

**LIBRARY SERVICES AND TECHNOLOGY ACT**  
**FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT**

Library or System Name South Central Regional Library Council \_\_\_\_\_ Project #0070-04-16

Project Title ~~Continuous Improvement for Libraries~~ \_\_\_\_\_ Budget \$ 70,000

Period Covered: October 1, 2003 - September 30, 2004

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**Instructions:**

This report is required for all FY 2004 projects.

Fill in the information requested on the bottom of this page. Using your own word processing software, repeat each question below and provide your response. Use this page as the cover, followed by your response pages and the Quantitative Measures page.

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**Narrative Report**

1. Describe the project's accomplishments in relation to its objectives and the target population.
2. If you were starting this project now, what would you do differently?
3. Briefly summarize the **quantitative evaluation results** for this project (and attach the Quantitative Measures page) noting to what extent you reached the target population. *For all projects, including Technology Training projects, include a list of the libraries that participated.*
4. For the **qualitative evaluation results**, please provide an analysis and interpretation in relation to user satisfaction and/or success. *(Please do not submit copies of individual completed user surveys or forms. We are interested in your summary and analysis of results.)*
5. Please provide one or two anecdotes about how this library project affected people who received services.

~~Three copies of the Final Report must be received in Library Development by October 29, 2004.~~

~~One of the copies should include a set of the materials produced with LSTA funds.~~

~~Mail the items (3 copies of the report and 1 set of materials) to:~~

LSTA Unit  
New York State Library  
Division of Library Development  
Room 10B41 Cultural Education Center  
Albany, NY 12230

1. Describe the project's accomplishments in relation to its objectives and the target population.

The NY3Rs sponsored this statewide project, with SCRLC as the lead agent. We held eight sessions at approximately 6 week intervals from January – August; each session was repeated in three locations: Rochester, Albany, New York City. The instructors/consultants were Sara Laughlin and Associates (Sara Laughlin, Ray Wilson, Denise Shockley) from Indiana.

We recruited library staff representing nearly 50 libraries or library systems to attend the eight sessions. All types of libraries were targeted and the participants were represented as follows:

Type of library	Academic	Public	System	Other	Totals
Institutions	39	5	4	1	49
Participants	97	15	9	2	123

Libraries generally sent teams of staff, many of which included the director. We had targeted 45 libraries for 45 participants at each location. Due to demand at the Albany and Rochester locations, we expanded to 50 participants at these locations; New York City attracted fewer with 21 participants. Most teams continued to attend all sessions although not all staff could do so consistently. Over such a long period, there were bound to be individual absences. Only two teams withdrew completely before the end. We more than met our targets in terms of audience. See registration lists etc in the appendices.

The key objectives and their outcomes were:

- *Develop the aim of the library.* Participants worked on new or revised missions, vision and value statements. We used various techniques such as brain storming, affinity diagrams, pair and share, sentence strips. What can be laborious processes became relatively quick and effective activities resulting in short mission statements and well understood visions and values.
- *Identify key success factors, key processes, outcomes and methods for assessing progress and impact.* These objectives were the core of the whole series. Based on the early development of system maps for either a whole library or components of a library, participants learned how to then identify success factors, key work processes, and how to make rapid cycle improvements. Most teams worked through all the parts of the program to effect change in some component of their library services. The reports on homework assignments showed major successes in making these changes. Examples of these are found in the appendices to this report.
- *Practice using a variety of simple, engaging new tools for assessment and improvement.* Over the 8 weeks, we carried out many activities in assessing and improving library services and learned, and used, more than 25 tools in the process. The homework assignments meant the use of these tools in a real world setting back in the libraries. Homework reports indicated these were often very successful in getting staff involvement and buy-in to the effort and the result. The 3-ring binder provided to each participant is part of this report and each section has examples of the tools. In addition, each participating library received two books about assessment/improvement including useful tools. The books used for this project were: Sara Laughlin, Denise Shockley, Ray Wilson, *The Library's Continuous Improvement Field Book: Twenty-nine Ready-to-Use Tools*. ALA Editions, 2003. Ray Wilson. *Process Mastering: How to establish and document the best known way to do a job*. Quality Processes. 1998.
- *Incorporate the tools into ongoing work processes.* As noted above, homework by participants showed appropriate use of the tools in various activities in libraries. Even when a library did not go through an assessment and improvement process from beginning to end as they learned in the 8 sessions, many tools were used on the fly for short term activities. The homework examples in the appendices again indicate a positive outcome of this objective.

- *Be able to use outcomes-based evaluation to improve advocacy efforts.* It is probably too early to tell how these sessions have improved advocacy efforts. However, stories by participants indicated that even short term improvements impressed administrators and raised the visibility of libraries for users. This is likely to help in future efforts to get more money, but may be just as valuable in getting things other than money – more space, approval to fill positions, a seat at an important committee, the ear of the president etc. One important success story did emerge - the assessment and improvement activities by Miner Library at the University of Rochester Medical Center so impressed the Dean and the Development Office, that the library has been placed at the in the priority list of development priorities for 2005 and there will be renovations leading to an Information Commons.
- *Other objectives.*
  - *Networking.* Session activities often meant working with others in the room leading to connections with others that proved valuable. In addition, there was a listserv that was used for announcements and questions/answers about local problems. Reporting back on homework at each session provided very valuable insights for the rest of the group. Participants have asked for a reunion for their location and we will try to set that up in the spring.
  - *Specific activities noted in the application.* The specific activities and timeline were carried out as specified in the application.
  - *Statewide, multi-type project.* The NY3Rs was able to continue offering statewide services to all types of libraries and library staff indicating their ability to serve all libraries in New York State.

The binder contains:

- Handouts for each session.
- Homework by participating libraries in a separate section for each session.
- Evaluations by session and location.
- Registration and listserv lists.
- Handouts from programs and poster sessions about the project.
- Contents of the web pages.

## 2. If you were starting this project now, what would you do differently?

This project worked as well as it did because the staff of three of the NY3Rs were willing to put in many, many, uncompensated hours looking after the program in their location. Their generosity cannot be over-estimated. They found space, arranged for the copying of the binder of materials for each participant, bought all the supplies needed (various items used as part of exercises or assessment tools), organized meals, answered questions, attended the sessions to ensure there were no problems, kept track of registrations, typed up materials from the session and the evaluations, and were nimble and flexible enough to work around any problems. In addition, the staff of the actual locations provided many uncompensated hours scheduling their meeting rooms, working with the dining/catering staff, and being very gracious hosts. The work of all these people ensured the success of the project. In the future, projects of this magnitude should have funding or some other ability to compensate the hours spent in managing the project.

At SCRLC, we did our own copying and 3-ring binder development as the supplies budget had been cut and we did not know if there would be enough funding for commercial copying. We would not do this again as it was difficult and time-consuming.

SCRLC purchased 2 books for each team, shipping those needed to the other 2 locations. Book purchasing through a local bookseller was fast and efficient but ALA was not. We would be more

timely in our use of outside vendors in the future.

The major part of the work occurred before the 8 sessions began. Getting the project underway was a massive undertaking.

- Scheduling 24 workshops in 3 locations over 6 months, is very hard especially when the presenters were from out-of-state and several months were winter. We were fairly lucky with the weather and travel arrangements. Some participants complained about some sessions being in the summer as their staff scheduling was difficult. So the issue of holding many sessions over a long period is problematic. There is probably no good solution but future projects should take this issue seriously.
- The registrations for all three locations were centralized at SCRLC. This involved taking registrations and money, confirming the specifics for that person, answering questions, and keeping track of all complications of who was really coming or not. This was more work, but allowed a little more control over the initial planning.
- Getting all the supplies, the copying, buying books etc. needed to be done within 2 months. This meant that the presenters also needed to have their materials for the whole series completed within a month or so. A longer lead time might have been less stressful for all involved.

3. Briefly summarize the **quantitative evaluation results** for this project (and attach the Quantitative Measures page) noting to what extent you reached the target population. *For all projects, including Technology Training projects, include a list of the libraries that participated.*

The registration lists in the appendices indicate the individuals and the libraries participating in this project. As noted in Question 1, we more than reached our target audience.

A series of eight one day workshops were held in three locations for a total of 24 events. Sessions 1 and 8 were single events. Sessions 2/3, 4/5, 6/7 were held as two day events.

Products from the project include:

- A web site: <http://www.ny3rs.org/Clfront.html>
- An electronic discussion list: *improvement-1@lakenet.org* plus archived submissions.
- A 3-ring binder for participant with materials for each of the 8 sessions.
- Two books for each participating library: Sara Laughlin, Denise Shockley, Ray Wilson, *The Library's Continuous Improvement Field Book: Twenty-nine Ready-to-Use Tools*. ALA Editions, 2003. Ray Wilson. *Process Mastering: How to establish and document the best known way to do a job*. Quality Processes. 1998.
- Handouts from programs and poster sessions at the NYLA Conference, October, 2004.

4. For the **qualitative evaluation results**, please provide an analysis and interpretation in relation to user satisfaction and/or success. *(Please do not submit copies of individual completed user surveys or forms. We are interested in your summary and analysis of results.)*

As noted in our proposal, various evaluative tools were used during and after the project. The results of these are found in the binder.

1. Modeling their own assessment/improvement ideas, the presenters used a Plus/Delta evaluation tool at the end of each workshop to find out what worked or did not work well for that session. This tool, along with a written evaluation, helped improve the same session in other locations or the next workshop.
2. At the end of each workshop, participants filled in an evaluation form – most of these were compiled

for each location.

3. In addition, a final informal survey was carried out via the discussion list to get a slightly longer term perspective on the series.

4. Starting with session 2, the participant teams reported orally, and with printed materials, on their homework. These are found at the end of each session's handouts in the binder.

From these evaluations we offer the following analysis.

#### **Positive** responses to the project:

- This workshop series worked well for most participants.
- One person noted that it was a graduate level continuing education experience.
- It was a lot of work, but participant appreciated having to pay attention to techniques and processes that they might otherwise have ignored.
- The materials including the notebooks and books were very valuable resources.
- The presenters were generally considered excellent.
- Participants liked the ability to meet others and share ideas and experiences. They also liked being able to meet with their own colleagues out of the library/office. It was a bit like a retreat.
- The value of looking at the bigger picture or systems approach to libraries and services.
- Tools and processes that participants could really use in their libraries.
- The majority indicated they would recommend this series to others.
- The videos, journal articles etc. got mixed reactions – many thought they were very valuable but some thought they were a bit old or not relevant enough.
- Many participants want a reunion to share what they have accomplished.
- Positive changes in staff attitudes and enthusiasm. This was not just a passing management fad.
- Several potential requests for individual consulting by Sara Laughlin and Associates.

*This is the best organized class I taken in a long time.* System Director

*The doing. Going through the process to get insight into the how.* Public Library Director

*This workshop gave me some practical tips that I can instantly use at my workplace.* Academic Staff

*More of this is coming together. Many good tools were introduced and explained and just interesting to do.* Academic staff

*This was the best session. I had a lot of a ha moments!* Academic Director

#### **Negative** responses to the project:

- A couple of libraries withdrew as they did not think they were learning anything new.
- The presenters had previously offered the assessment/improvement series for public libraries and did not have enough academic library examples or case studies to suit some of the academic participants. In addition, some grumbled at examples from other professions or institutions (missing part of the point about learning from others!).
- There were some very good points beaten to death – it could have been done in two days.
- There was too much homework, so a few libraries stopped doing it.
- The long-tem commitment meant some individuals could not attend all sessions.
- For many there was initial confusion about how all parts of the assessment improvement process fitted together. This was clarified for most by about Session 4.
- The homework reports were usually too long and took up valuable time.
- The summer is problematic for some libraries – public libraries have their busiest time and some academic library staff are on 10 month appointments. But we were not able to accommodate all the variables such as the need for homework time in this project, the long Upstate winters, and the timing of the LSTA year.

*Many of the ideas presented have been operational for a decade, particularly Demings ideas although many of us may not have known them by his name. Idealizing is fine, but many of us have employed ideas like worker empowerment & are faced with satisfying and problematic results. Discussion of what we know of the benefits and problems would be interesting.* Academic Director

*I thought yesterday and today could have been combined into one session. System Staff.  
Leadership session misses the point that we are not businesses. Not for profits and academics have different issues. Academic Director*

**Other comments:**

- A program at the NYLA Annual Conference, Rochester, October 2004 was very well received by about 20 participants. Some noted that they wished they and their libraries had participated in the project. Presenters: Jean Currie, SCRLC; Lis Chabot, Ithaca College; Mary Beth Klofas & Michele Shipley, Miner Library University of Rochester Medical Center.
  - Two poster sessions were mounted at the same conference. These also received many interested viewers. Presenters: SCRLC; SUNY New Paltz.
  - One academic library will present a program at the 2005 ACRL Conference. Ithaca College.
5. Please provide one or two anecdotes about how this library project affected people who received services.
- Senior staff of three large public libraries in New York City noted that they wished their libraries had participated in the project.
  - We have been told that several libraries have asked for follow-up consultations by Sara Laughlin and Associates: Buffalo State, NY Medical center, SUNY Oneonta, Crandall Public Library.
  - *We continue to meet and develop process masters to help deal with our original project -- service at our circulation desk. There is still much to be done as this is the aspect of library service that has the most processes for staff to manage. We have made physical improvements: bins in front of each terminal with all supplies handy, process manuals, new flooring (in process now), new cabinetry, improved work flow, better customer service. As I write these things down, it seems like we haven't accomplished much but when I think of all the work that went into the accomplishment of each of these items, I feel very gratified. Team members have undertaken "contracts" with me to see each of these projects through. Vendor contact, staff input, vendor negotiation, more staff input, then a finished product. They have been invested in each project and were able to carry through their assignments. I learned how to better delegate projects and they learned to be responsible. We have more productive full staff meetings with many good suggestions coming through from all staff. (Public Library)*
  - *We have trained senior managers and a pilot team, senior managers will determine a process to address, there is greater staff involvement and buy-in, we have a more organized approach to measurement and statistics analysis, we have a greater emphasis on service to our CUSTOMERS, we are having more fun, and we are moving closer to our vision. (Medical Library)*

Person preparing report—~~Jean Currie~~  
(Typed or Printed Name)

(Signature)

Telephone 607/273-9106 \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 29 October, 2004

