

COLORADO STATE LIBRARY

Program Audit 2001

Overview of Process and Findings

This document contains a brief description of the process used to complete a program audit report requested by the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget. To ensure objective analysis, the State Library hired an independent research consultant, Dr. Augusto Diana, to assist in the completion of the audit. Dr. Diana consulted on the processes described herein.

Audit Process

The State Library audit process began with the convening of an advisory team of key representatives knowledgeable about State Library services. The group included representatives from all of the individual projects to be audited, three independent library specialists, key CDE management staff (Nancy Bolt, Jim Schubert), and a CDE Budget Office representative (Grace Sprik). Finally, an independent research consultant, Dr. Augusto Diana, was involved to help build the process, and to serve as an outside, objective feedback source.

The audit advisory team met monthly beginning shortly after the first of the year (January, 2001), and met for roughly 5 months. The research consultant was asked to review relevant literature on performing audits, and to provide a summary for the group of methodological options for the group to review.

Several key agreements emerged out of the audit advisory team. First, a common methodology, known as Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA), would be utilized by all individual projects. MCA is an approach that includes four basic components:

- A listing of alternative strategies for delivering the project services
- An agreed-upon set of criteria, or dimensions, on which to rate the strategies
- A scoring rubric to ensure consistent measurement of the criteria and strategies
- An assessment of alternative, including scores and justification for ratings

MCA was believed to be the most feasible methodology given its compatibility with the individual projects to be included in the audit, and the limited time frame. Projects could supplement MCA with additional methodologies, as needed. Audit reports would also contain consistent font and page formats, and would utilize a common report template.

In addition to the four components listed above, the audit report template contained guiding information about each section of the report. The goal of the written tools, as well as the audit advisory team meetings, was to ensure consistency in the reporting of information so that a well-informed decision was made in each case.

Other safeguards were built into the process. State Library staff and the independent research consultant hired to help with the audit interviewed all project leads to determine their basic service components and any evaluation of their services. In addition, these interviews served to prepare project leads for the type of information the audit would seek from them in their later reporting. The results of the interviews were used to construct the final audit reporting guidelines.

Another safeguard was the creation of an independent client group to review and provide feedback on drafts of the individual audit reports produced by project leads. This group included library specialists and the audit independent research consultant. In addition, the State Librarian reviewed and provided feedback on the preliminary audit reports. Beyond the general content of the reports, the client group assessed the rating scores assigned by project leads to the criteria in the MCA, to ensure fairness in the rating of alternatives. The feedback of the client group was then provided to project leads prior to final completion of their audit reports.

The last precaution taken by the advisory team to maximize objectivity in the final audit reports was a final review of all reports by the audit's independent research consultant. A purpose of this report is to summarize the findings across all the individual project audit reports. By housing this responsibility in Dr. Diana, an objective assessment of the reports is enhanced.

Summary of Key Features of the Audit Report Template

This brief summary outlines comparable areas of five sections of the individual audit reports included in this overall report. This summary is meant only to provide an overview, or quick picture, of some of the key measurement dimensions of the individual audit reports. The first important component of the individual audit reports was the identification of the need being addressed. The table below summarizes the needs across the project reports.

Table 1: Summary of Needs across Individual Audit Project Reports	
<i>Need named*</i>	<i># reports w need</i>
Student academic achievement	8 (80.0%)
Professional development of teachers/administrators	7 (70.0%)
Informed state-level decisions/Enhanced learning by officials	4 (40.0%)
Resource sharing	4 (40.0%)
Archiving of historical information	4 (40.0%)
Attention to best practices	3 (30.0%)
Economic need, limited availability of resources	3 (30.0%)
Adult academic achievement (including inmates)	2 (28.6%)
Print-disabled development and circulations	1 (14.3%)
Adult life skills	1 (14.3%)
Public safety	1 (14.3%)

Table 1 shows that a wide variety of needs are addressed by State Library projects. The highest percentage of projects address academic achievement. Combining student and adult services, 8 of 10 projects included in the table address this need. Next highest is the need for learning by those responsible for academic achievement. Professional development to teachers and others to promote better learning by students is addressed by 7 of the 10 projects. The next several needs are addressed by 4 of the 10, and these are projects to provide better quality information to state-level officials who make important decisions about library and other services provided in the state.

The second important component briefly analyzed below assesses the current and proposed delivery of service models to address these needs. The table below provides a summary of the ratings of proposed service models and the average score for all alternatives, by the criteria of the Multi-Criteria Analysis tables in the individual reports.

Table 2: Rating Scores of Project Alternative, by MCA Criteria*		
<i>Criteria</i>	Proposed Project	Alternatives
Authority of Programs and Statutes	3.57	2.71
Access to Services	3.86	2.12
Quality of Services	3.86	2.18
Client Satisfaction	4.00	2.29
Efficiency of Services	3.71	2.35
Total Scores	19.00	11.65

* Score range is from 1 to 4 on each dimension. Total of 7 projects and 17 Alternatives included in #s.

As Table 2 shows, there are striking differences between the projects that are proposed to deliver services in the individual audit reports and the alternatives available to deliver those same services. Some of this is to be expected, given that projects were rating their service models in comparison to others they did not prefer. Still, the safeguards built into the process helped to ensure that ratings were fair. Outside review of the draft audit reports frequently recommended modifications to scores so that any apparent inflation of the selected service model was avoided. Finally, many projects proposed modified service models and rated the new model in relation to current or past services. This is important because it suggests that project leads who were assessing the alternatives in the MCA took into consideration other ways the services had, in fact, already been offered.

Reviewing the data in Table 2, then, in all cases, the proposed projects score at or close to the maximum achievable level from the rubrics (a score of 4), and the total across the 5 criteria in the MCA is only 1 point lower than the maximum (19 of 20 possible points). The fact that the average score was not 20 indicates that projects did provide lower than “perfect” ratings in a number of cases. The alternatives, meanwhile, are seen as much less able to fulfill the state’s needs. In fact, the total score across all the criteria when averaging the scores for all listed alternatives is almost half that of the proposed project. The average scores are typically close to 2 on the scoring rubrics for each of the MCA criteria, or very close to not addressing the need at all.

Looking more closely at each alternative within the individual audit reports, in very few cases would even a single alternative satisfy most of the criteria in comparable ways. If the proposed project can deliver its services and address the public needs it claims to do in these reports, the state will be best served by funding these projects.

Summary of Program Audit Survey Key Findings

Toward the end of the most recent service year, State Library projects were surveyed to assess satisfaction with library services. The survey was administered to a random sample of clients of service delivered by these projects. The survey had a very high response rate (nearly 80% overall) as shown below.¹ High response rates tend to increase representativeness of the resulting data, giving more confidence in the findings.

Client Satisfaction Survey Response Rates		
<i>Survey Sub-Group</i>	# Surveys Distributed	Response Rate
Public Libraries	118	84%
Academic Libraries	43	67%
School District Libraries	176	77%
Total Scores	337	78%

The client satisfaction survey focused on two dimensions of State Library services. First was the degree to which services had been utilized by those surveyed. Second was the degree to which those who had used services rated those services as high quality. Given the extensiveness of the data, this report does not include the service utilization rates. The results discussed briefly below, instead, reflect client ratings of “Good” or “Excellent” quality service across many dimensions of many services of State Library projects.

Overall, the findings in the tables below show very positive ratings of State Library services. These high ratings appear consistently across virtually every dimension of virtually every library service. In the vast majority of cases, the percentages of respondents choosing Good or Excellent was at least three-fourths of all those rating the dimension. There was remarkably little variation by general category of service (e.g. Regional Library Systems or Colorado Resource Center) and by type of library (e.g. Academic, Public or School).

The following tables aim to summarize the data in an abbreviated form. The first three tables show the results across each of the general dimensions for Academic, Public and School Libraries, respectively. The next two tables show the findings for Regional Library Service and the Colorado Resource Center services.

¹ Special thanks to Keith Curry Lance and Louise Conner for their high quality and last-minute work in producing the survey and the summary tables.

Table 3: Percent of Academic Library Survey Respondents Choosing Good or Excellent*					
Unit/Program & Service	Time- liness	Use- fulness	Quantity	Quality	Impact
CO Talking Book Library (CTBL)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Communications	100.0	75.0	100.0	100.0	50.0
Library Development Unit (LDU)	100.0	0	0	100.0	0
Library Research Service (LRS)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	50.0
Networking & Resource Sharing (NRS)	100.0	0	0	100.0	0
State Publications Library (SPL)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

***Timeliness** = currency of information provided and/or the speed of its delivery;
Usefulness = appropriateness and applicability of the service or information to the intended purpose; **Quantity** = amount of information provided or the frequency with which it is delivered; **Quality** = perceived accuracy and completeness of the information provided and/or the attractiveness and effectiveness of its presentation; **Impact** = your perception of the service's value in addressing patron requests or organizational needs.

Table 4: Percent of Public Library Survey Respondents Choosing Good or Excellent					
Unit/Program & Service	Time- liness	Use- fulness	Quantity	Quality	Impact
CO Talking Book Library (CTBL)	100.0	100.0	91.7	91.7	100.0
Communications	92.9	100.0	92.3	100.0	85.7
Library Development Unit (LDU)	100.0	100.0	90.0	100.0	100.0
Library Research Service (LRS)	92.3	92.3	90.9	92.3	92.3
Networking & Resource Sharing (NRS)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
State Publications Library (SPL)	72.7	50.0	55.6	80.0	60.0
County Equalization grants	93.3	86.7	78.6	85.7	93.3
Technology and E-rate assistance	100.0	95.5	90.9	95.5	95.5
Library law interpretation	82.6	78.3	70.0	86.4	78.3
Public Library Standards	84.0	84.0	81.8	83.3	84.0
Summer Reading Program	83.3	83.3	86.4	87.0	82.6
Trustee training and consulting	70.6	88.2	68.8	82.4	76.5

Table 5: Percent of School Library Survey Respondents Choosing Good or Excellent					
Unit/Program & Service	Time- liness	Use- fulness	Quantity	Quality	Impact
CO Talking Book Library (CTBL)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Communications	90.9	95.2	90.0	100.0	90.5
Library Development Unit (LDU)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Library Research Service (LRS)	93.8	93.3	92.9	93.3	93.3
Networking & Resource Sharing (NRS)	94.7	94.4	88.2	88.9	94.4
State Publications Library (SPL)	75.0	75.0	75.0	75.0	75.0
"CO2" school library impact study	100.0	92.3	100.0	96.2	84.6
CSAP-related consulting	95.0	90.0	100.0	100.0	95.0
Information Literacy Guidelines	100.0	94.3	91.2	91.4	88.6

Tables 3 through 5 above provide a synopsis of the striking findings mentioned above, for general Colorado State Library Services. In no cases did less than half the respondents choose Good or Excellent, and in almost every case, at least 75% of respondents did so. Several categories were rated as Good Or Excellent by 100% of the survey respondents. The next set of tables shows the same patterns of satisfaction for Regional Library Service Systems (RLSS) and Denver Public Library (DPL) Colorado Resource Center.

Table 6a: Percent of RLSS Public Library Survey Respondents Choosing Good or Excellent					
Service	Timeliness	Usefulness	Quantity	Quality	Impact
General support	90.9	91.3	86.4	95.5	86.4
Consulting services	75.0	75.0	80.0	83.3	75.0
Collections & technical services	92.3	83.3	72.7	81.8	81.8
Continuing education	83.3	92.3	81.8	91.7	83.3
Networking & resource sharing	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 6b: Percent of RLSS School Library Survey Respondents Choosing Good or Excellent					
Service	Timeliness	Usefulness	Quantity	Quality	Impact
General support	95.7	95.7	95.5	95.5	95.5
Consulting services	86.7	86.7	76.9	85.7	85.7
Collections & technical services	77.8	81.8	80.0	80.0	80.0
Continuing education	81.8	81.8	90.0	80.0	80.0
Networking & resource sharing	85.7	85.7	83.3	83.3	83.3

Table 7: Percent DPL Colorado Resource Center Survey Respondents Choosing Good/Excellent					
Service	Timeliness	Usefulness	Quantity	Quality	Impact
Interlibrary loan service	95.7	97.0	93.8	98.5	94.0
No stop service	83.3	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Answer reference questions for libraries	100.0	100.0	98.2	100.0	98.2
Training by Denver Public Library	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	91.7

As Tables 6 and 7 show, independent of the source of the service delivery, the same pattern of findings holds. One last set of tables, provided below, offers further evidence of effectiveness of CDE Library Services projects. These tables show the percentage of survey respondents identifying the contribution of Colorado State Library Services to student achievement.

Table 8a: Percent of survey respondents identifying a contribution of Colorado State Library services to academic achievement of Colorado students			
Type of Service	Type of Library		
	Academic	Public	School
ACLIN/Colorado Virtual Library (CVL)	100.0	95.8	94.7
“CO2” school library impact study	100.0	75.0	88.5
Continuing education scholarships	80.0	90.9	81.8
CVL for Kids	0	93.3	92.3
Deposit collections from CO Talking Book Library	100.0	87.5	71.4
Diversity Tool Kit	66.7	90.0	62.5
FAST FACTS on the status of CO LM programs	100.0	86.7	83.3
National Library Week promotion	85.7	61.9	76.3
Online database licensing (FirstSearch, Gale Group)	100.0	100.0	80.3
State Funding for Libraries	88.9	100.0	89.5

As Table 8a shows, very high percentages of survey respondents saw a contribution of Colorado State Library services to student achievement. Once again, there is very little variation by type of library, or type of service. Table 8b below shows the same pattern of findings.

Table 8b: Percent of survey respondents identifying a contribution of RLSS services to academic achievement of Colorado students		
Type of Service	Type of Library	
	Public	School
ACLIN/Colorado Virtual Library (CVL)	94.4	89.7
“CO2” school library impact study	82.4	90.3
Continuing education scholarships	91.7	77.4
CVL for Kids	100.0	70.0
Deposit collections from CO Talking Book Library	76.9	83.3
Diversity Tool Kit	88.9	88.2
FAST FACTS on the status of CO LM programs	80.0	79.3
National Library Week promotion	83.3	87.9
Online database licensing (FirstSearch, Gale Group)	83.3	68.8
State Funding for Libraries	100.0	85.7

Conclusion

The findings above are consistent in their support for the quality of State Library projects. Ratings by project directors suggest a high degree of quality, as do ratings by clients of the services promoted by these directors.

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