

# *Libraries for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:* **Accomplishments and Lessons Learned**

## **Background**

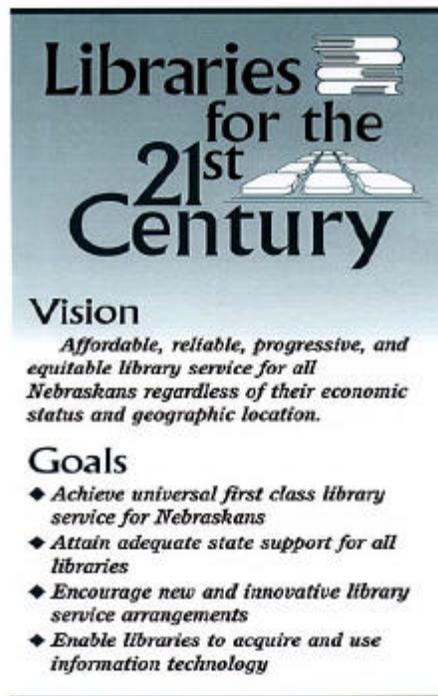
The purpose of this evaluation report is to review needs and goals identified in Nebraska's Five Year Plan and to document major accomplishments and lessons learned. Specifically, this report focuses on LSTA outcomes in Nebraska for the period including fiscal years 1998 through April 2002. This process also serves as part of the planning and needs assessment to develop Nebraska's new five-year long-range plan that will be submitted to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in July 2002.

The evaluation was conducted by a team comprised of 21 Nebraska Library Commission (NLC) staff over the course of many months. The decision to rely on NLC staff to plan and implement the evaluation met several needs:

- to develop and improve planning, evaluation, and facilitation knowledge and skills among a substantial number of agency staff;
- to build a better understanding among NLC staff of existing conditions and needs in local public libraries across Nebraska; and
- to build relationships between local public library staff and NLC staff.

A detailed description of the evaluation process may be found in the Evaluation Methodology section of this report, beginning on page

## **Introduction**



The Nebraska Library Commission is responsible for administering the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) in Nebraska. The mission of the Nebraska Library Commission is statewide promotion, development, and coordination of library and information services. As the state library agency, the NLC is an advocate for the library and information service needs of all Nebraskans.

*Libraries for the 21st Century*, The Nebraska Library Commission Library Services and Technology Act Five-Year Plan, 1997-2002, (<http://www.nlc.state.ne.us/mission/lsta.html>) was developed initially with broad input from the Nebraska library community through six regional public forums held in 1997 to which librarians and members of the public were invited. Dates and locations of the public forums were April 14 – Scottsbluff; April 15 - North Platte; April 16 – Kearney; April 22 – Columbus; April 28 – Papillion; April 29 – Lincoln.

In addition, the Nebraska State Advisory Council on Libraries, made up of representatives from public, school, academic, special, institutional libraries and the regional library systems, provided ongoing perspective on library needs and priorities through discussion at quarterly meetings.

The following questions were posed to those attending Public Forums and State Advisory Council on Libraries meetings:

- What are the services that librarians and libraries should be providing Nebraskans in the 21st Century?
- How have the citizens in your community been involved in identifying these needs and services?
- How do those services relate to the goals and purposes of federal and state funded programs for libraries?
- What are the most pressing or priority needs?
- How should we choose among worthy and conflicting needs and priorities?

The major needs identified in that process were:

- Access to information, regardless of format or location
- Promote and encourage new and innovative library service arrangements
- Access to information technology
- Improvement of skills and abilities of library staff
- Access to information for people with special needs

The needs, vision and aims articulated by the Nebraska library community resulted in the following five long-range plan goals:

- Goal 1: Nebraskans will have access to statewide library and information services regardless of format or location.
- Goal 2: New and innovative library service arrangements will be encouraged to provide efficient access to library and information services for Nebraskans.

- Goal 3: Nebraskans will have access to information technology through library and information centers.
- Goal 4: Nebraskans will be served by library staff with the knowledge and expertise to link them with the highest quality library and information services.
- Goal 5: All Nebraskans will have access to library and information services including persons with diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds; with disabilities; with limited functional literacy or information skills; having difficulty using a library; representing underserved urban and rural communities (including children from families with incomes below the poverty line).
  - Sub Goal 5a: Provide Talking Book and Braille Service to qualified Nebraskans.
  - Sub Goal 5b: Promote and support library and information services to non-English speaking Nebraskans and individuals with limited English speaking ability.
  - Sub Goal 5c: Develop, maintain, and support library services to children and young adults.

In addition, librarians, library board members, and the general public attended a series of statewide public forums in Summer 2000. The Nebraska Library Commission used this opportunity to generate input and discussion on the *Libraries for the 21st Century* 2001-2003 Campaign for Improved Library and Information Service, a statewide initiative to increase state funding for libraries. The Library Commission also used ideas and recommendations from the public forums to gauge progress in the state long-range plan, and to construct the 2001-2003 biennium budget request. The forums were held in Scottsbluff, Cozad, and Lincoln.

### **Nebraska's Demographics**

The 2000 Census counted Nebraska's population at 1,711,263 persons in a 76,872 square mile area (22.3 persons per square mile). This was an 8.4 % increase since the 1990 Census count. Overall, 40 of Nebraska's 93 counties added population during the 1990s. Eighty-seven percent of the population is white and 18.9% of Nebraskans over 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher. Those 65 years old or older make up 13.6% of the state and 26.3% are under 18 years old. The state's population grew in two ways: births exceeded deaths (natural increase of 84,611, or 5.4%) and more people moved into the state than moved out (immigration of 48,234, or 3.1 %). These changes reflect growing linguistic and ethnic diversity in Nebraska, particularly in counties where large meat packing plants are attracting non-white or Hispanic workers, or in counties hosting refugee resettlement programs.

Between 1983 and 2000, Nebraska has taken in 8,714 refugees. In 1988, 166 refugees were resettled in Nebraska, 365 in 1989, and a peak of 1,032 in 1991. Refugees have come from 32 different countries over the past 18 years. During the past five years, 11 new groups of refugees have come to Nebraska, the largest numbers coming from Vietnam, Iraq, Bakongo (Africa), Ukraine, Russia and Cuba. According to the 2000 census Lancaster County experienced an

increase in Asian population of 3,944 people, almost as big an increase as in Douglas County. Lincoln has resettled more than half the total number of refugees in the state - 5,479 people - since 1983. Overall the state's white-only, non-Hispanic population grew by just 2.4% (34,399) compared with an 83.3 % growth (98,479) in minority population.<sup>1</sup>

### **Status of libraries in Nebraska<sup>2</sup>**

At the start of this evaluation project, the Nebraska Library Commission identified 275 legally-established public libraries in the state. The NLC contracts with the boards of six regional library systems to serve as local resources to those public libraries, as well as to libraries of all types. Approximately 80% of those 275 public libraries provide annual statistical data to the Library Commission. Local resources are the major source of funding for Nebraska public libraries. As seen in Table 1, for fiscal year 2000, federal funds comprised less than half of one percent of public library income in Nebraska.

Table 1. Nebraska Public Library Income

Fiscal Year	Local Funds	State Funds	Federal Funds	System Grants	Other Income	Total Income
1997	<b>\$27,651,161</b>	<b>\$329,871</b>	<b>\$214,540</b>	<b>\$28,691</b>	<b>\$1,615,598</b>	\$29,839,861
1998	<b>\$28,681,033</b>	<b>\$338,116</b>	<b>\$179,377</b>	<b>\$18,497</b>	<b>\$1,567,303</b>	\$30,784,326
1999	<b>\$30,398,482</b>	<b>\$338,918</b>	<b>\$265,617</b>	<b>\$28,139</b>	<b>\$1,614,242</b>	\$32,645,398
2000	<b>\$32,274,170</b>	<b>\$437,329</b>	<b>\$183,051</b>	<b>\$18,619</b>	<b>\$1,518,005</b>	\$34,431,174

*Source: Nebraska Public Library Annual Statistical Reports*

Nebraska's public libraries are numerous and most serve relatively small populations. Seventy-two percent of the public libraries are in communities of less than 2500 population, and eighty-four percent in communities of less than 5,000. See Table 2 based on the data from 227 reporting public libraries for fiscal year 2000. Nearly 60% of the state's population is served by the 17 public libraries serving communities of 10,000 and above.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sources: *Components of Population change, Nebraska Counties, 1990-2000*. Center for Public Affairs Research, University of Nebraska at Omaha. <http://www.unomaha.edu/~cpar/table 1 a2.pdf>

*Population Change by Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin, Nebraska Counties, 1990 to 2000*. Center for Public Affairs Research, University of Nebraska at Omaha. <http://www.unomaha.edu/~cpar/table 7a.pdf>

*Refugee family makes new life in United States, Lincoln*, by Nancy Hicks. Lincoln Journal Star December 25, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> All figures are based on 1999/2000 Public Library Statistical Reports.

Table 2. Nebraska Public Library Support by Size Community

<b>Population Served</b>	<b>Number in category</b>	<b>Average per capita support</b>	<b>Average % local income</b>	<b>Average amount of federal grant funding</b>
Over 50,000	2	\$23.42	93.5%	\$ 19,700
10,000-49,999	15	\$25.89	94.7%	\$ 19,629
5,000-9,999	19	\$25.26	94.1%	\$ 5,076
2,500-4,999	27	\$23.90	92.6%	\$ 6,667
1,000-2,499	72	\$18.53	83.4%	\$ 8,100
Under 1,000	92	\$17.44	85.0%	\$ 2,293

Professional (MLS degreed) staffing in Nebraska public libraries is concentrated in service population areas greater than 10,000, yet the majority of public libraries (92.5%) serve populations less than 10,000 (see Table 3).

Table 3. Nebraska Public Library Staffing by Size Community

<b>Population Served</b>	<b>MLS Staff</b>	<b>FTEs</b>	<b>Volunteer Staff</b>
Over 50,000	73	221.9	1,013
10,000-49,999	30	183.3	812
5,000-9,999	4	78.6	135
2,500-4,999	2	68.9	134
1,000-2,499	2	67.8	391
Under 1,000	2	42.1	406

Per capita expenditures for Nebraska's public libraries tend to decrease, on the average, with community size (see Table 4). The average statewide per capita for public library expenditures in 2000 was \$24.17 which is less than the national average of \$25.25 (based on 1999 data).

Table 4. Nebraska Public Library Expenditures by Size Community

<b>Population Served</b>	<b>Total Expenditures per capita</b>	<b>% Expenditures for Salaries &amp; Benefits</b>
Over 50,000	\$ 25.08	63.6%
10,000- 19,999	\$ 25.80	62.9%
5,000-9,999	\$ 25.27	65.0%
2,500-4,999	\$ 23.94	58.2%
1,000-2,499	\$ 21.08	50.8%
Under 1,000	\$ 19.57	51.7%

In addition to the public libraries in the state, Nebraskans have access to numerous post-secondary libraries in the University of Nebraska system, the state college system, community college system, and private academic institutions (see Table 5). There are a large number (593) of public school districts in the state, most of which maintain library/media centers, as do many of the private school systems. Nine bookmobiles still deliver services in pockets of the state.



Table 5. Nebraska Library Data

Post-secondary libraries	35
Institutional libraries	19
NEBASE Network members	165
OCLC Users	146
<b>Public Library Data</b>	
Public library outlets	287
Bookmobiles	9
Staff <sup>3</sup> (FTE employees)	738
Circulation <sup>4</sup>	11,110,433
Interlibrary loan <sup>2</sup>	
Items loaned	21,421
Items borrowed	23,723
Public access Internet terminals <sup>2</sup>	763
Annual public service hours <sup>2</sup>	386,902
<b>K-12 Schools<sup>5</sup></b>	
Total students	386,170
Public school districts	593
Private & nonpublic school systems	325
State population <sup>6</sup>	1,711,263

### Nebraska Statewide Services Funded with LSTA Funds

The Nebraska Library Commission supports several programs and services to libraries and the public with a combination of state general funds and federal LSTA funds. As shown in Table 6, LSTA funds comprised up 23.4% of the NLC's total funding for the fiscal period 1998-2001. State general funds and LSTA funds are intermingled in many of the agency's operations and library aid programs and services.

<sup>3</sup> Based on 1999/2000 Public Library Statistical Reports filed with the Nebraska Library Commission.

<sup>4</sup> FY 2000 FSCS Public Library Survey data.

<sup>5</sup> *Nebraska Blue Book*, 2000-2001

<sup>6</sup> Based on 2000 Census ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)).

Table 6. Nebraska Library Commission Funding Sources

Fiscal Year	State	LSTA	Cash	Total
1998	\$ 2,791,312	\$ 930,826	\$115,604	\$ 3,844,035*
1999	\$ 3,365,284	\$1,024,568	\$ 86,617	\$ 4,476,469
2000	\$ 3,499,249	\$1,182,998	\$ 67,536	\$ 4,749,783
2001	\$ 3,647,519	\$1,036,264	\$ 63,499	\$ 4,747,282
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$13,303,364</b>	<b>\$4,174,656</b>	<b>\$ 333,356</b>	<b>\$17,817,569</b>

\*Total for FY98 includes other funds not included in table

Significant LSTA funding supported the following programs or services:

- LSTA Competitive Grants
- Nebraska Talking Book and Braille Service (staffing and operations)
- Six Regional Library Systems
- Library Development (consulting on children and young adult services, library construction, planning and evaluation, accreditation and certification, fund raising, collection development, library automation, intellectual freedom, personnel management, E-rate, continuing education for library staff and trustees, and coordination of regional library systems)
- Resource Sharing -- Lender Compensation
- Statewide Library Advocacy

Lesser LSTA support was involved in the following areas:

- Administration
- Long range planning
- Nebraska State Advisory Council on Libraries
- Publications: *NCompass*, *NLCommunicator*
- Nebraska Center for the Book
- Other operations

Nebraska LSTA Annual Reports submitted to IMLS in December of 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001 describe in general terms the various uses of federal funding in NLC programs and services. Therefore, this evaluation report will focus on selected accomplishments, outcomes and lessons learned upon reflection of the entire evaluation period. These results are explored in more detail and include quantitative and qualitative data. Where possible, the report lets the customers tell the story as the Making a Difference process unearthed a wealth of qualitative data. The following section, organized by long range goals, discussed the accomplishments and lessons learned for selected LSTA funded projects.

**Goal 1: Nebraskans will have access to statewide library and information services regardless of format or location.**

LSTA-funded Activity: Encourage Interlibrary Loan Through Lender Compensation

*Accomplishments:*

Support of resource sharing among Nebraska libraries is achieved in part through reimbursement of a portion of the cost incurred by Nebraska libraries that lend materials to other Nebraska libraries through Lender Participation Aid. Quarterly payments are made to libraries based on OCLC transactions for loaning books, periodical articles, and other materials. A combination of state and federal funds is used to fund this aid package to libraries of all types across the state.

Table 7. Nebraska Interlibrary Loan and Lender Compensation Data

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>No. ILLs</b>	<b>State Funds</b>	<b>LSTA Funds</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1998</b>	36,909	\$ 95,188	\$ 33,809	\$ 128,997
<b>1999</b>	34,779	\$ 66,478	\$ 57,046	\$ 123,524
<b>2000</b>	33,842	\$ 131,708	\$ 18,916	\$ 150,624
<b>2001</b>	34,325	\$ 109,526	\$ 23,782	\$ 133,308
<b>Total</b>	<b>139,855</b>	<b>\$ 402,900</b>	<b>\$ 133,553</b>	<b>\$ 536,453</b>

Lender compensation payments are made to Nebraska libraries of all types and sizes, although primarily to public, academic, and special libraries. Per-item reimbursement rates vary from quarter to quarter, depending on the total number of interlibrary loan transactions and have ranged from \$3.25 to \$4.75. Although these payments only reimburse libraries in part for the cost of interlibrary loaning, they do provide libraries with supplemental funds for collection development, postage, photocopying and other purposes. Table 7 shows that over half a million dollars was distributed to Nebraska libraries over a four-year period.

*Lessons Learned:*

Nebraska libraries are increasingly able and willing to do their own interlibrary loans without need for a intermediary. The NLC, beginning in 2001, became the statewide resource for interlibrary loan and reference service, a function previously contracted for through regional resource libraries, either directly or through the six regional library systems, for the prior several decades. With products such as OCLC's Web-based interlibrary loan module and the increasing ability of smaller libraries to use such products, the NLC's intent is to assist more and more libraries in initiating their own interlibrary loans. NLC reference staff's goal is to build interlibrary loan and reference skills in local library staff.

**Goal 2: New and innovative library service arrangements will be encouraged to provide efficient access to library and information services for Nebraskans.**

LSTA-funded Activity: Statewide Library Advocacy

The Nebraska Library Association (NLA), the Nebraska Library Commission (NLC) and the six regional systems observed the need for advocacy on the part of library trustees to improve library services. This was true on both the local and statewide levels. NLA and NLC learned of the national effort being launched by the organization Libraries for the Future (LFF) with support from the Viburnum Foundation, galvanize efforts in Nebraska to address this deficiency.

Symptomatic of this low level of advocacy was the below average funding level of many libraries in Nebraska in communities that have adequate tax bases to provide higher funding. This issue was one addressed by the project with statewide and regional workshops and with specific projects in two communities.

The goals of the Community Library Advocacy Project were to:

- Increase citizen support for public libraries
- Build local library support in communities with low local per capita library income
- Build and strengthen relationships between communities and public libraries
- Nurture leadership at all levels
- Promote continuing education for leadership
- Create awareness
- Develop citizen library advocates, expanding diversity in community representation
- Promote and develop partnership networks and coalitions

*Accomplishments:*

- Survey of libraries with below acceptable per capita income support; 26 libraries indicated an interest in participating
- Two-day meeting of libraries following the above survey to begin to explore ways of increasing local support for libraries via advocacy; two mentors from national Libraries for the Future (LFF) attended the meeting
- Meetings in two local communities with a third LFF mentor; one community had suffered two tax increase defeats, the other was attempting to address the burgeoning population in its county outside established library districts
- Follow up telephone survey of 14 libraries from those that attended an earlier statewide meeting to ascertain results of advocacy efforts
- Workshops entitled, “Friends Indeed,” presented in four locations and emphasizing the “nuts and bolts” of establishing and revitalizing library Friends groups, and their role in advocating for the library
- An advocacy panel discussion during NLA’s 1999 Legislative Day and plans to offer advocacy workshop experiences at each subsequent Legislative Day

- Six regional workshops emphasizing advocacy, for Friends groups with presenter Pat Wagner of Pattern Research, sponsored by the six regional library systems
- One western (North Platte) and one eastern (Columbus) Nebraska workshop entitled “Blueprint for Building Infrastructure” presented by mentors Penny Hummel from Oregon and Mary Jo Ketchum from New York.; 120 people registered for these January 2001 workshops
- Preconference with mentor Ellen Miller at the Nebraska Library Association preconference in October 2001; all-day session was entitled, “Trustees, Friends and Staff: Your Library’s Three-Legged Stool”
- One of the two local libraries on which we focused has successfully passed its sales tax partially in support of the library’s operating budget; it has also begun its planning for a new library.
- The other local library has taken a leadership role in the discussing the fast-growing population outside established library service areas, has worked with other libraries in that county, and has begun planning for a new main library as the city continues annexing surrounding areas.
- Another library attributed their community’s success in building a new library directly to what they had learned from another community and its advocacy efforts.
- During the last two NLA Legislative Days there was increased participation by trustees and other library advocates.

The Nebraska Library Commission; Nebraska Library Association Trustees, Users, and Friends Section; and the Regional Library Systems participated in the second year of the Communities and Libraries project sponsored by Libraries for the Future and the Viburnum Foundation. Workshops were held in North Platte and Columbus in 2001. The theme was "Blueprint for Building Infrastructure." Approximately 120 people spent the day with Mary Jo Ketchum, Elma, NY and Penny Hummel, Portland, OR learning about working with community groups to expand the base of support.



**Small groups worked on advocacy action plans.**

The workshops were designed for trustees, Friends group members, directors, and other community activists who are interested in building library support on a sustained basis. The sessions stressed the importance of forming partnerships within the community and provided the tools for achieving those partnerships. The morning session focused on "why, how, and where" to find support for the library. The afternoon session was a working session to build the action plan from beginning to celebration. The presenters provided concrete examples and techniques to achieve the goals of the audience.

*Lessons Learned:*

An ongoing need is to work with volunteer trustees from local public libraries, encouraging them to be active proponents for libraries. The intent of the project has been to raise awareness of the need to constantly advocate for libraries. The statewide level of activity in NLA and during the annual Legislative Day is steadily growing. There has been increased advocacy on the local level where many participants can see a direct benefit.

The Community Library Advocacy Project has addressed these problems by providing a series of workshop experiences throughout the state, engaging in almost an "immersion" process to attempt to reach these advocates and potential advocates. The group is also working cooperatively among LFF, NLA, the regional library systems, local officials, and the Nebraska Library Commission to revitalize the themes related to library advocacy.

In all the activities completed during the life of this project a number of themes were highlighted:

- Building partnerships within the community (local and state) is vital to the success and survival of the library.
- Advocacy needs to be a component of activities involving trustees, other library advocates, and library staff.
- Trustees need to realize their power and use it.
- A strategic plan is needed to support the library; it's not a plan if it isn't written.
- Building support for the library in the community is perhaps the most important job trustees have.
- Trustees and other library advocates must be aware of where power lies within a community and must employ that knowledge successfully if the library is to thrive.

There will always be a need for library advocacy initiatives in Nebraska. State and local revenue fluctuations and the relatively low priority of libraries require ongoing advocacy. The turnover in local library staff and library boards is another factor in the need for ongoing advocacy training. Communities also report that recruiting volunteers to serve on local library boards is increasingly challenging.

LSTA-funded Activity: Public Library Finance Task Force

*Accomplishments:*

Nine Nebraska library representatives were selected to address public library finance issues and develop recommendations related to goals, needs, and strategies. Participants included Ann Stephens, Joan Birney, Ted Smith, Kathy Tooker, Ron Heezen, Judy Grandstaff, Richard Miller, Brenda Ealey, and Shirley Flack. Rod Wagner and Richard Miller from the NLC convened the group in early 1999.

The Task Force met on several occasions to talk with experts about tax, foundations, political issues, and technology. The Task Force minutes and findings are available on the Library Commission home page at <[www.nlc.state.ne.us](http://www.nlc.state.ne.us)>, search on finance task force.

**Recommendations from the task force included:**

Build on strengths.

Fine tune and expand library efforts at local and state levels.

Develop a promotional effort to raise awareness of the value of library services.

Although public libraries are a function of local government and primary funding must come from local governments, work for a significant increase in state support as well.

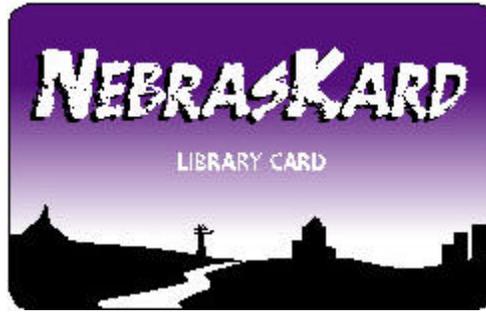
Develop knowledge and skills for conducting effective fund raising efforts for special projects and needs that are beyond the scope of primary funding sources.

Re-work the Libraries for the 21st Century funding initiative to provide specific details about how funding would be used and the expected results.

The NebrasKard reciprocal borrowing card has potential as part of a package of interlibrary cooperative efforts, although no consensus has been reached.

On July 1, 2002 the Library Commission distributed information packets to Nebraska public libraries containing information on the NebrasKard reciprocal borrowing arrangement. The packets included Policies and Procedures, Frequently Asked Questions, Agreements, Customer Sign-up Forms, and sample marketing pieces.

As of April 2002, 47 libraries (44 public and 3 academic) had registered to participate in NebrasKard.



*Lessons Learned:*

Response to the NebrasKard program has been slow. Additional promotion of the program is needed as well as responses to specific questions about administrative details. Concerns continue regarding how participation in NebrasKard may affect local and county funding patterns.

**Goal 3: Nebraskans will have access to information technology through library and information centers.**

LSTA-funded Activity: Competitive Grants

Each year the Library Commission offers libraries the opportunity to apply for LSTA funds through a competitive grant application process. The following is a summary of this process over a five-year period (1998-2002).

The time frame for the application process varied most years. In 1998, the applications were available in April, and the application deadline was 3 months later. In 1999 and 2000, the applications were available in January, and due 2 months later. In 2001, the applications were available in February, and due 2 months later. The 2002 applications were available in December of 2001, and due 3 months later, in March of 2002. Awards were announced anywhere from 1 to 3 months after the deadline date.

Each year, library development staff offered training workshops to assist with completion of the application. In 1998, there were two videoconferences held at 14 sites statewide. Each year, fewer sites and sessions were offered, based primarily on the attendance in previous years. In 2000, 2001 and 2002, training sessions were videotaped and made available to individual library staff members, through both the Commission and Regional Library System offices.

Eligibility criteria varied slightly in most years. In the first four years, there were two major categories of eligible applicants. For four years, the first category included public and state-run institutional libraries. In 1998, the second category included public libraries, institutional libraries, public elementary and secondary school libraries, and academic and special libraries. In 1999, 2000 and 2001, all of these groups were eligible, as well as the addition of private elementary and secondary libraries. In 2002, the only eligible entities were public and institutional libraries.

The basic grant categories remained constant during the five-year time frame. The major categories were Basic Technology, Internet Connectivity Enhancement, Partnerships and Cooperative Projects, and Improved Access to Library Services. Within each major category, grants were grouped into either planning, implementation, or customized service projects. Each year the Library Commission goals targeted through the LSTA grants were goals 1, 2, 3, and 5.

In 1998 and 1999, printed applications were mailed out to eligible libraries. In 2000, 2001 and 2002, the application was available to print from the Library Commission's Web site. In 2001 and 2002, online submission of the application was offered as an option.

Table 8. Nebraska LSTA Competitive Grant Summary

Fiscal Year	No. Applications	\$ LSTA Requested	No. Awards	\$ LSTA Awarded	\$ Local Match
1998	44	\$315,899	28	\$226,635	\$121,400
1999	36	\$336,437	32	\$291,644	\$118,961
2000	39	\$429,620	27	\$287,892	\$341,853
2001	58	\$438,344	38	\$243,486	\$ 98,333
2002	56	\$321,810	47	\$263,646	\$141,995
<b>Total</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>\$1,842,110</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>\$1,313,303</b>	<b>\$822,542</b>

*Accomplishments:*

LSTA competitive grants have leveraged significant amounts of local funds and other support over the course of the evaluation period. As seen in Table 8, local libraries raised \$822,542 to meet the 25% match requirement in Nebraska's LSTA grant program. A total of 172 LSTA projects have been funded during fiscal years 1998 through 2002, distributing \$1,313,303 to local communities. Due to the increase in both the number of grant requests and amount of funding requested, there were insufficient resources to meet the need.

Table 9 shows that LSTA funds have played a major role in the initiation and development of information technology in Nebraska's public libraries, supporting automation, Internet access for the public and for library staff, networking of computers, and mobile and stationary computer labs. In addition these funds have enabled libraries to plan for technology and to provide new services to special groups. Intra-local and inter-local collaborations among libraries and other entities have also resulted from LSTA grant projects.

Table 9. Nebraska LSTA Competitive Grants by Project Type

Project Types	Number Projects	Local Funds	LSTA Funds
Automation	41	\$235,640	\$384,491
Internet Access	93	\$346,811	\$642,313
Miscellaneous Technology	17	\$ 32,956	\$ 92,307
Partnerships	4	\$181,267	\$138,414
Planning	3	\$ 1,994	\$ 5,960
Service to Special Groups	14	\$ 23,874	\$ 49,818
<b>Totals</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>\$ 822,542</b>	<b>\$1,313,303</b>

The total number of computers in Nebraska public libraries grew significantly from fiscal year 1997 to the year 2000 (see Table 10), nearly tripling from 647 to 1,946 computers. Likewise, the number of public libraries with Internet access mushroomed from 46% to 80%. The number of automated catalog increased from 74 to 102, and automated circulation systems from 102 to 121 during that same period. Expenditures on access to electronic resources in Nebraska public libraries also grew from \$ 836,472 in 1997 to \$ 1,265,933 in 2000. These changes resulted in part from the concentration of LSTA funding in building local public library technology infrastructure.

Table 10. Nebraska Technology Use Trends

Fiscal Year <sup>1</sup>	% of Reporting Library that have computer <sup>2</sup>	Total Number of Computers	% Internet Access	Electronic Access Expenditure (annual)	Reference Transactions (annual)	Use of Electronic Resources (annual)	Auto-mated Catalog	Auto-mated Circ. System	Total Public Access Internet terminals	Have Web site
1996/1997	85%	647	46%	\$ 836,472	1,032,539	No data <sup>3</sup>	74	102	No data <sup>4</sup>	26
1997/1998	87%	1,608	65%	\$ 953,073	1,045,525	No data <sup>3</sup>	88	110	No data <sup>4</sup>	42
1998/1999	86%	1,829	74%	\$ 619,865	948,741	No data <sup>3</sup>	96	114	616	51
1999/2000	88%	1,946	80%	\$1,265,933	1,034,887	1,688,927	102	121	754	53

<sup>1</sup> All figures based on Public Library Statistical Reports, compiled as Nebraska Library Commission Public Library Profile.

<sup>2</sup> Number of reporting libraries varies each fiscal year.

<sup>3</sup> This data was not collected during this fiscal year.

<sup>4</sup> The format of this question changed so this data is not comparable.



Battle Creek (pop. 1,158) Public Library's 1998 and 2001 LSTA grants introduce Internet public access computers to the community

Comments from staff in libraries during the Making a Difference visits (see Table 11) reinforce the reality that without the LSTA grants many libraries, in all size communities, would not have been able to acquire information technology or be in a position to demonstrate the use and value of such technology. Many libraries received multiple LSTA grants during the five-year period as shown in Table 12. Forty-nine libraries received one grant whereas 38 libraries were recipients of 2 or more grants, one library benefiting from 8 grants. This data suggest that LSTA funds are a major source for providing technology in public libraries in Nebraska. However, in any given year, approximately 165 accredited public libraries are eligible for LSTA grants. These figures show that about half of the eligible libraries have not yet benefited, either because they did not apply or applied and were not funded.

<b>Table 11. Making a Difference Comments on Technology Initiation and Development</b>
<i>Without the grant we would not have the computers.</i>
<i>Added to public access computers.</i>
<i>Allowed us to have the only Internet access in town for public use.</i>
<i>Would not have any computers without LSTA grants.</i>
<i>The LSTA grant supported the purchase of 8 new PCs, a significant part of the library's technology overhaul during 1999.</i>
<i>Wouldn't have as many computers for public use if it weren't for the grants.</i>
<i>One grant provided a large screen monitor for use by visually impaired.</i>
<i>All computers are connected to DSL which provides much faster Internet access than before.</i>
<i>Without the grant we wouldn't have been able to have Internet access or at least not as quickly.</i>
<i>The LSTA grant provided the library's first Internet computers.</i>
<i>The LSTA grant helped make service enhancements happen. The city would not likely have funded these services.</i>
<i>More computers for Internet access was a significant boost in 1998.</i>
<i>Allowed migration from DOS-based to Windows, Y2K compatible library automation system.</i>

Table 12. Numbers of Nebraska LSTA Grants from 1998-2002

<b>Number of Libraries</b>	<b>Number of LSTA grants received</b>	<b>Total</b>
49	1	49
13	2	26
19	3	57
3	4	12
2	5	10
1	8	8
<b>87</b>		<b>162*</b>

\* An additional 10 projects were not included in this table as they went to institutional libraries or to multiple communities.





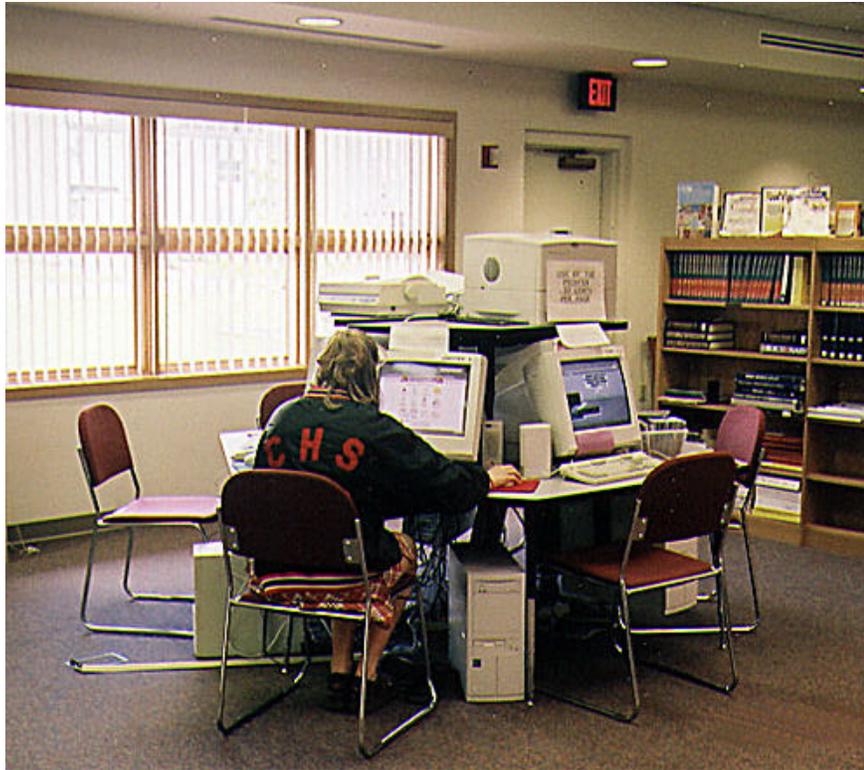
A young Bloomfield (pop. 1,126) Public Library customer using one of 6 public access computers made available through a 1999 LSTA grant



An Imperial (pop. 1,982) Public Library patron enjoying Internet access funded in part with a 2001 LSTA grant



Clay Center (pop. 861) Public Library's 1999 LSTA technology planning grant resulted in a 2001 LSTA grant that provided Internet access for the public



The Creighton (pop. 1,270) Public Library offers access to the Internet and online catalog through a 2000 LSTA grant

### **Impact of LSTA Grant in Hastings Public Library and Community**

*This grant allowed the library to upgrade its Internet server, public workstations and the library's Internet connection from a 56K line to a T-1. These upgrades impacted public service at the library in several ways. First, the faster workstations and Internet connection delighted patrons who count on the library for a public Internet connection. Second, the faster connection allowed the library to offer Web-based resources such as Wilson Web, SIRS, Facts on File and First Search at all eight public Internet workstations. Third, more and more reference questions are being answered using some form of Internet resource and the speed at which staff can respond to patron requests for information and materials has been greatly increased by having the T-1 direct connection. Finally, the upgraded server allowed the library to expand the library Web presence and offer more information and service to patrons via the Worldwide Web.*

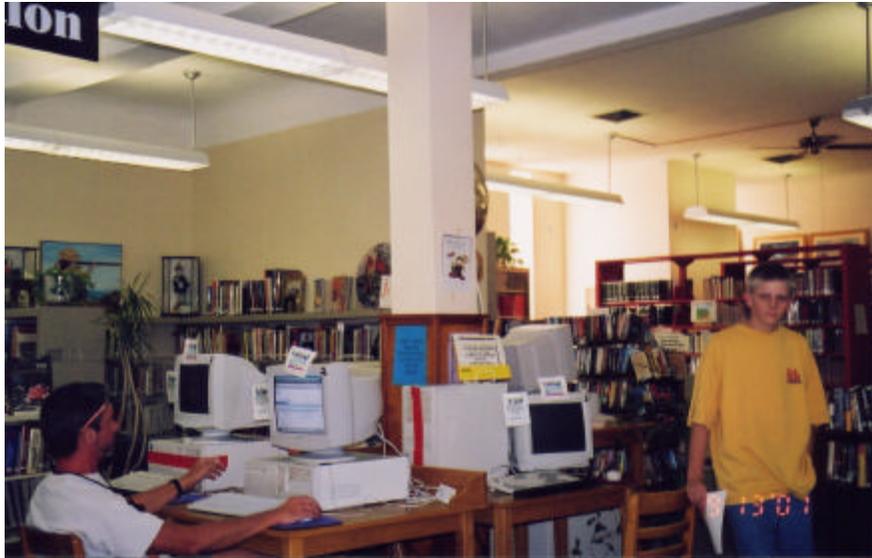
*Public use of the Internet computers at the library continues to grow and has gone from approximately 1,100 uses a month at the time the grant was awarded to over 1,500 uses a month. The library can only provide citizens with the electronic access they expect and need if our equipment can be upgraded on a regular and timely basis. LSTA dollars impact the whole technological fiber of our state by allowing libraries to keep abreast of technological change.*



Lydia Bruun Woods Memorial Library in Falls City (pop. 4,671) developed a sizeable computer lab with LSTA grants in 1999, 2000, and 2001



Newly equipped with a computer lab from the Gates Foundation, the Raymond A. Whitwer Tilden (pop. 1,078) Public Library provides Internet access and online catalog with 1998 and 2000 LSTA grants



Chadron (5,634) Public Library customers benefit from several years of LSTA grants (1998, 1999, 2001) aimed at Internet access



Kearney (pop. 27,431) Public Library's computer lab benefited from 1998 and 2000 LSTA grants as well as a 2001 state grant for computer hardware and software



North Platte (pop. 23,878) Public Library computer lab users benefit from a faster Internet connection thanks in part to 1999 LSTA funds for upgrading from 56k to 1.5 mbps

August 29, 2000

Dear Sally,

*Enclosed please find an invoice for the equipment we have purchased and installed with the LSTA [2000] grant funds. The computers are all in and all but one are functioning beautifully (still need some tech people). We went with a wireless hub and I love it! I feel like the whole building is wired and available for whatever. The laptop can be carried to any part of the building and even to the patio and still have access to the Internet. To me this seems pretty miraculous as only a few short years ago we were still counting cards and having patrons write their names for check out. It is a great feeling of accomplishment and without your help and the LSTA funding it would not have been possible.*

*Thank you for your part making this possible. Our library has truly become a community center with the technology provided by these grants. Hopefully, this is but a beginning and the library can be launched into bigger and better projects.*

Boni Hathaway  
Auburn [pop. 3,350] Public Library Director



Western (pop. 287) Public Library provides Internet access for the public for the first time due in part to a 2001 LSTA grant

**The Difference to Our Community  
Verdigre (pop. 519) Public Library's LSTA Story**

*If a person wanted to sum up in one statement what impact this project has had on our community, it would be "Now Verdigre has the same technology as any city in the world and that means equality for the citizens of Verdigre and the surrounding rural community. "*

*The number of patrons walking through the door has increased. In all of our service areas, usage has increased. The number of patrons using the computer has increased an average of 6 people per day. And the surprise is, now more of these people (whom came to use the computer) are checking out books to read because, " they are at the library anyway."*

*As the library director I am very pleased with the results of this project. We do have more senior citizens using the technology resources and the large size monitor has been complimented many, many times.*

*I thank you for this opportunity for our community.*

Linda Bauer, Director  
Verdigre Public Library

Library automation, including online circulation systems and online public access catalogs, were another major category of LSTA grant implementation in Nebraska during the evaluation period. Nearly one-fourth, or 41, of all LSTA funded projects from 1998 to 2002 were for library automation (see Table 9). Perceived benefits of these types of grants to library customers were numerous (see Table 14), and included improved record-keeping, faster service, fewer errors, collection assessment assistance, reduced backlog, and extending access to library collections and other information resources through bookmobiles and home computers.

**Table 14. Making a Difference Comments on Library Automation**

<i>The computer has probably been a bigger help to staff than patrons who don't see behind the scenes.</i>
<i>The effort it once was to keep records has been greatly reduced.</i>
<i>Patrons believe the computer when it says that they have a fine or overdue book.</i>
<i>The library put the laptop on the bookmobile and can now take the card catalog with them.</i>
<i>Patrons complained that they could not tell if they had ever read a book by looking on the card in the back of the book in the old checkout system, so with the new automated circulation system the library gave patrons permission to write their initials in the back of the book to keep track of what they have read.</i>
<i>It's good for the high school, elementary and rural students to be able to come in and use an automated system so they are prepared for the real world.</i>
<i>The firewall purchase as part of the LSTA grant helped ease fear of being connected to and using the Internet. However, software installed after the firewall seemed to have glitches. The firewall also added unknown filters to our Internet connectivity and we've spent a lot of time researching the results of this.</i>
<i>The new circulation system allows more responsiveness to customers.</i>
<i>With the computers they have an easier time scanning the inventory, keeping records and doing reports for statistics.</i>
<i>We no longer have to pull each person's name from a file; we don't feel we have quite the same control as before, however.</i>
<i>Software is an asset for both staff and public and allows for creation of brochures, reports, signs, etc.</i>
<i>Life is so much easier – the difference between heaven and hell.</i>
<i>No six month to one year backlogs because of having the computer.</i>
<i>When people come in the librarian is able to tell patrons what they have checked out and can also tell patrons what new books have arrived without waiting.</i>
<i>Automation makes a big difference in librarian's job; filing catalog cards always waited and the backlog grew. Now the catalog is up to date.</i>
<i>Automation in general has greatly speeded up processing, allows customers to place reserves online, and library uses circulation reports for weeding and selection.</i>
<i>LSTA grant gave library access to online catalog on bookmobile.</i>
<i>Automation has greatly simplified filling out the annual statistical report.</i>
<i>The online circulation system helped staff notice how old the books were and they did some major weeding.</i>
<i>Makes check in so much easier! Check out is wonderful too. Everyone is adjusting nicely to the computers. The kids especially like them.</i>
<i>With automation there is less margin of error. It has allowed library staff to be more efficient and get people out the door more quickly. The librarians have been able to use the OPAC to find information for patrons on particular topics. Most patrons don't use the OPAC, they just head for the shelves. Children are more likely to use it than adults.</i>
<i>The LSTA grant allowed the library to upgrade from DOS to Windows version of Follett which is more user friendly, thus gets more use now.</i>
<i>The benefit of the LSTA automation grant to the staff and borrowers is faster service: quicker</i>

*start up time in the morning; automatic backups; the ability to check the same item in and out quickly. Under the DOS-based system, materials required more staff time to re-circulate. Also, borrowers could not receive normal service during the first or last portions of the workday because the system required more time for start-ups, shut-downs and back-up procedures.*



Beatrice (pop. 12,496) Public Library's 1999 LSTA grant added a firewall permitting Internet access to the library's online catalog

### **Lyons (pop. 963) Public Library LSTA Success Story**

*We are now part of the technology era like other libraries in our area which brings feelings of respect and pride in our library. Since we have had a card catalog only since 1996, it is not used as much by adults, but students are making good use of it and the number of users is growing. The school has also just recently automated with the same system which has given them a headstart in how to use the catalog. Adults who do not type are more hesitant to use it, but others are becoming quite comfortable.*

*Staff training has been a major thrust..... as tasks are becoming familiar new ones are being added. Two training sessions have been taken from the software company. One session was in the library in September when we started and the other was in Sioux City in March.*

*Plans are underway to work with our Page Turner's book discussion group to help familiarize themselves in use of the catalog and also an Extension Club group coming for a program at the library. Other training works better in one on one situations with patrons when they have questions about location of books.*

*Automation has increased our capacity to do reports quickly, make barcodes, labels, overdue notices, keep track of patrons and materials. Electronic catalog greatly increases my ability as Director to locate materials that would have been "lost" under the old system of filing. Key word searches and author searches given instant access to lists of materials in the collection.*

*Publicity: Announcement of being awarded the grant, barcoding "party", and "birth announcement" after completing the project all appeared in the local newspaper.*

*I now wonder how we ever did it without being automated. Larger fundraisers beginning in 1996 and a can do attitude helped us realize our portion of the LSTA Grant match and made applying for a project of this magnitude feasible. We could not have done it without your help and that of the volunteers and staff who worked overtime to accomplish the task.*

*Now that this is becoming more familiar to us, it will be easier to spend more time working with the databases provided through NLC directed funds.*

*Thank you for your financial support through the LSTA grant!*

Mary Fritts, Director  
Lyons Public Library



Ord (pop. 2,269) Public Library's 2001 LSTA grant assisted in up-grading automated circulation and catalog system and making their OPAC Internet accessible



Pawnee City (pop. 1,033) Carnegie Public Library received a 2001 LSTA grant to automate their card catalog and to update their circulation system to a Windows based product

**How Library Technology Helped Save A Family – A LSTA Success Story  
From North Platte Public Library Technology Learning Center**

*Library staff were approached by a patron (who wishes to remain anonymous) in February 2001. The patron, we'll call Jane, was a frequent user of the Technology Learning Center since it's re-opening. She often brought the other four members of her family and would spend their allotted 1 to 2 hours per day on the computers. On this particular evening she relayed the following story to library staff.*

*Jane and her family had been having a hard time with their finances. It had become so bad, they were in the process of filing bankruptcy and were informed that the bank was going to take their house. They were at a loss for what to do and feared they would soon be homeless. Jane heard about the computers at the library and started coming in to use them. After about an hour she had become proficient at "navigating the Web". And in an act of desperation set out to find help and support with her family's situation.*

*Jane managed to find her way into an Ask the Expert type of site for legal advice. Jane sought help from Technology Learning Center staff in setting up an email account to converse in this forum. After chatting with a lawyer briefly, the expert contacted her through email. The expert requested she send as much of the information about the process she was going through, not account numbers, just facts and figures. After one day, she had a reply telling her to seek local legal council because there was a problem in the process. Jane did this armed with the exact process required by law for foreclosures.*

*The family was able, through refinancing, to keep their house and their possessions. According to her, the library saved their family. This is just one of the many said and unsaid success stories in our community that can be attributed to the library.*

LSTA grant projects have likely contributed to increased library usage and have attracted new types of users. In comparing the number of total public library visits in Nebraska in fiscal year 1997 (5,186,958) with that of fiscal year 2000 (6,083,579), there was an increase of 896,621 visits or 17.3%<sup>7</sup>. As many of the comments from Making a Difference visits in Table 15 demonstrate, the public library's adoption of the technology function or role in the community has brought customers to the library, either in-person or through remote access, who were non-users and has increased the amount of time spent in the library or accessing library-based resources from remote locations.

---

<sup>7</sup> Source: Nebraska Public Library Annual Statistical Reports and based on FSCS definition of library visits.



Atkinson (pop. 1,244) Public Library provides computer training classes on a mobile laptop network purchased with LSTA 2001 grant

<b>Table 15. Making a Difference Comments on LSTA Impact on Community Outreach</b>
<i>LSTA grant great in adding the communication between school and public library. Allowed us to be more cooperative and allows the public access to both collections. We're hoping to open the school library one night a week during school session to allow public and kids to come into the library. The project also makes resources available to poorer kids.</i>
<i>The improved technology has increased the number of people coming to the library. The downsides are the cost to the city for upkeep and the increased business with no additional staff. We do have more respect from the community because we have computers.</i>
<i>We wouldn't have had the immediate access to the Internet for the public as early as we did.</i>
<i>It is too early to know what impact the 2001 LSTA grant will have. It is hoped that the computers and the language programs will help to retain students in the ESL program.</i>
<i>It is very satisfying to see people waiting all the time to use all three public access computers.</i>
<i>The project has been a great success as it has encouraged young people to read.</i>
<i>Four of the five computers are located on a workstation near the circulation desk and are always in use when the library is open. Patrons sign up for them for 30 minute periods and there is usually a waiting list.</i>
<i>The LSTA project impacted a large number of people. We received 8 computers and we now have Internet access via Roadrunner Cable and it is great!</i>
<i>The grant greatly affected 2 small schools with the increase of materials available to them.</i>
<i>Getting computers has helped us get more people into the library.</i>

<i>Computers make people in a small town feel connected to the world.</i>
<i>Kids come in to use the computers and end up checking out books too.</i>
<i>Technology, computer access, Internet – the library’s the only place in town for free access.</i>
<i>The more computers the library adds changes the nature of library users. People are in the building for longer period of time now. There is also an artificial urgency meaning customers want help NOW when things don’t work. They also want instruction on how to use the computers at their own convenience.</i>
<i>Some people come in to use the library computers even though they have one at home because all family members vie for time on the home computer.</i>
<i>Students don’t have enough time in the day school to get all their work done so the public library computers are booked up from 3:30-8:00 p.m.</i>
<i>Children use the computers a great deal; the library is able to serve more children. The Head Start group began to come in regularly. We were able to provide computer instruction for children, although helping them on the new computers took more of the Children Librarians’ time.</i>
<i>The LSTA grant was a good way to sell the community on the capability of Internet access.</i>
<i>Before we had the two new computers, the other computers were booked from 2 – 8 p.m. with reservations and many people were turned away. Now the library can serve walk-ins. Many patrons use the Internet when they come to town on sales days. We have 250-350 usages of the Internet per month. [town population is 1,756]</i>
<i>The library’s technology center is the pride of the town.</i>
<i>Library now has Internet-only customers.</i>
<i>More computers helped cut down on waiting times for the public.</i>
<i>With Internet access provided by the 2000 LSTA grant, the library has more low income and elderly patrons, and visitors from the Cowboy Trail come in to use email.</i>
<i>Other city agencies, the local church and hospital have borrowed the laptop.</i>
<i>Additional computers raised customer satisfaction.</i>
<i>The LSTA grant enabled the library to build a homework center and they have kids coming in and waiting in line or calling to reserve a computer. More kids are coming in than ever before.</i>
<i>The computers have increased usage by people who wanted to come in to use the computer only.</i>
<i>Older people are taking the computer classes –they want to learn about computers.</i>
<i>People comment about the LSTA grant articles in the local newspaper. They don’t have to go to the larger town now to get access.</i>
<i>The library, hospital, city offices and schools are all sharing a T1 line. The library now has a public access Internet computer with a large monitor and Dragon dictation for the blind on it.</i>
<i>High school students use the public library computers for papers, especially toward the end of the school year.</i>
<i>Internet access and the computers bring more young patrons into the public library. In fact, the age group that formerly seemed to drop out of using the library (teens) now come in regularly to use the Internet and the computers. The big screens are helpful to the older customers. The classes on how to use the Internet were very popular and many</i>

<p><i>people then felt comfortable enough to buy computers at home.</i></p>
<p><i>Library service improved because more people can use the 6 laptops in the computer lab.</i></p>
<p><i>Forty community members have attended classes in the library in the past few months.</i></p>
<p><i>[town population 1,244]</i></p>

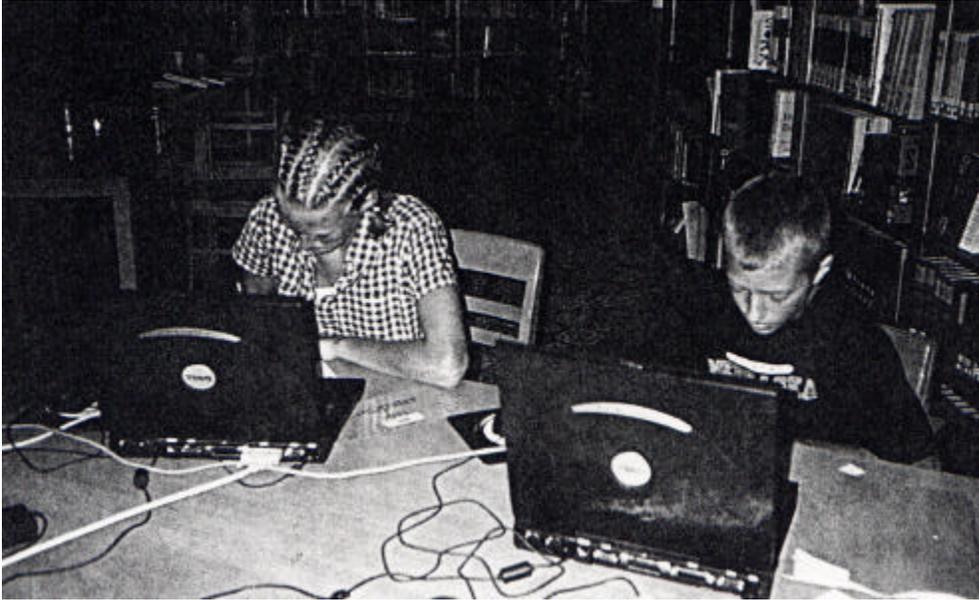
Another major outcome of LSTA competitive grants has been the need for expanded knowledge and skills on the part of local library staff, local library customers, regional library system staff, and NLC staff. Learning occurs informally through local, regional and statewide networking. As well as through formal courses and workshops. Regional library systems host periodic user-group discussions and vendor updates on products such as Follett software, used by many smaller public libraries. State-funded continuing education and training grants, a NLC program started in 2000, focused on projects relating to building technology skills.

Nebraska's public libraries have accepted new or expanded leadership roles by providing technology and access to electronic resources through the Internet and subscription databases. The NLC received increased state general funds in 1998 to provide statewide access to several databases, that now include subscriptions to OCLC FirstSearch, Wilson Web, Bowker's Books in Print, Electric Library, and Kiplinger Business Forecasts.

Many libraries have taken on the additional task of hosting Web sites for the library and the community. In more than one Nebraska community, the public library was the prime catalyst in bringing Internet to local government and the first site for Internet access for the general public.

Comments from Making a Difference visits (see Table 16) suggest that the public library's adoption or expansion of a teaching role has been an important outcome of the LSTA projects. As local library staff become increasingly proficient in selecting, implementing, and maintaining technology and in using that technology to help their customers, they are more and more viewed by the public (and themselves) as teachers or coaches.

Librarians have also developed or improved skills in completing online applications for E-rate, LSTA, NITC (Nebraska Information Technology Commission) and other grants and in using Bibliostat™ Collect for submission of annual public library statistical data. Other skills gained include use of word processing, spreadsheet and presentation software, and the ability to negotiate with ISP's and other vendors for IT products and services.



Atkinson (pop. 1,244) Public Library patrons using laptops acquired from a 2001 LSTA grant to access electronic databases

<b>Table 16. Making a Difference Comments on Knowledge, Skills and Roles</b>
<i>The public library had the kids from school help set up the computers. Young people and adults ask for classes on the computers and the library found someone to teach them. The library had a troubleshooter for the PCs until recently so they are out looking for another one. The former librarian still volunteers quite a bit at the library so they have her expertise available.</i>
<i>There wasn't any special training needed. The computers added from the grant were very compatible with the existing ones.</i>
<i>Due to more access for the public, staff has had to try and keep up with the demands of technology and the Internet.</i>
<i>A local teacher from a nearby town helped the library acquire the computers and set up the network. The library has offered several computer and Internet classes for the public through the roving lab from the extension service.</i>
<i>The library used the computers to train staff on Microsoft products and the Internet. A great way to get staff to learn!</i>
<i>Thursday will be the first Internet class for the public. There is a waiting list.</i>
<i>Staff are more confident in helping patrons with the computer.</i>
<i>The mobile learning lab allows the library to offer a variety of classes to the public – using the Internet, email, genealogy, and others. It also allowed for extensive training in Microsoft Office products. This helps staff to make better use of those products in their jobs as well as serve as a resource for patrons using the tools at the library.</i>
<i>The LSTA grant helped seven staff and volunteers get in-depth training as Master Navigators. They in turn now provide training to the community. The project didn't end with the grant, it has been ongoing. The grant introduced the new role of librarians as</i>

<p><i>teachers.</i></p>
<p><i>We [public library staff] learned we could raise funds through a grant and accumulate funds for matching the grants. This helped stretch our resources further and gave us staff training. The availability and opportunity to apply for grants has helped the director and board to feel empowered and capable.</i></p>
<p><i>The library staff felt fulfilled and gratified to be able to carry out the project plans. They are looking forward to teaching older adults to use the computer.</i></p>
<p><i>An indirect result of the infrastructure improvement made possible by the LSTA grant was creation of an IT position for the city. The project will also provide server and networking training for library staff and has helped the Technology Learning Center develop as a training and research area.</i></p>
<p><i>Our Community Connection project provided grants for training. Our customers can now ask any staff how to do things on the computer and they all can help. This had increased the respect the community has for the public library.</i></p>
<p><i>The staff's jobs are now more complex because they deal with technology.</i></p>
<p><i>The public librarian had a teacher in town that helped her learn a lot of things, as well as kids who helped teach her about software, computers and Internet skills, for example.</i></p>

### **A Grand Island Public Library LSTA Success Story**

*The Mobile Technology Learning Lab has made a difference in our community by serving as the equipment used to offer a variety of computer classes free of charge to anyone interested in becoming more computer literate. Over the past year, nearly 400 people have received computer training within the four classes offered (Basics, More Basics, Genealogy Online, and Investment Resources Online). The vast majority of the participants had little or no previous computer skills. As more aspects of life become dependent on a person's ability to use technology, the need for computer literacy increases. Many of the students expressed the lack of time and money needed to register for a regular computer class at the local community college. By offering hands on, one- time classes, meeting for one and a half hours, the library has definitely filled a need within the area. Computer classes are generally full and at any one time there is a substantial waiting list. These classes receive excellent evaluations from the participants and are often the subject of favorable media coverage. The library staff had definitely seen an increase in the computer literacy of our patrons. Internet use is continually on the increase. Our current move to the Dynix Pac for Windows interface requires users to be familiar with a windows environment. The continuation and expansion of these classes is beneficial to everyone within the community.*

*The Mobile Technology Learning Lab has also been used for staff in-service, the Nebraska Library Commission's database training, and resource demonstrations both within and outside of the library. The equipment has definitely been a positive addition to the library. And with the increasing need for computer literacy, the lab will continue to be a great asset in the future.*



Stanton (pop. 1,627) Public Library patrons benefiting from technology acquired through LSTA funding received in 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001

The availability of information technology has greatly broadened the type of information citizens may access through local public libraries. Comments from Making a Difference visits (see Table 17) show that librarians feel that access to new electronic sources has been a major asset in helping to respond to customer queries and customers are able to use the Internet, software, and other resources to satisfy information needs through the library.

<b>Table 17. Making a Difference Comments on Access to Information</b>
<i>A woman needed a rifle permit to bring a gun in to Canada, came to the library with a Web address and the staff were able to help her.</i>
<i>Someone came in to the library to look for a job in Kansas City.</i>
<i>Email was a big success. One lady in the community has a fire. Fortunately a lot of her correspondence was on her email at the library. She also used her email to track and catch an individual who scammed her.</i>
<i>Patrons use computers for creating job resumes, completing homework assignments, researching on the Internet, sending business information. The public library has the only Internet access in town.</i>
<i>Now we can answer questions using the Internet.</i>
<i>Some young people have changed directions in their academic lives due to the individual assistance with the Internet from public library staff.</i>
<i>One senior citizen comes to the library every day to email her daughter who lives in another state.</i>
<i>Access to the information resources provided through the LSTA grant is somewhat of an equalizer allowing our small library to have some of the same resources as bigger, better-funded libraries. Students that don't have computers at home can use the library computers to produce homework of an equal quality of those who have these resources at home.</i>
<i>Technology grants help us to spend our budget on books. The Internet is needed to substitute for reference books that are expensive.</i>
<i>The T1 line has really helped speed things up and has increased usage of online resources – the OPAC, databases, the Electronic library, Internet and email.</i>
<i>Travelers check their email on the road at the public library. Kids often use the email to keep in touch with parents, especially if they are in one-parent families.</i>
<i>People can take college classes because they come in and use the public library computers for class work. A local man recently graduated from Bellevue College.</i>
<i>Local farmers were able to find a part for a Caterpillar, advertise horses for sale, and find information on a new cross of wheat and raising goats for meat and wool.</i>
<i>Patrons order products over the Internet at the library.</i>
<i>The LSTA project allows for remote access to library's catalog and online databases through remote authentication process.</i>
<i>The grant provided Internet access for reference staff who provide access to databases and other resources for library patrons.</i>
<i>The LSTA grant resulted in increased community use of the public library for meeting information needs.</i>

<p><i>The computers helped a woman design a letterhead for her husband's trucking firm.</i></p>
<p><i>People come in to the library with URLs they see on television and knowing nothing about how to access those URLs, they find out how simple it is.</i></p>
<p><i>If it weren't for the grants, the customers wouldn't have access to all the different forms of information and databases.</i></p>
<p><i>One customer with fibromyalgia accesses the fibromyalgia newsletter from email and shares her stories. Other customers come into the library to locate information about their medical needs after seeing their doctors. There are also adult customers who are taking academic online coursework at the library as they don't have computers at home.</i></p>
<p><i>The library now has a Web site and the online catalog can be accessed via the Web.</i></p>
<p><i>The public library can now offer assistance to high school seniors for senior research projects.</i></p>
<p><i>Many citizens use the computers for email, business, and to create PowerPoint presentations.</i></p>
<p><i>We are now a global library because we have access to everything. Kids use the computers to do homework research. College students are coming in to do online classes and homework. Our older population comes in to learn how to do email. Some learn and then go home and do it own their own computers.</i></p>
<p><i>A woman came into the public library last night and she had been to Norfolk and Sioux City trying to buy lemon curd, but none of the stores she went to even knew what she was talking about. She'd gotten a recipe from the Food Network Channel and wanted to make it. She wondered if the library had a recipe. Library staff went on the Internet and found many recipes so they could offer her recipes made with the microwave, in a double boiler or simply stirred on the stove. She [the customer] was very, very impressed.</i></p>



Arapahoe (pop. 1,028) Public Library's 1999 LSTA cooperative project with Arapahoe Public Schools provided created a shared online catalog and networked workstations for educational software and Internet access.

**An Arapahoe (pop. 1,028) Public Library –School Cooperative LSTA Success Story  
The Public Library’s View**

*The LSTA grant funds have made a huge improvement in this community's available Internet service to young people and poverty level families. Arapahoe has 70% of its population at the poverty level. Many families do not have the financial means to purchase home computers necessary for searching or general clerical work.*

*In placing the computers and Follett software at the school it has allowed the public and school libraries to work together in several areas. Foremost and most importantly the two libraries are able to see each other's records and not duplicate materials, which helps with budgeting concerns. Our school promotes the accelerated reading program and we are able to work with them in providing a good book base for the children to use. Relations between the two libraries have been very positive and the school is very thankful for the support shown to them by the grant and the public library.*

*We were also able to place four computers in the school study hall, which allows students to work on papers and do Internet searching at a time convenient for them. They may start a project, save to disc, and come to the public library (which has expanded hours beyond school time) to finish their projects.*

*The public library has three Internet stations, one clerical station (with Encarta, Print shop, Microsoft Word, Publisher and Excel available), and one OPAC station. These stations have allowed more patrons to use the services they provide at one time. Our computer stations are used each day. Saturday and after school usage is extremely heavy. Our biggest concern is that we have such a small area we cannot provide as much usage as we would like.*

*The only phase of our project that is not completed and will have to wait for a while is the networking of the two libraries together. The software is in place and the school has the available line, but the library has no access to the wiring necessary for the two to be connected. Cost is a big factor. We will this summer however, be working on a Web site in conjunction with the school. This will allow patrons and the opposite library to check holdings, availability, etc.*

*Our community greatly appreciates the funding of this grant. Many people are now able to use the Internet that prior to would have been denied service. Our thanks to the Commission and all those involved for this generous grant.*

**An Arapahoe (pop. 1,028) Public Library –School Cooperative LSTA Success Story  
The School Library-Media Center’s View**

*To whom it may concern;*

*I hope I can keep this brief, for me to say just a simple thank-you for this grant and the new computer systems and for Cheryl Ahrens seems-woefully inadequate. I am new at this job but we spent a year doing things the "old way". Then over the summer the systems were installed and all of the books were entered, and the difference was extraordinary. Checking books in and out is a breeze, checking on individual students’ status was simple and quick, checking on status of individual books and tapes is simple and efficient. Making reports, checking inventory, circulation status of entire collection is amazingly fun and interesting (yes I said fun). Entering patron information and new collection editions are easy. I must apologize for this is just coming from my perspective as it applies to making our job easier and more efficient and enjoyable. The truly beautiful consequence of installing this system is how it has affected the students of this school. As near as I can tell our circulation use has increased at least 250% over the old method, I have personally witnessed third graders running to be the first to get on the circulation computers to look up books. High school kids exclaiming that it is so much easier to do research.*

*The best statement however was from a high school senior that told me very quietly one day that this is the first time she has checked out a book in two years and it is due in part to the new system that has been installed. I can't begin to describe the joy I feel when I see young people scramble to the circulation computer and come away with a list of books to find and then find them with no trepidation about the process. I know of at least five third and fourth graders that read more just because they can look up "more stuff" on the computer. There are several instances where kids interest has increased in a particular subject and their research yielded nothing in our collection that they had to use the inter-library loan process. At first a couple of them were incredulous "you mean we can do that" was the initial response. So the ease of access has opened a lot of windows for our students and staff, which in turn has gotten me excited about providing the best possible circulation and access to information that we can.*

*Also I have a big thank-you to Cheryl Ahrens for her commitment to getting us this grant and modernizing our system and her incredible patience and generosity in helping us begin to provide a better information gathering place for our students and staff. This is wonderful and exciting because I love books. Again, thank-you for making our school better.*

*Sincerely,*

Charles W. Collins  
Media Specialist, Arapahoe Public Schools



Schuyler (pop. 5,371) Public Library customers using technology purchased in part with State Aid to Public Libraries funds



Plattsmouth (pop. 6,887) Public Library customers benefit from computers and Internet access supported through a 2001 LSTA grant



Young mother and her child using CD-ROM products provided in part with 1999 LSTA grant to the North Platte (pop. 23,878) Public Library for a CD-ROM cache server for the children's area



1998 LSTA grant to Columbus (pop. 20,971) Public Library assists in making Internet and CD-ROM materials available for children

This evaluation process also illustrated many challenges relating to technology use in libraries. Many communities are trying to provide new types of library services in inadequate facilities due to a lack of space, poor wiring, or the need to better use existing space. Computing equipment is often added to the library without benefit of space planning, appropriate ergonomic furnishings or electrical and data connections.

Speed and reliability of connectivity continue to be issues for some libraries, particularly for libraries in remote, rural locations. The use of DSL, T1 and wireless connections is growing statewide, although viability of service providers is an issue.

Libraries also report difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff with computer knowledge and experience. Positions tend to remain vacant for long periods and when filled are staffed with individuals who need extensive training. There is also a need for ongoing technology training and technical support for existing library staff. Public libraries, particularly in smaller communities, often have no local technology support and must contract with a provider many miles away. Or if they do have local technology support, it is often a teacher or student who may leave in the midst of a project. Some libraries choose to purchase computers through their local computer stores and business supply offices even though the cost may be higher in order to have convenient service and support.

Sustainability, or the need to build in ongoing local funding for technology replacement as well as for new technologies, is an issue of concern on the local as well as state level. As discussed earlier in this report, a fair number of Nebraska public libraries have acquired much of their technology from grants (LSTA, State Aid, NITC, etc.) and have yet to develop a plan for supporting and maintaining hardware and connectivity. Many libraries are aided in this effort by E-rate discounts or free or discounted Internet service from a local provider.

The Gates Library Project is in the early stage of implementation in Nebraska and this initiative will potentially equip smaller, non accredited public libraries with computers, software and improved Internet access. The issue of sustainability is emphasized in the Gates project and this should help NLC efforts to address this need. Library staff will also benefit from the training made available as part of the Gates project, addressing in part another area of great need.



Rushville (pop. 999) Public Library exemplifies challenges of adding technology to existing library programs and services



Blair (pop. 7,512) Public Library – LSTA grant helps with Internet upgrade

### **Blair Public Library LSTA Success Story**

The Blair Public Library received a 2000 LSTA grant to purchase and install a new server.

*One of the things that the new server has made possible is to expand our Web page. Through the Web page we have been able to put a weekly new booklist on the Web page. The newspaper takes the list of new books off the Web page and publishes them in the local newspaper on a weekly basis. We have several patrons coming in the library asking for book titles that they have seen on our Web page or in the newspaper.*

*The new server has made it possible to store more information. We have now been participating in CatExpress to do our cataloging. Therefore we are able to obtain better MARC records. This makes it easier for patrons to locate the books for which they are searching.*

*We had many technical problems. It cost more money than anticipated to install new server. During transfer to new server one of our computers in the network crashed. We were not able to buy new computer for the office due to this added expense.*

## **LSTA Competitive Grant Recommendations:**

*Technical issues:* There is a need for expertise and consulting before, during and after grant process to evaluate and select appropriate hardware, software, technical support, installation, etc. One library recommended that the NLC maintain a list of libraries that use various automated systems and names of staff willing to demonstrate or provide training on the systems.

*Evaluation:* The NLC needs to provide outcome-based training for state, regional and local library staff. Evaluation expectations need to be clearly articulated in the grant application instructions and examples of outcome measures provided.

*Follow-up:* NLC staff should monitor interim and final grant reports for outcome-based measures and probe for stories from local libraries and communities if none are provided.

*Sustainability:* Many libraries have received multiple LSTA grants during the evaluation period; therefore a majority of their technology and automation has been funded with federal monies. For many libraries are also using state aid funds, as well as other sources, to meet the 25% matching requirement, the local commitment and funding to sustain or increase the level of technology is not in place. The NLC should assist local libraries in planning and budgeting for technology maintenance and future development. One strategy would be to build into the LSTA grant process a sustainability element, perhaps using the model from the Gates Library Project.

*Future Grants:* The NLC should consider funding larger, statewide projects that could benefit more libraries. Examples might include digitization projects and database access.

*Local Match:* The requirement for local matching funds in LSTA competitive grant projects should be maintained as it allows limited funds to be maximized and builds in a commitment for the project on the local level.

*Grant Application Process:* LSTA competitive grant applications can be submitted online at the present time, however a printed signature page must be sent in separately. The NLC should implement use of electronic signatures in subsequent LSTA and other grant applications. The NLC should adhere to a consistent timeframe, i.e. announce and award the grants the same time each year, allow for the same time to complete the grant applications each year, and the same amount of time to implement the grants and submit a final report.

*Grant Review Process:* The NLC should involve grant reviewers from outside of the agency.

*Grant Process Follow-Up:* The NLC should review the grant application process each year shortly after grants are awarded to note what worked well and what needs to be improved or changed. Projects that are not funded should be reviewed to learn what the NLC can do to assist libraries in future grant applications.

<b>Table 18. Making a Difference Comments on LSTA Competitive Grant Process</b>
<i>Library staff like the online application for LSTA and have no suggestions for improvement.</i>
<i>The LSTA grant focus is too narrow; it only gives money for new projects and not for maintenance of technology.</i>
<i>The project caused the library to go way over budget due to a miscalculation and a vendor who may have taken advantage of the library.</i>
<i>Getting the grant helped to encourage the city to fund a portion of the project.</i>
<i>They appreciated the LSTA video-conference and learned enough to effectively use the board's help in writing a successful grant. They had to save for some time in order to have the match for LSTA. The library director and board would like to be in a position to use a future LSTA grant for technology in a new building.</i>
<i>Part of the plan was to set up a tower, load the CDs on the tower, and send them out via the server. This was not feasible so the plan was scrapped.</i>
<i>The LSTA grant increased the number of patron access terminals from 7 to 12 but the process was delayed because of problems with the service provider.</i>
<i>The LSTA technology project was partially accomplished. Some snags came about but the grant was extremely important in allowing the library to achieve Internet connectivity and to provide online services for the city and county population.</i>
<i>State and federal funds from the Library Commission have had a significant impact, providing about half of the funding for library technology-based services.</i>

To the Nebraska Library Commission,

Bellevue Public Library  
wishes to thank the Nebraska  
Library Commission and the  
LSTA Committee Members  
for selecting our library as a  
recipient of a LSTA 2002 Grant.

Needless to say we are  
excited. Busy people plotting  
and planning for the summer  
arrival of our new equipment.

We are sincerely grateful  
for your consideration and  
thoughtfulness in presenting  
this grant to us.

In appreciation,

Mary E. King, Director  
Bellevue Public Library  
Bellevue, Nebraska

**Goal 4: Nebraskans will be served by library staff with the knowledge and expertise to link them with the highest quality library and information services.**

LSTA-funded Activity: Regional Library Systems

Assistance in implementation of the NLC Long Range Plan is achieved through funding Nebraska's six regional multitype library systems (see Appendix H for information on System Staff and a map of the system service areas). Each multitype library system is organized as a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation and elects a system board from the general membership. The majority of system funds come from state general and LSTA funds through contracts with the NLC. Systems each employ a full-time MLS degreed administrator and a part-time administrative assistant. Regional systems were established in the early 1980s. Prior to systems NLC library development consultants were located in several regions of the state and worked closely with Network Advisory Councils to ensure library service needs were being heard and met.

The regional library systems have provided:

- training and consultation services to Nebraska libraries;
- interlibrary loan and reference services (this function was discontinued in 2001);
- assistance to the NLC in implementation of the programs for accreditation of public libraries and certification of public librarians and library boards;
- assistance to local libraries in development of local library collections;
- support for library technology development;
- training of library participants in use of online services;
- and support for library services to children and young adults.

In addition, the NLC contracts with each of the Regional Library Systems on a biennial basis for specific duties and activities. LSTA funds made up approximately 33% of the total funding for the Systems over the five-year evaluation period (see Table 19), the remainder of the support coming from state general funds. System budgets have been increased slightly over the past several years, primarily to cover increased costs in salaries and benefits.

Table 19. Nebraska Regional Library System Funding Sources

Fiscal Year	State	LSTA	Total
1998	\$ 372,938	\$ 263,544	\$ 636,482
1999	\$ 492,870	\$ 154,362	\$ 647,232
2000	\$ 429,356	\$ 229,590	\$ 658,946
2001	\$ 458,388	\$ 215,567	\$ 673,955
2002*	\$ 399,000	\$ 192,701	\$ 591,701
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,152,552</b>	<b>\$1,055,764</b>	<b>\$3,208,316</b>

\* Figures for 2002 incomplete as not all contracts are in place

*Accomplishments:*

FOSTERING NETWORKING

In a variety of ways, each system fosters cooperation and the development relationships among system members. This is done by arranging for group meetings based on topical issues, specific jobs held, or a geographic factor. This allows library staff to develop relationships with their peers and to share problems and solutions. Some examples include:

- Director’s groups
- “CLICK” in the Eastern System, which is a group of children’s librarians that meet on a regular basis
- “CASTL” in the Southeast System, which brings together library staff from a specific geographic region within the system
- County library associations, which encourage library staff within a given county to meet and plan ways to obtain and increase county funding

A unique feature of networking fostered by the systems is that this allows for cooperation and development of relationships with library staff from all kinds of libraries. System membership and board representation includes media specialists, and staff from public, post-secondary, special and institutional libraries.

RESOURCE SHARING

Each system office maintains a small collection of print materials that are loaned and routed among the system members. Specialty items such as audio and large print books are often rotated throughout the system in order to maximize use. In addition, the systems make major purchases of equipment and software that is then made available to all system members. Members share facilities, materials and skills both with the system office and with each other.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

A major activity of all system offices is the planning and presentation of continuing education events. System workshops and training opportunities account for a majority of the continuing education hours earned by library staff statewide as part of the Public Librarian Certification program. Each system surveys its members annually in order to get input about the types of programming needed. In some cases, the six systems plan continuing education events as a group and offer them in several locations statewide.

## COMMUNICATION

A large part of system staff time is spent in consultation, both in person and via email and telephone. This kind of personal interaction is particularly beneficial for new library staff members. In addition, each system publishes a monthly newsletter that highlights member accomplishments and provides information about library issues and upcoming events. Each system also maintains a member listserv that allows for informal discussions, announcements, and interaction among all participants.

The Nebraska Community Foundation, the Library Commission, member libraries, individual Educational Service Units (ESUs), local colleges, and qualified staff and board members are some of the factors responsible for the success and growth of system activities. Each system has developed a good relationship with various regional and community organizations that support system activities and respond to system needs.

### *Lessons Learned:*

All systems identified a shortage of time and resources as a major challenge. This requires prioritizing the demands on these resources in order to best respond to the needs of the members. The dichotomy of meeting the needs of both very small libraries and large, metropolitan libraries continues to challenge system staff. Dealing with aging equipment, finding and providing good technical support, and board recruitment are common issues that demand staff attention.

An ongoing challenge is the continued encouragement of library staff to grow and develop, in part because of the turnover in library staffing. For some system staff, dealing with the distances between libraries, and the issues inherent with some remote, rural communities, continues to be a difficult problem.

System staff deal with these challenges in part by cultivating resource people throughout both their system and statewide, that can be called upon to solve problems and research questions about library issues. This includes staff at the Library Commission, community colleges and universities, regional ESUs, and other local, regional and statewide organizations. Programs and members of the Nebraska Library Association are also a valuable resource in helping to meet the variety of challenges to fostering improved library services.

#### IMPACT OF LSTA GRANT

Equipment purchased (digital cameras and scanning equipment) through the LSTA grant has been well used. The fact that all six systems purchased the same equipment has allowed staff to share expertise and respond to each others questions about using and troubleshooting the equipment. A training session was offered to all system staff in order to minimize problems and maximize use of the equipment. The digital cameras facilitate documentation and publicizing of system activities and programs, as well as local library and community events. In addition, the Southeast System used federal funds to purchase a laptop and projector which is loaned to member libraries and enhances the quality and scope of workshops presented.

#### SYSTEM SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE GRANT PROCESS

It would be helpful to standardize the time frame for grant applications from year to year. This would likely result in increased participation since library staff and system staff would know each year when to prepare for and when to expect applications to be made available.

#### PLANNING AND EVALUATION

All systems have written a Strategic Plan for 2001-2003. The plans are developed with either the board or a sub-group of board members. Revisions are often based on feedback from members, which is collected in a variety of ways. Some systems conduct an annual survey of members, asking them to evaluate the services and programs offered by the system, and to suggest ideas for changes in programming, services and other activities. Workshop evaluations are also reviewed as part of the planning process. In addition, system staff are in constant contact with members and receive suggestions and feedback throughout the year, all of which is used to improve services and programs offered.

Each system board conducts an annual evaluation of the administrator, and the administrator in turn evaluates the staff assistant each year. The findings are used to make salary recommendations for the coming year. All systems offer a variety of grant opportunities to the member libraries, often in the form of scholarships to attend workshops, and sometimes through a competitive process to encourage achievement of specific goals. In some cases, grant recipients are ask to make a presentation at a system workshop or to write an article for the system newsletter, sharing their experiences with other system members.



Meridian Library System office in Kearney offers professional development resources for local library staff, a common function in all six regional library systems



Panhandle Library System office located in Scottsbluff Business Center

LSTA-funded Activity: Review the Public Librarian and Board Certification Program

*Accomplishments and Lessons Learned:*

The Nebraska Library Commission's Public Librarian Certification program, initiated in 1987, was designed to improve public library service throughout the state and to motivate librarians to acquire, maintain, and develop skills through basic and continuing education.

Participation in this program has grown steadily since its inception, with close to 600 hundred library staff members currently enrolled in the program. A task force was established in 1998 to evaluate the Public Librarian Certification Program, including the Basic Skills courses. The Nebraska Library Commission contracted with Debra Wilcox Johnson, J&J Consulting, to direct the evaluation process.

Key data sources for the study included Library Commission staff, Regional Library System directors, certified librarians, board presidents, and print documentation from the program. The primary focus of the study was the public library community. The task force developed eight questions to guide the evaluation process and defined desired outcomes for certification, along with measurable or observable indicators of evidence of these outcomes.

The independent consultant designed questionnaires for certified library directors, certified library staff, and board presidents. The return rate was 74% for certified library directors, 71.6% for certified staff, and 75.9% for library board presidents. Library directors reported reasons for being certified as: public library accreditation requirement, job skill development, and professional commitment. One out of two librarians felt that customer service had improved as a result of certification and nine out of ten directors are planning to be recertified.

Certified library staff reported that the certification program helped them improve their library skills and two out of three reported a positive change in attitudes. Nearly three-quarters of the board presidents expected some changes because of the certification of the director. The primary change was a more knowledgeable and up-to-date director. Three out of four boards require the library director to be certified.

The questionnaires were designed to compare findings across all groups. When comparing the reasons for certification, the influence of the Library Commission is very clear, especially among directors and trustees. Increased knowledge and improved skills were the primary expectations from certification in all three groups. Benefits were seen in job performance, duties, opportunities, and attitudes toward library work. The biggest changes were in their own attitudes about work and in job performance.

Six focus groups were held across the state to gather information to supplement the findings from the questionnaires. Personal accomplishment was a perceived effect from certification. There were no reports of being unable to meet the 45 hour requirement for recertification, although participants reported barriers to attending workshops including time away from work, travel, and issues not related to their work. Focus group participants wanted an advanced level of

basic skills, better sequencing of courses, Web-based instruction as a supplement or lead-in to a basic skills course, and a "quick-start" class just for new directors. The value of attending workshops was "learning from each other" or the "informal learning." Technology needs were expressed although participants had difficulty defining specifics.

Nearly fifty percent of library directors had no suggestions for changing the certification program or Basic Skills courses. Ideas for improvements to the program included: always use an "onsite" instructor, offer a refresher course, and schedule the courses more frequently. The primary information desired was "more technology." Comments made about the use of videotapes as a course medium tended to be negative. Across all groups, the networking with other library workers is an important outcome of the basic skills courses.

The study concluded with a series of recommendations. The complete report along with the recommendations can be found on the Nebraska Library Commission home page at [www.nlc.state.ne.us](http://www.nlc.state.ne.us), search on continuing education evaluation.

Public Librarian Certification Program changes included:

- The implementation of a "provisional" certificate on January 1, 2001. For participants who apply to the program after that date, the Nebraska Library Commission will issue a one time, three-year Provisional Certificate. This certificate is provisional until the requirements of the certification program are met.
- The renewal application is no longer required. Once the requirements for re-certification are met, the Library Commission issues a renewed certificate, along with a copy of the participant's record. In January of each year, participants are notified if their accumulated CE hours are insufficient for renewal.
- No fees are charged to participate in the Public Librarian Certification program.
- The database that manages certification information is in need of re-design.

Library Board Certification Program changes included:

Participation in the certification of public library boards has dropped since the program started in 1992, with approximately 120 library boards currently certified. Program changes are designed to increase participation.

- Library board certification runs from October through September. This coincides with the time frame for public library accreditation. Renewal dates are checked and each board contacted near their renewal date.
- Certificates for library boards are sent to the library director, with copies mailed to board presidents.

**Goal 5: All Nebraskans will have access to library and information services including persons with diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds; with disabilities; with limited functional literacy or information skills; having difficulty using a library; representing underserved urban and rural communities (including children from families with incomes below the poverty line).**

**Sub Goal 5a: Provide Talking Book and Braille Service to qualified Nebraskans.**

LSTA-funded Activity: Nebraska Talking Book and Braille Service

According to Library of Congress estimates, 1.6% of Nebraskans, or 27,380 citizens are unable to use standard print material because of a visual, physical, or reading disability, and therefore would be eligible for Talking Book and Braille Service through the Nebraska Library Commission.

Nebraska's Talking Book and Braille Service is located in Lincoln and occupies 13,566 square feet, or 33 per cent of the total area of the NLC space. As shown in Table 20, \$759,497 in LSTA funds were allocated to support the Talking Book and Braille Service over the five-year evaluation period. This amount is approximately 28% of the total program cost. Twenty-six percent of NLC total staff, or 12 of 46 FTE is devoted to providing Talking Book and Braille services.

Table 20. Nebraska Talking Book and Braille Service Funding Sources

Fiscal Year	FTE	State Funds	LSTA Funds	Total Funds
<b>FY 1998</b>	12.5	\$ 363,785	\$ 135,372	\$ 499,157
<b>FY 1999</b>	12.5	\$ 408,265	\$ 140,643	\$ 548,908
<b>FY 2000</b>	12.0	\$ 394,136	\$ 171,403	\$ 565,539
<b>FY 2001</b>	12.0	\$ 398,190	\$ 155,933	\$ 554,123
<b>FY 2002*</b>	12.0	\$ 417,435	\$ 156,146	\$ 573,581
* estimated		<b>\$1,981,811</b>	<b>\$ 759,497</b>	<b>\$2,741,308</b>

*Accomplishments:*

The Talking Book and Braille Service served 3,437 individual borrowers and 297 deposit sites in 2001 (see Table 21), less than 13% of the potential customers in Nebraska which are estimated at 27,380. The number of registered borrowers has declined steadily over the evaluation period.

Table 21. Nebraska Talking Book and Braille Statistics

<b>TBBS Activities</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
<b>Circulation</b>				
Books and Braille formats	152,589	149,761	168,258	171,274
Magazines	41,086	40,370	20,682	*
Videos with audio descriptions	208	194	328	358
<b>Duplication</b>				
Cassettes	49,735	46,874	46,036	42,588
Magazines (Issues)	309	267	284	281
<b>Books Circulated through Utah State Library</b>	1,846	2,580	2,272	1,823
<b>Registered Borrowers</b>				
Individuals	4,197	4,065	3,819	3,437
Deposit Sites	424	408	346	297
<b>Studio Recording</b>				
Books	32	22	28	24
Magazines	*	*	154	153
<b>Volunteer Hours</b>				
Tape duplication	1,781	1,478	1,410	1,400
Studio work	1,730	1,831	1,834	1,720

\* data not available

TALKING BOOK AND BRAILLE CUSTOMERS' SUCCESS STORIES:

*In December of 1973, it was medically confirmed that (the borrower's) sight was diminishing. This sad event was her introduction to the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, which over the next 26 years would be her ticket to the captivating world of talking books. (The borrower) averaged 150 books a year and she would delight in casually giving you a wonderful synopsis of her latest adventure over a steaming cup of tea. – from deceased borrower's funeral program (1999)*

*First I want to thank you for your support for the past three years through the use of the cassette player and sending the talking books for my mother after her last stroke in early 1997. She enjoyed having the opportunity to listen to the books, and it brought her much enjoyment. She has now passed away, and I will be returning the cassette player so someone else can receive comfort from its use. Thank you very much for adding quality of life for my mother. It has meant a lot to receive your services.” (2000)*

*My mother passed away July 25. I am returning the machine and final tape. She enjoyed this program very much. It helped her pass the time when her eyesight prevented her from reading and watching television. . . . She missed her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday by five weeks. (2001)*

*Mother enjoyed talking books very much. It is a wonderful service for the visually impaired. (2002)*

#### TALKING BOOK AND BRAILLE OUTREACH PROJECT:

Beginning in August 2000, a *Talking Book Outreach Handbook* was offered to librarians and other advocates for Nebraskans with visual or physical impairment. The *Outreach Handbook* presented a basic overview of the Talking Book and Braille Service, as well as an explanation of who is eligible for the service and how they can apply. It was designed to serve as a guide for presentations in classes or meetings and as a reference to use when a person in the community experiences sight loss, stroke, or some other impairment that limits their ability to use regular print. To date, 581 handbooks have gone out upon request to: Churches (9); College and university libraries (40); Public libraries (273); Senior centers (81); Nursing homes (98); Service providers (53); Individuals (14); Educational Service Units (7); and Institutions (6).

For the twelve-month period from August 2000 through July 2001, distribution of the *Outreach Handbook* does not correlate with an increase in the number of new applications for service. From October 2001 through March 2002, the Talking Book and Braille Service participated in a "Take a Talking Book" multimedia outreach campaign for seniors, provided by the Library of Congress. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) were distributed to 102 radio and 17 television stations.

Another facet of the campaign was a mailing to all of Nebraska's 250 senior centers. Every senior center received a magnet, poster, and five brochures and application forms. A similar mailing targeted Nebraska optometrists and ophthalmologists. This mailing to 300 offices was completed in December 2001. Contents of the mailing included a poster, cover letter, six brochures, application forms, and a magnet.

A mailing also went out to approximately 165 Nebraska newspapers. This mailing consisted of a cover letter, press release, and a camera-ready PSA. In early 2002, packets including a cover letter, brochures and a magnet were sent to Nebraska pharmacies. This mailing was an experiment that developed from a meeting of the Talking Book and Braille Service Area Coordinators. In one month, packets were sent to approximately 175 pharmacies statewide. These mailings produced only a handful of responses and we chose not to continue contacting pharmacies.

An article about this statewide campaign, and about Talking Book and Braille services in Nebraska, was submitted to the Nebraska Health and Human Services/Aging and Disability Services, for use in its newsletter, *Older Nebraskan's Voice*. This publication is distributed widely to approximately 14,000 Nebraska seniors, but the mailing list also includes nutritional and health care professionals. The article was published as a full page in the Winter 2002 issue.

Radio and television stations and print media statewide have used the PSAs and press releases. Staff members have seen the PSA aired numerous times on Lincoln's KOLN / KGIN station that can be viewed throughout most of Nebraska. Borrowers and new contacts have reported seeing or hearing our PSA in Omaha and Scottsbluff/Gering.

On the Monday after Thanksgiving, a Library Commission staff member reported:

*Just wanted to let you know that on the way back from Colorado yesterday, I heard the Talking Book PSA 19 times. We changed stations several times and always managed to hear it. Sounds like the radio stations are doing a good job.*

When asked for more specifics, the staff member responded:

*It was both day and night. It was actually all across the state. I heard it first when we entered Nebraska at Big Springs, three times from there to Ogallala, a few near North Platte, several times around Grand Island and the rest of them from Grand Island to Lincoln. Feel free to share the good news.*

We have received various reports of newspaper coverage. Specific examples include *The Grand Island Independent*, *Omaha World-Herald*, and Kimball's *Western Nebraska Observer*, though we have indication that other papers carried the news release.

Table 22 compares the number of application received during the campaign with those received in the previous year. During the six-month period, from October 2001 through March 2002, 98 more applications were submitted than were received during the same timeframe the previous year.

Table 22. Nebraska Talking Book and Braille Outreach Campaign Data

	Number of Applications	
	2000	2001
October	61	71
November	58	64
December	41	48
January	68	72
February	50	102
March	49	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>425</b>

LSTA-funded Activity: Newslines

*Accomplishments and Lessons Learned:*

As of December 20, 1999, visually and physically impaired individuals who live anywhere in Nebraska could “read” *The Omaha World Herald* through Newslines, a service that uses phone lines to access newspapers through synthetic speech. Qualifying individuals with touch-tone telephones can call a toll-free number to select various sections of the paper. Other choices include *The Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *USA Today*. Newslines also offers a listing of phone numbers for other Newslines service centers across the United States to benefit subscribers while they are traveling. Three hundred Nebraskans subscribe to this free service. To subscribe, contact the Talking Book and Braille Service at 402-471-4038, 800-742-7691, e-mail: [readadv@nlc.state.ne.us](mailto:readadv@nlc.state.ne.us) or Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, 402-471-2891, 877-809-2419. Individuals who qualify for the Library Commission’s talking book service also qualify for Newslines.

## **Happy Fiftieth Anniversary Talking Book and Braille Service**

On January 1, 1952, the Nebraska Public Library Commission created a Division for the Blind to provide talking book service to visually impaired Nebraskans. That new division, now known as the Talking Book and Braille Service, began under the direction of Helen Dvoracek with a collection of four hundred titles. The new library circulated 454 books in February 1952. By July, the collection of 1,100 talking books, averaging twenty-two long-playing records per title, circulated to more than three hundred Nebraskans. A complete recording of the Bible required twelve boxes of records.

Nebraska became the twenty-eighth talking book library in the National Library Service/Library of Congress nationwide network of cooperating libraries.

Prior to this, visually impaired Nebraskans received service through a regional center at the Denver Public Library.

Today, with a collection of 49,000 titles, mostly on audio cassette, the Nebraska Library Commission’s Talking Book and Braille Service provides books and magazines on cassette and in Braille to more than 4,600 Nebraskans with visual or physical impairment. We look back with gratitude to the hard work and vision of scores of staff members (including Helen Dvoracek, Dorothy Lessenhop, and former Executive Secretary of the Nebraska Public Library Commission Louise Nixon) for the crucial role they played in the development of this service.

**Sub Goal 5b: Promote and support library and information services to non-English speaking Nebraskans and individuals with limited English speaking ability.**

LSTA-funded Activity:

Foreign Languages Project: build collections in Vietnamese, Arabic and Russian for adults & children; grant # 98.14 to Lincoln City Libraries (grant of \$4,687, local match \$1,562, total project cost \$6,249)

*Accomplishments:*

Lincoln City Libraries developed, produced and distributed a “Get to Know” your library brochure in Vietnamese, Arabic, Persian, and Russian languages. They purchased and catalogued materials for the circulating adult and youth collections in Vietnamese, Arabic, Persian, Russian, and Ukrainian languages.

*Lessons Learned:*

Developing relationships with community organizations serving immigrants and refugees in Lincoln was a vital link to make the program a success. In doing this, the library demonstrated its willingness to work with others to address community needs. ELS classes visit the library and students feel more welcome by the institution when they see the “Get to Know” your library brochure in their language.

The library materials purchased have seen varying rates of use. The Vietnamese materials were clearly the most popular and well-used. In Russian, classic works by Tolstoy and Solzhenitsyn have been popular, as have some of the children’s titles, such as *Thumbelina*. In Persian, Graham Greene, John LeCarre and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle titles have been popular, as has a book of Iranian short stories. In Arabic, picture books and Agatha Christie have been circulating.

It is difficult for the library to anticipate what materials will be most popular. Contact with the community organizations and the individuals who use the library is the best way to continue to add items to the library that readers will want to borrow.

LSTA-funded Activity:

Materials in Your Language: provide materials in Spanish and Lakotah to inmates of the correctional system; grant # 98.27 to the Nebraska Department of Corrections (grant of \$11,332, local match \$3,777, total project cost \$15,109)

*Accomplishments:*

The Department acquired fiction and nonfiction materials primarily in Spanish. Dictionaries and language tapes in Lakotah Sioux were purchased, as was a variety of English language materials about and/or by Native American people. The materials were distributed to the eight correctional facilities of the Department.

*Lessons Learned:*

Demand continues for materials in Spanish, and some have requested materials in Vietnamese. The librarians noted that the project has made clear the need to include materials for all inmates as a part of each library's collection management policy. It is difficult to add collections at a time when budgets are cut or remaining the same, but it is important the collection reflect the reading tastes of all inmates, to the best of the librarians' abilities.

LSTA-funded Activity:

Foreign Languages Project II: build a collection in Serbo-Croatian and provide English as a Second Language (ELS) materials for speakers of Serbo-Croatian; grant # 99.13 to Lincoln City Libraries (grant of \$4,687, local match \$1,562, total project cost \$6,249)

*Accomplishments:*

Lincoln City Libraries developed, produced and distributed a "Get to Know" your library brochure in Serbo-Croatian. They purchased and catalogued materials in Serbo-Croatian for the circulating collection and promoted these materials to the ESL programs at Southeast Community College and Lincoln Public Schools, and to Catholic Social Services, the lead community organization in assisting refugees from other countries in adapting to Lincoln.

*Lessons Learned:*

Again, a crucial link in this project was the communication with the ELS programs and with Catholic Social Services. These connections provided information on types of materials to purchase, how best to promote the library to the target group, and troubleshooting potential problems within the project. Materials purchased included several language dictionaries, a videotape in Serbo-Croatian about the Immigration and Naturalization Service Examination for U.S. citizenship, and 208 fiction and nonfiction titles in Serbo-Croatian.

LSTA-funded Activity:

We Speak Your Language: Aquí Hablamos Su Idioma Hay Materiales en Español ¡Pregúntenos!; grant # 00.27 to a partnership of Republican Valley Library System, Imperial Public Library and Perkins Library at Hastings College (grant of \$4,400, local match \$1,520, total project cost \$5,920)

*Accomplishments:*

The librarians worked together to develop a list of titles for adults and titles for children for the partnership to purchase. Staff at Perkins Library at Hastings College cataloged and processed the titles as they were received. The librarians agreed to house the collection at Imperial Public Library, as Imperial has seen a recent increase of Spanish-speaking individuals. The materials are available for loan to any public library within the system, and within the state.

A flyer in Spanish and one in English explaining the project was produced. A camera ready copy of each was made available to all libraries within the system through the newsletter. Also

included in the newsletter was an English version of the same flyer, and a list in English and Spanish of the materials available

Linda Garcia of Omaha Public Library, presented “Serving the Hispanic Population” on March 29, 2001 at McCook Public Library. She addressed why libraries should serve the Spanish speaking and discussed appropriate collection development and marketing approaches.

*Lessons Learned:*

It was efficient and economical to combine expertise for the purchase and cataloging of the collection. Materials are being checked out of the Imperial Public Library by local residents, but there has been little interlibrary loan activity for the Spanish language titles at this point. Even with the promotional materials libraries have not garnered much interest by Spanish speaking residents to request specific titles. A more successful approach may be to loan the materials as small bulk loans to libraries interested in learning the level of interest for these materials in their community. Having a selection of titles in Spanish at the library to explore may encourage people to ask if additional materials are available.

LSTA-funded Activity:

Technology for the Library’s Language Lab: purchase four computers and appropriate software; grant # 01.10 to Columbus Public Library (grant of \$8,916, local match \$2,972, total project cost \$11,888)

*Accomplishments:*

The library purchased four computers and appropriate software for the Library’s Language Lab to assist adult English-as-a-second-language persons in their efforts to become proficient in reading, speaking and writing in English. The library’s goal was to assist the one-on-one tutoring program with computer software that could be used as a part of a tutoring session, or as self-directed practice students could use on their own time.

*Lessons Learned:*

The program has been very successful. There are two to three people in the lab using the computers whenever it is open. The director noted that all four computers are not often in use at the same time, which is a positive sign they have enough to meet the existing need, and the future can always bring a greater need. He also stated it has been gratifying to see the changes in the ESL students. Two to three years ago they came to the library only for ESL tutoring. Now the families come into the library, attend programs and check out materials.

LSTA-funded Activity:

Multi-Lingual Access Program for Service: Grant # 02.10 to Crete Public Library (grant of \$1,146, local match \$537, total project cost \$1,683)

*Accomplishments:*

There are currently 17 languages, representing 17 nationalities, spoken at Farmland Foods, a major employer in the Crete area. Minorities in the Crete Elementary School, which were one percent a year ago, are currently at 29 percent. DVD (Digital Versatile Disk) technology provides movies and documentaries in up to eight audio languages and subtitles in 32 additional languages. This project will provide two DVD players and a variety of DVD documentaries and movies based on books.

*Lessons Learned:*

This project was just awarded in April 2002 and it is too early to know the outcomes.

**Sub Goal 5c: Develop, maintain, and support library services to children and young adults.**

*Accomplishments and Lessons Learned*

CHILDREN'S LIBRARIANS MAIL GROUP

[CHILDLIB-L@NLC.STATE.NE.US](mailto:CHILDLIB-L@NLC.STATE.NE.US) mailing list is a forum for Nebraska children's and young adult services librarians to share information and ideas. The discussion includes summer reading programs, book reviews and up-coming events and workshops for Nebraska's children's and young adult librarians. Membership has grown steadily each year. There are 72 participants currently.

*I really appreciate the opportunity to give input about Summer Reading art work before it is chosen and feel that my opinion counts. (Gering Public Library)*

*After September 11<sup>th</sup>, we answered questions and filled requests from the information about helping children cope with disaster that you posted on Child Lib. (Lincoln and Omaha Libraries)*

Continued mentoring of list members will increase participation and stimulate the exchange of information and discussions online.

CHILDREN'S GRANTS FOR EXCELLENCE

The Library Commission provides grant funds to libraries for innovative projects for children. This grant program is designed to encourage creative thinking, risk-taking and new approaches to address the problems and needs of children in your community. The projects should enable library staff to begin needed programs and try projects which you have been unable to undertake, to develop children's service capabilities in new and different directions. It is intended to provide a foundation for ongoing rather than one-time services, which can be continued with community support.

Funded projects have resulted in effective resource sharing and outreach to un-served and underserved youth. In response to changing community demographics, several projects were aimed at providing resources to meet the needs of Spanish-speaking children. Other projects targeted rural schools and low-income neighborhoods within communities.

*The materials for our collection were used much more heavily than anticipated. Even English-speaking children look at them (the Spanish materials) and ask what the Spanish words mean. It has been very helpful to be able to go to West Point (a neighboring community) and find new materials to meet the need we seem to have aroused. (Lyons Public Library)*

*It's been awesome to meet with the other librarians. We've found that we're seeing the same kind of kids and dealing with the same kinds of problems.*

*Thinking and coming up with solutions is really exciting. We're going to keep on meeting. (Battle Creek Public Library)*

In 1998, children's grants were federally funded. A total of \$13,810 was distributed to fifteen public libraries, with an average award of \$921. Projects include a daycare outreach, after school programming, reading projects for teens, and grants for the purchase of special materials for bilingual programming.

The children's grant program helps to highlight the work of children's and youth librarians throughout the state, to provide support for projects not otherwise feasible, and also serves to develop planning, budgeting and grant writing skills of children's librarians throughout the state.

Consistency in grant timing and internal record keeping will allow for analysis of this process, and encourage broad participation statewide. Future application criteria should emphasize cooperative arrangements as a high priority.

#### LIBRARIES OF PROMISE

The Nebraska Library Commission offers the challenge to libraries to sign a pledge to support Nebraska's youth by providing some aspect of the five resources most crucial to child development:

- Ongoing relationships with caring adults
- Safe places and structured activities during non-school hours
- Healthy minds and healthy bodies
- Lifelong learning in a variety of settings
- Opportunities to contribute to the community through volunteer or community service

This campaign was designed to help youth librarians realize their potential to influence youth in their community. Almost 90 public libraries currently participate in this campaign, and display a Library of Promise decal in their library. Many librarians share stories of how they implement the Promise, as well as how community members have responded.

*Parents see the decal on the library door and ask what it means. I explain that it means the library give children a safe place to come to and chances to learn something, and helps them grow up strong and healthy.*

Librarians need encouragement to share their experiences with this program, both personally and on the Library Commission Web site. A press kit is being developed to assist librarians in publicizing this project within their own communities.

#### SUMMER READING PROGRAM

In 1997, the Library Commission joined the Cooperative Summer Library Program (CLSP), which currently consists of fourteen states. This cooperative effort has allowed Nebraska librarians to acquire quality Summer Reading materials at lower prices, choose from a wider

range of selections, participate in a broader sharing of creative ideas, and spend less time planning and implementing this annual program.

*I really appreciate the [Summer Reading] manual. I have the Summer Reading Manuals back to 1986. I keep them in a file and use them constantly. (Bennington Public Library)*

#### SERVICE LEARNING

Service Learning is a method of teaching and learning that engages students of all ages in solving problems and addressing issues in their school, public library, or greater community. Public librarians across Nebraska will pilot a Service Learning project, sponsored by the Nebraska Library Commission and the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UN-L). This project is funded through a grant from the Nebraska Volunteer Commission. Additional funding is expected from the Barbara Bush Literacy Foundation.

Participating public libraries have designed projects to involve service learners in their library programs. Children's services staff continue to make presentations to America Reads groups, literacy volunteers and teachers, explaining the public library's role in nurturing literacy. The Service Learning activities are being implemented in conjunction with the Libraries of Promise campaign.

#### TELECONFERENCE DISCUSSIONS

A series of videoconference discussions were held for children's and young adult librarians. Attendance increased from an average of 35 for the first sessions, to nearly 80 participants at twelve sites statewide, for the final session of the first year. Based on these numbers, the Youth Advisory Board recommended that these discussions continue for another year, and identified specific topics to be covered during that year.

*Thanks for another worthwhile program. As always, I learned some things I can use! (Ainsworth Public Library)*

*We're glad you're having more of these conferences. We really enjoy them. (Scottsbluff Public Library)*

Challenges in this program are operating the videoconference equipment at each site, distributing program materials in a timely manner, and encouraging broader participation.

#### CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEWS

This is a semi-annual activity coordinated by the Library Commission. Its main goal is to inform Nebraska's children and young adult librarians about children's literature so they can make better purchasing decisions for their collections. The reviews help librarians to:

- Hear about the best of current children's literature
- Become more systematic in developing children's book collections

- Become proactive in requesting budget allocations to fit collection needs

A grant of over \$8,000 was received from the Nebraska Information Technology Commission's State Government Council for the purpose of making the recorded book reviews available on the Library Commission's Web site. Library Commission staff is working with staff at Nebraska Educational Television to determine appropriate format and accessibility requirements. The book reviews continue to be a popular resource with children's librarians statewide and are routinely requested by children's services staff from neighboring states.

*I also watched the Fall Book Reviews over Thanksgiving. A big thank you to all of you for the book information. It's so very helpful – and always exciting to discover new titles that are just what your kids and teachers need! (Gordon Public Schools)*

*Please send me a set of your Fall Children's and Young Adult Book Reviews. I will be using them again for a workshop in the spring. My children's librarians love them. (Iowa State Library)*