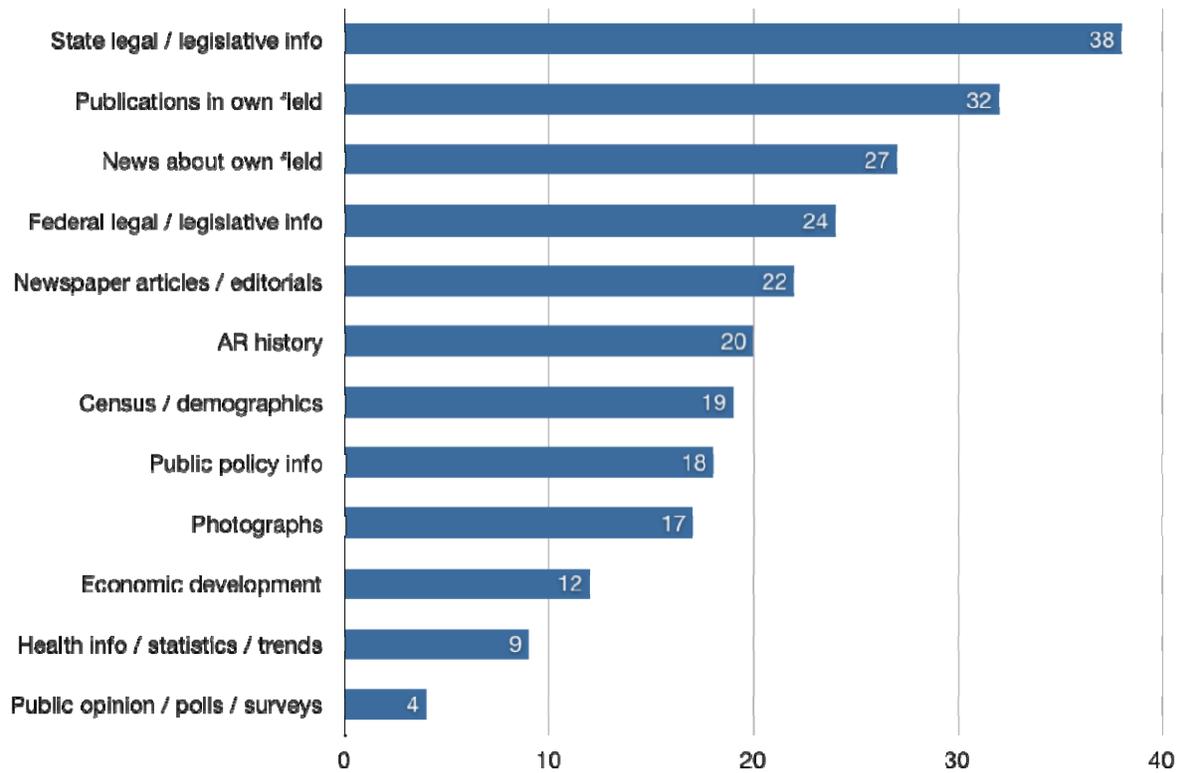
Chart 2: Awareness of ASL Services



Types of Information Needed

State employees were asked what types of information they require most often to do their jobs. For those who responded, the list was headed by state legal and legislative information followed by publications and news of their particular fields. The top five were rounded out by federal legal and legislative information and newspaper articles and editorials. The three types of information for which the fewest respondents expressed a need were economic development information; health information, statistics, and trends; and public opinion polls and surveys.

Chart 3: Types of Job Information Needed Most Often

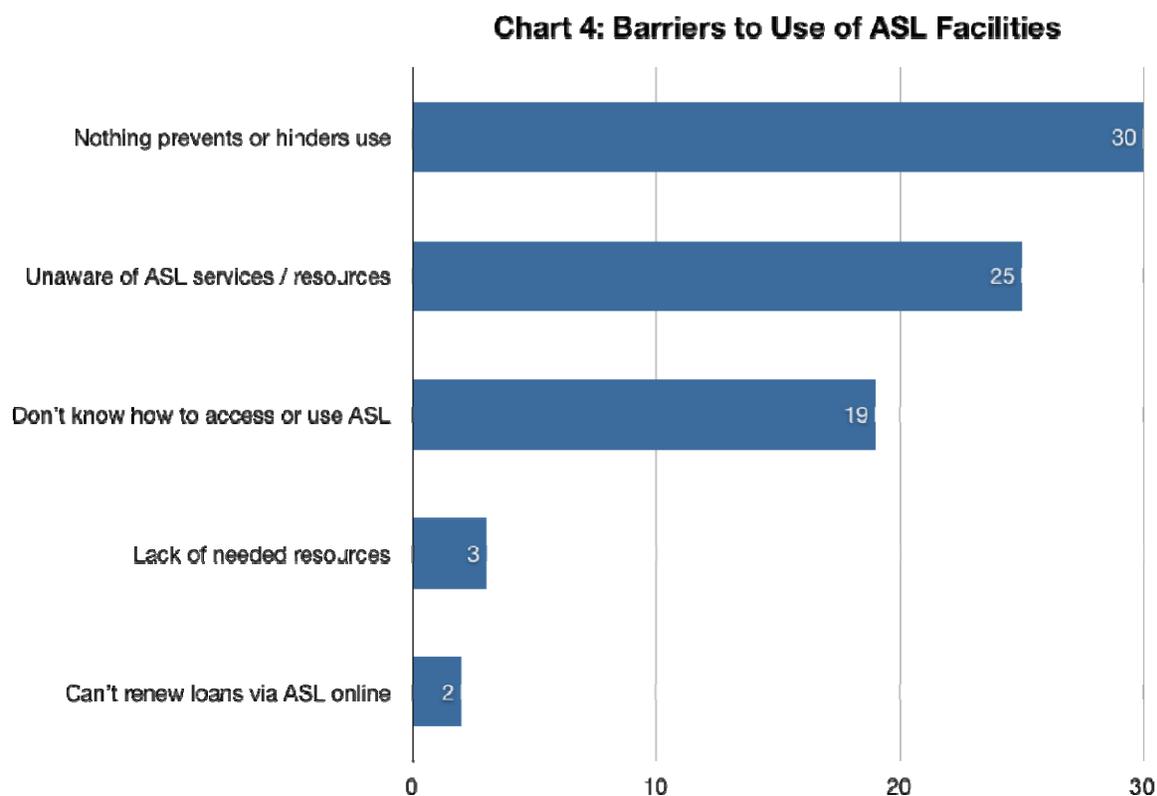


Other types of needed information mentioned by commenters included:

- Ecological literature (books, theses)
- Project management
- State Medicaid data
- Technology generally and software development in particular

Barriers to Use of ASL Facilities

When state employees were asked about barriers to their use of ASL facilities, the vast majority indicated nothing (30), unawareness of ASL’s services and resources (25), or a lack of knowledge about how to access or use ASL (19). Only three felt ASL lacked resources they needed, and only two quarreled with one of ASL’s procedural limitations (i.e., the inability to renew interlibrary loans online).



Commenters mentioned some access issues associated with the new ASL facilities, specifically, its distance from their offices and parking (an issue that may indicate lack of familiarity with parking available at the new facilities). Notably, most commenters indicated that, regardless of how user-friendly the new facilities may be or may be made, they would prefer to use ASL resources online from their own offices.

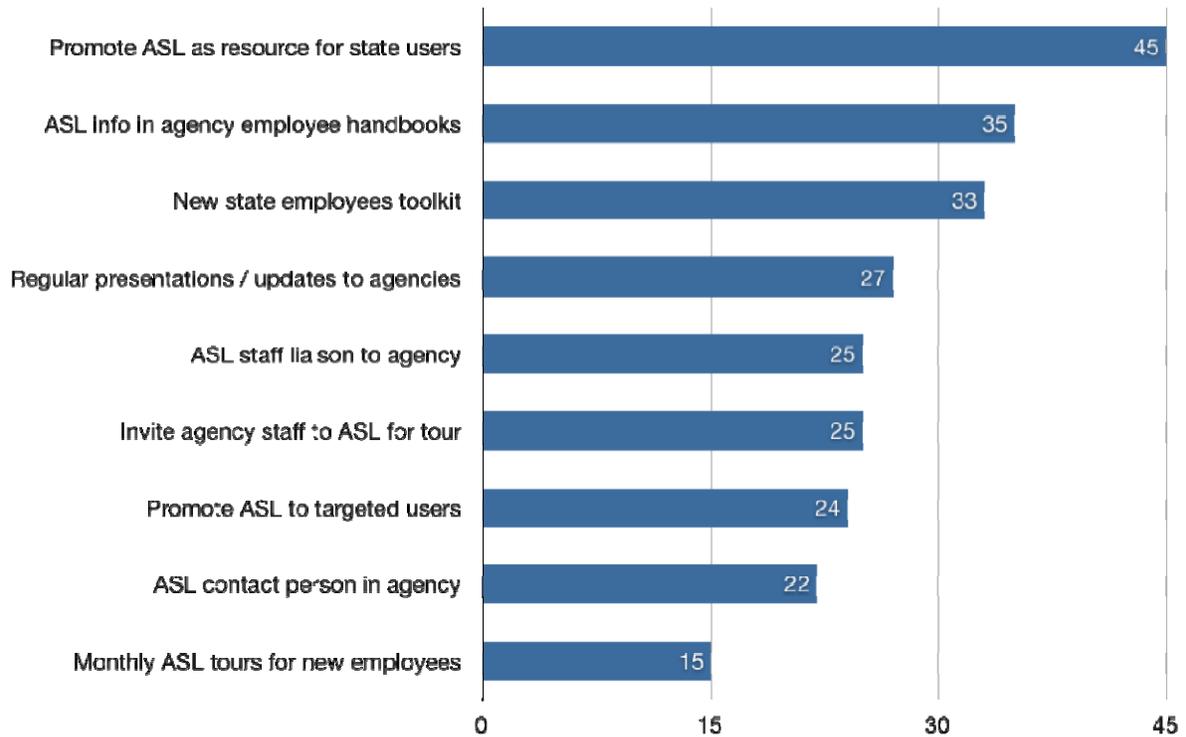
How to Introduce State Employees to ASL

The greatest majority of state employee respondents (45) endorsed the idea that ASL needs to promote itself to potential state government users as a resource for them. The next largest majorities of these respondents advocated ASL providing agencies with information about ASL, its collections, and its services to add to their own employee handbooks (35), and ASL developing its own new state employee toolkit, including a library card, to be given to new state employees when hired (33). Approximately two dozen respondents supported each of the following strategies for introducing state employees to ASL:

- Making regular presentations to state agencies to update them about ASL services and resources (27)
- Identifying an ASL staff liaison to each state agency (25)
- Inviting state agency staff for tours of ASL facilities (25)
- Promoting specific ASL resources and services to targeted state government users (24)
- Identifying an ASL contact person in each state agency (22)

The idea for introducing ASL to state employees that received the least enthusiastic reception was offering monthly ASL tours for new state employees to learn about ASL and to meet each other (15).

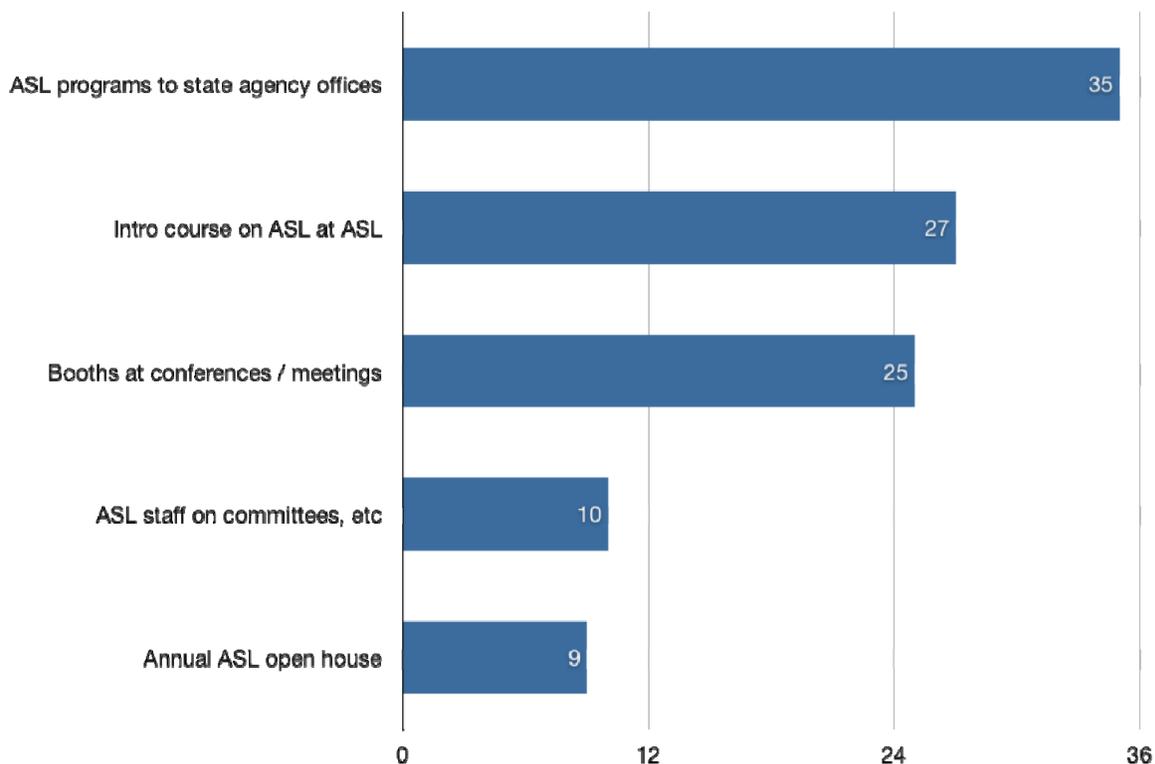
Chart 5: How to Introduce State Employees to ASL



How To Improve ASL Visibility

When asked about face-to-face approaches to making ASL more visible to state employees, respondents indicated that the most effective one would be offering to bring programs about ASL to state agency offices (35). The other two approaches that received substantial support were offering an introductory course on ASL services and resources at ASL and having booths at conferences and meetings attended by state government employees (27 and 25, respectively). Few of the respondents endorsed volunteering ASL staff to serve as members of, or liaisons to, state committees, task forces, and advisory groups, or holding an annual ASL open house to recognize exemplary state government users in front of their colleagues (10 and 9).

Chart 6: How to Improve ASL Visibility Face-to-Face



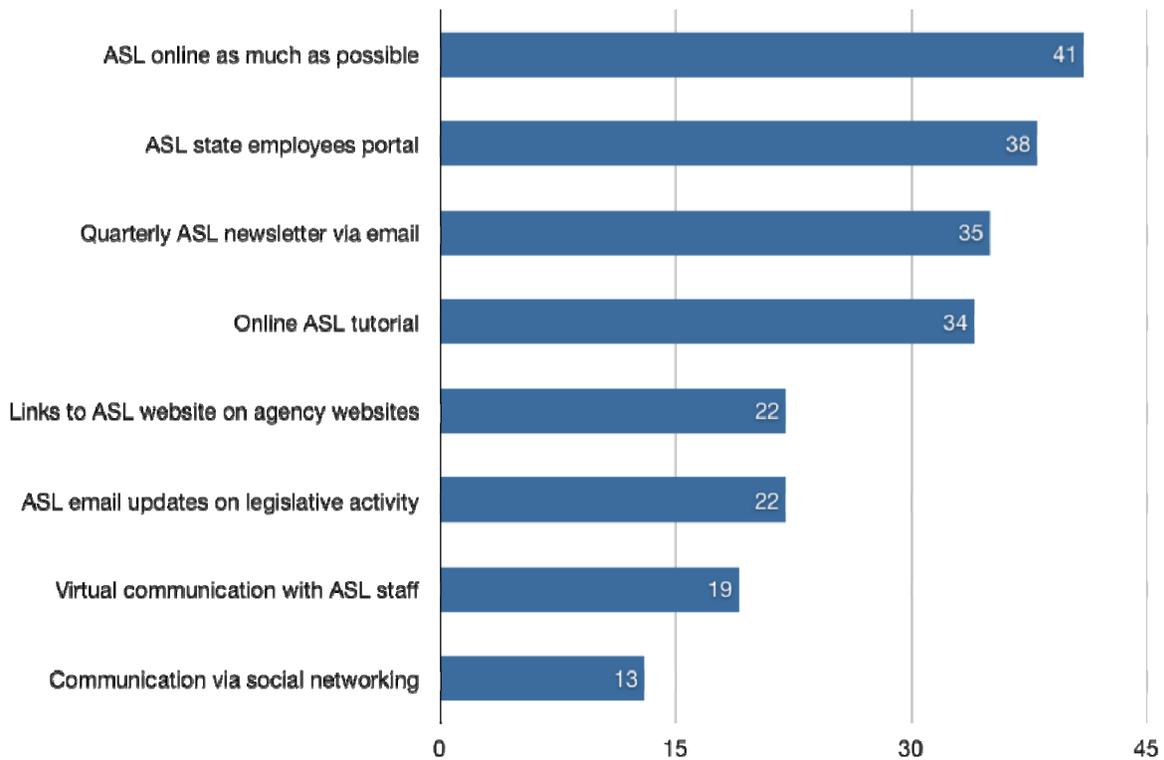
When asked about virtual approaches to improving the visibility of ASL to state employees, the largest majority of respondents advocated ASL making its services and resources available online as much as possible (41), and most of those (38) liked the idea of a state employees portal on the ASL website. Almost as many supported presenting the latest ASL newsletter to state employees quarterly via e-mail, and providing an online tutorial to introduce new state employees to ASL services and resources (35 and 34).

Minorities of respondents supported:

- Encouraging state agencies to place links to the ASL website on their websites (22)
- Updating state employees on legislative activity via e-mail daily during legislative sessions (22)
- Enabling state employees to communicate virtually with ASL staff about their ongoing needs (19)

Employing social networking to encourage communication between ASL and its state government users was the least popular virtual communication approach (13).

Chart 7: How to Improve ASL Visibility Virtually



Commenters emphasized the potential value to ASL of utilizing more fully its own website, those of other state agencies, and Arkansas.gov to raise its profile among state employees. Some also suggested pursuing a marketing / public relations campaign largely online as the most cost-efficient and effective option available.

How to Strengthen Ties Between ASL & State Agencies

When asked what approaches they believed would be most effective in strengthening ties between ASL and other state agencies, two were endorsed by majorities of state employee respondents:

- Sharing information with staff of other agencies about specific ASL resources available to support their work (33)
- Promoting awareness of ASL-funded subscription databases useful to state employees (32)

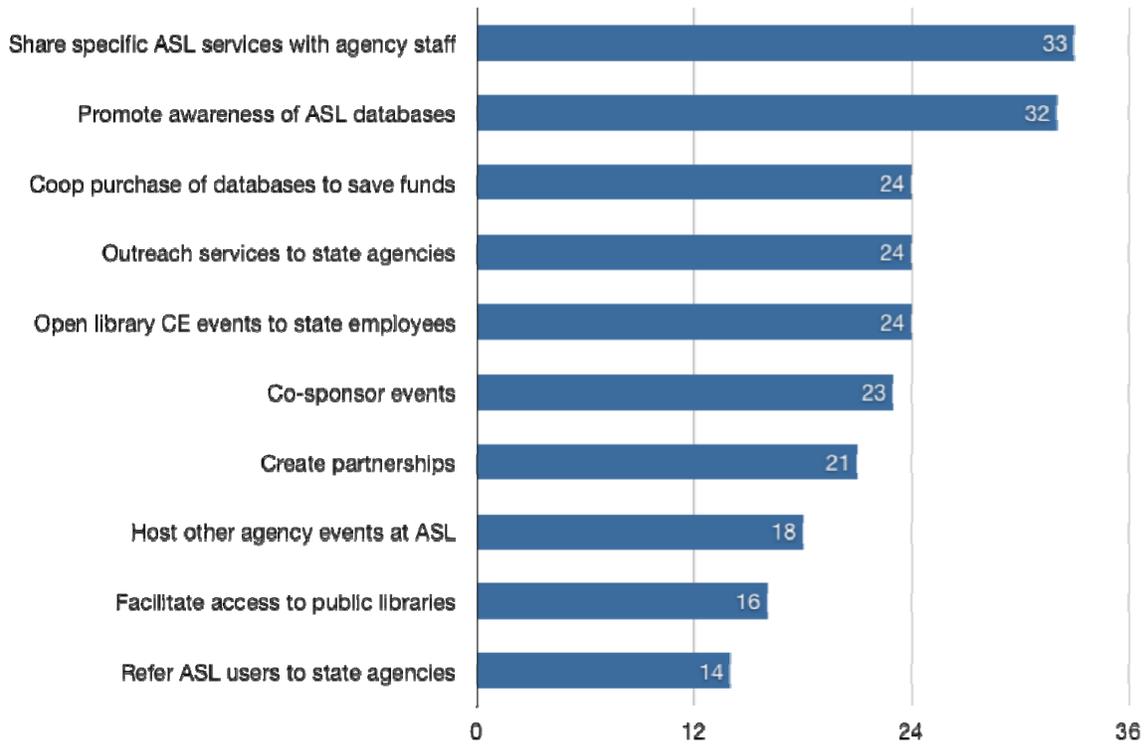
Minorities endorsed other ideas, including:

- Coordinating cooperative purchasing of subscription databases for state agencies to save state funds (24)
- Offering outreach to other state agencies that takes ASL services to them (24)
- Opening library continuing education events of general interest to state employees (24)
- Co-sponsoring events with other state agencies (23)
- Creating partnerships with other agencies to share staff, informational, and/or fiscal resources (21)

Approaches to strengthening ties between ASL and other state agencies for which there was least support were:

- Hosting more events of other state agencies at ASL to facilitate first-time or return visits by agency staff (18)
- Facilitating access to public libraries for other state agencies (16)
- Referring ASL users to other state agencies as appropriate (14)

Chart 8: How to Strengthen ASL-State Agencies Ties



Overall Comments

As with library survey respondents, comments from responding state employees emphasized the need for ASL to improve its visibility as well as its ties to other state agencies. Most suggested ASL has a potentially vital role in helping all state agencies make the most of their resources by helping to eliminate duplication of effort and by being a catalyst for inter-agency partnerships, whether sharing their own information or purchasing and sharing access to external information sources via ASL. Several commenters expressed enthusiasm for ASL as a source of expensive databases, such as JSTOR.

Comments on ASL’s new facilities were mixed. Some indicated excitement about ASL’s new location as one more readily accessible to them; others felt it was now less physically accessible to them than ever. Several mentioned the improved parking situation. Intriguingly, some suggested that leaving their offices (especially if at any distance) to visit ASL’s facilities was not part of their office culture.

Despite some enthusiasm for ASL’s new facilities, however, there was at least equal enthusiasm among commenters for ASL making its resources available online as much as possible.

Notably, a few respondents credited this survey with making them aware of ASL's existence and potential utility to them in their jobs.

State Employee Survey Highlights

Based on the limited response received to the state employees survey, ASL should consider these conclusions, and further explore the recommendations:

- The best known ASL collections and services to most state employees may be state and federal documents, recorded and Braille books, interlibrary loan services, and on-site tours of ASL's new facilities. Notably, it appears likely that most state employees are not aware of the extent to which ASL staff are willing to bring services to them and customize those services to their specific job-related needs.
- After state legal and legislative information, the most common information needs of most state employees are likely to be for publications and news in their own fields. Again, the limited findings on this topic suggest that most state employees are unaware of the extent to which ASL staff are willing to respond to specific job-related needs of state employees.
- For most state employees, there may be few barriers to using ASL except for two considerable issues: lack of awareness of ASL and lack of knowledge about how to use its resources.
- Doubtless, the best way to address these issues is to make a concerted effort to promote ASL as a resource to state employees. Specific approaches that might be effective include: providing information about ASL for agencies to include in their own employee handbooks and providing a new employees toolkit (including an ASL library card) to introduce newcomers to state agencies to ASL.
- Effective face-to-face strategies for improving ASL's visibility to state employees may be: offering to take programs about ASL to state agency offices, offering an introductory course on ASL services and resources at ASL's new facilities, and having booths at conferences and meetings attended by state employees.
- Most assuredly, the best virtual strategy for ASL to employ in seeking to improve its visibility with state employees is to make ASL services and resources available online as much as possible, and to establish links on appropriate state agency websites.
- The best options for strengthening ties between ASL and state agencies may include: sharing information with state agency staff about specific ASL resources available to support their work, and specifically, promoting awareness of ASL-funded subscription databases useful to state employees.