5.0 BRIEF REVIEW OF EVALUATION PROCESS

"The LSTA grant program is crucial for the development of public libraries in Florida."—Library Director

5.1 *Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA)*

The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) is a federal grant program for libraries, and was passed September 30, 1996. Administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), it:

- is a state-based program;

- has purposes that focus on information access through technology and information empowerment through special services;

- emphasizes public libraries, but encourages interlibrary cooperation and partnerships among all types of libraries;

- increases emphasis on accountability and evaluation; and

- is authorized under Public Law 104-208, as amended.

The two primary purposes outlined in the LSTA are:

- enhancing electronic linkages among libraries and promoting resource sharing; and

- targeting services to persons who have difficulty using a library and to underserved urban and rural communities.

5.2 *Background*

The IMLS encourages state library agencies to measure the impact that statewide and local LSTA projects have on the people they serve. In 1998, IMLS sought participation of state library agencies in a pilot project that would examine the effects of applying an outcomes based measurement approach to the evaluation of projects

funded under LSTA. Florida was one of five states selected to participate in the pilot approach.

In January 2001, the Division issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to find an independent evaluator for Florida's federally funded Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant program. The evaluation results will be used to meet the requirements of the LSTA by IMLS, and used by the Division to show the impact of funded programs. The results will also be used to improve future programs, policies, and procedures.

Although IMLS desired the states' LSTA evaluation to reflect outcomes-based planning, and it was the Division's intention to do this, it was not possible with the data that are currently available. LSTA grants awarded for 2001–2002 represent the first year that Florida's grant recipients are required to use the outcomes-based model developed by the Division in conjunction with an outside consultant. Nonetheless, some of the questions included on the evaluation instruments and asked during interviews were designed to solicit feedback about the impact librarians receiving LSTA grants and their customers experienced.

5.3   Methodology

To complete this evaluation, the Division created two distinct objectives. The first objective was to examine the extent to which the goals and objectives of the Division's five-year plan, _Access for All: Libraries in Florida's Future_, have been achieved.

The second objective was to conduct an in-depth evaluation of two selected programs that served as focal points for grant awards. The first of these in-depth evaluations assesses FloriNet and grants awarded through that program that are designed to implement or enhance the:

- infrastructure that supports libraries;
- interconnectivity between libraries;
- training in the use of technology; and
- relevant content available on the Internet.

The second evaluation will assess the effectiveness of the literacy program. Literacy services include grants with a focus on three separate areas that sometimes overlap. These areas are adult literacy, family literacy, and the Born to Read program.

5.4 Evaluation Approach

In order to complete the requirements of the LSTA grant evaluation successfully, MGT met with appropriate Division staff members to develop the basic evaluation approach and agreed upon the specific tasks to be completed. Four primary components were selected:

- Evaluation Design
- Data and Information Collection
- Data and Information Analysis
- Report Generation

The following sections detail each of the components and the activities associated with them.

5.5 Evaluation Design

The tasks associated with the evaluation design include:

- reviewing customer expectations;
- identifying specific tasks;
- reviewing background information; and
- designing evaluation approach.

A final Evaluation Design was delivered to the Division in late February, and the design detailed each of the primary components for the evaluation as described in this chapter.

5.6   *Data and Information Collection*

This evaluation incorporated several different data collection techniques. These included surveys and questionnaires, interviews, and documentation review.

5.6.1   *Surveys and Questionnaires*

Working with the Division, MGT developed a survey instrument and a questionnaire. Survey instruments were created for library directors and staff, and collected information relating to the overall grant program and the FloriNet and literacy programs. Questionnaires were designed for library directors and multitype library cooperative directors. Like the survey, this instrument gathered information from the director's perspective on the grant program and the FloriNet and literacy programs. The survey and questionnaire were designed to solicit information about the impact of LSTA funding on libraries and their customers.

Surveys and questionnaires were distributed in paper form to library directors and their staffs in mid-March, and were to be returned to MGT by April 13, 2001. To assist stakeholders with completing the survey, an on-line Internet version was made available.

5.6.2   *Interviews and Visits*

In addition to data collected from the library directors and multitype library cooperative directors, MGT conducted interviews with the appropriate Division staff. The interviews addressed the Division's perspective on their performance administering the grant program and the FloriNet and literacy programs.   All levels of staff were interviewed over a period from February 2 through May 15, 2001.   Interviewees included:

- Mr. Barratt Wilkins, Division Director;

- Ms. Lorraine Summers, Assistant Division Director;

- Ms. Loretta Flowers, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Library Development;

- Ms. Marian Deeney, Library Program Administrator;

- Ms. Amy Johnson, Library Program Specialist;

- Ms. Sheila Griffin, Communications Coordinator;

- Ms. Sondra Taylor-Furbee, Library Program Specialist;

- Mr. Charlie Parker, Library Program Specialist;

- Ms. Carole Fiore, Library Program Specialist; Born To Read Program;

- Ms. Sandy Newell, Library Program Specialist; Adult and Family Literacy;

- Ms. Debra Sears, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Library and Network Services;

- Mr. Mark Flynn, Library Program Specialist;

- Mr. Dan Lhotka, Library Program Specialist; and

- Ms. Cherie McCraw, Operations and Management Consultant II and Project Manager.

The major objectives of the interviews were to:

- understand the role performed by the Division for libraries;

- gain insight into the internal workflow and mode of operation within the Division;

- match the Division's activities against their stated objectives in "Access for All: Libraries in Florida's Future";

- understand the Division's activities for the special programs FloriNet and Literacy (Adult and Family);

- understand the LSTA grant funds administration process from application through the final report;

- gain insight into the changes the Division has incorporated to meet the changing needs of the customer base and environment; and

- get a personal view of how effectively the plan and special programs have been implemented.

Mr. Wilkins and Ms. Summers covered the role played by the Division in library advocacy within the state and at the national level. These interviews also contained discussions regarding how information is disseminated from the Division to libraries and multitype library cooperatives keeping them abreast of new policies, funding, trends, and other pertinent topics.

The interview with Ms. Flowers concerned the process for identifying the critical issues mandated by the long-range plan. This interview resulted in an understanding of the 11 critical issues and Division plans and activities to address the issues.

Ms. Deeney discussed the process the Division uses to develop grant applications annually and the evaluation and award processes that place LSTA funds in libraries and cooperatives. This interview also covered some of the reporting requirements awarded grants are responsible for to the Division.

Mr. Parker talked about the Division's role in developing and assisting with the development of policies for access to technology and appropriate usage of the resource for libraries and the public.

The interview with Ms. Fiore regarded the Born to Read program. The interview provided an understanding of the history of the program, the progress seen over the years, and several issues such as funding and local community coordination that face the program around the state.

Ms. Newell discussed the Division's efforts in adult and family literacy programs. This interview provided an understanding of the Division's efforts with workshops to develop literacy programs.

Ms. Sears' interview was about the State Library and the Florida Government Information Locator Service (FGILS). This interview provided an understanding of the history, growth, and success of the FGILS program.

The interviews with Mr. Lhotka and Mr. Flynn dealt with the FloriNet program. The interviews added a historical perspective and understanding of the program to the documentation concerning FloriNet.

Ms. Griffin's interview concerned the marketing strategies and efforts for the Division. Information was shared regarding the various efforts the Division undertook to support programs statewide; assist with library advocacy at local, state, and national levels; and promote increased library usage.

Site visits were conducted in four libraries to develop an understanding of and experience firsthand programs that were representative of the two areas chosen for the in-depth analysis. The four sites visited were:

- Columbia County Public Library;
- Suwannee River Regional Library Headquarters;
- White Springs Public Library; and
- Madison County Library.

Each visit included an interview with the director or head librarian and a tour of the facility.

5.6.3 _Review All Pertinent Documentation_

In addition to surveys, questionnaires, and interviews, MGT reviewed the annual reports submitted to the Division by each grant recipient for fiscal years 1997–1998 through 1999–2000.[1] Additionally, the review of documentation encompassed information on programs administered by the Division and the results of annual surveys distributed by the Division. Such data included documents published by, or on behalf of the Division, data collected from the Division's annual statistical and customer satisfaction surveys distributed to libraries across the state, and the Division's contact

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[1] At the time of this report, grants for fiscal year 2000-2001 were still in progress, and were unavailable for review.

log.   MGT reviewed documentation throughout the course of this evaluation, while grant files were reviewed from mid-March to mid-April.

5.7   *Data and Information Analysis*

Information collected through the different data collection techniques was reviewed and analyzed to address the LSTA grant program and the special programs selected for in-depth evaluation, FloriNet and literacy.   Analysis was conducted throughout the course of the project, and the data are summarized in this report.

5.8   *Report Generation*

After all the data were collected and analyzed, MGT developed a draft evaluation report containing its findings relating to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the five-year plan, and the results of the in-depth evaluations of the FloriNet and literacy programs.   In addition to findings, the report provided commendations for outstanding accomplishments and recommendations for improvement.

The draft report was submitted to the Division of Library and Information Services on May 31, 2001, for the purpose of review for omissions, corrections, and clarifications. Once the division provided feedback, MGT finalized the report by incorporating changes as necessary. The final report was delivered to the Division in July 2001.