Narrative

Cultivating Rural Librarians' Technology Skills
2010 IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program

Assessment of Need

The Nebraska landscape is dominated by vast, remote, sparsely populated rural areas, containing about 42% of the state's nearly 1.8 million residents but spread over 94% of the land area. Of the 93 counties in the state, 84 have been identified as non-metropolitan[1] under the "core-based statistical area" system used by the Office of Management and Budget.[2] Within these rural counties there are 209 public libraries, or about 77% of Nebraska's 272 public libraries. Over 60% of these rural libraries (128) serve towns or villages with fewer than 1,000 residents.[3] Typically, even the smallest of these libraries strives to provide access to computers and the Internet for their communities. In many instances, these libraries serve as the sole source of free Internet access for their citizens.

While most of these small communities do not have sufficient financial resources to support an MLS-educated librarian, they still need well-trained personnel in their libraries who are capable of meeting the information needs of the residents. And, since reliable access to Internet-based resources is especially important in isolated areas, the small town librarian must also possess the skills to assist customers with computer technology and maintain the computer/network equipment.

Assessment of the landscape of librarianship in Nebraska highlights two primary needs:

Need 1: Formal Education

"The staff is key to the success of the library: cultivate our staff."[4]

As *Museums, Libraries, and 21st Century Skills* states, "The need to enhance 21st century skills is a compelling national imperative. Built on a foundation of deep content mastery, these skills are the new workforce requirements for maintaining U.S. global competitiveness and ensuring each person's personal and professional success….[L]ibraries offer rich and authentic content, dedicated and knowledgeable staff with deep expertise…which invite and support effective learning."[5] The first goal in the Nebraska Library Commission's (NLC) *Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Plan 2008-2012* asserts: "All Nebraskans will have improved access to enhanced library and information services, provided and facilitated by qualified library personnel, boards, and supporters with the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes necessary to provide excellent library and information services."[6]

Nearly 9 in 10 (88.2%) of public libraries in Nebraska serve communities of fewer than 5,000.[3] In most cases, these libraries' personnel are part-time, undereducated, poorly paid, and do not receive benefits.[3] Of the 212 public library directors participating in the state librarian certification program (http://www.nlc.state.ne.us/libdev/ce/libcert.html), 55% do not have a college degree although some have earned college credits.[7]

For 2006–2016, 86 openings, on average, are projected in Nebraska on an annual basis for "library technicians" (requiring an associate degree) and "library assistants, clerical" (requiring a high school diploma or GED), with about 13% of those being new positions as a result of growth, and the remaining 87% being replacements.[8]

According to a U.S. Department of Education survey, 61% of library media centers in the United States are staffed by full-time, paid, state-certified library media specialists, but the statistic for Nebraska is 46%. Of those media specialists, 69.4% nationally have at least a master's degree, while only 60.5% of Nebraska media specialists do.[9] In Nebraska schools serving fewer than 250 students, one certified media specialist may be in charge of as many as five schools, with only a paraprofessional staffing the media centers on at least a half –time basis.[10]

As author Manda Luchs says, "Librarianship in rural areas today is in a state of crisis" and the "single-most important factor" contributing to libraries' lack of funding and resources is the "lack of education of the rural librarian."[11] To address the lack of library science backgrounds in rural library staff, a program has been developed through the Nebraska community college system. Refined over the past several years, the Library and Information Science (LIS) program

(http://www.cccneb.edu/LIS) is an organized, pedagogically-sound set of online courses that provides students with the theoretical basis for and practice in 21st century skills. Without skilled staff, rural libraries may find it difficult to sustain their positions as viable anchor institutions in their communities. For our rural librarians who have time, travel, and budget restrictions, this program removes barriers to receiving training. One student in the LIS Foundations class reported:

> "I am currently employed at the Sidney Public Library and have enjoyed it so much I wanted to make it a career not just a part time job. Right now I am working towards the LIS certificate and will continue towards the AA."[12]

The LIS coursework can stand alone or be used as the first step on a continuum to higher education. The previous 21st Century Librarian grant program awarded 24 scholarships to 20 students in Library Technical Assistant (now LIS) programs and 16 scholarships to 11 students in bachelor's degree programs in library studies. One preprofessional scholarship recipient went on to pursue her bachelor's degree. One bachelor's scholarship recipient went on to pursue her master's degree. Both received scholarships at the next levels.

It is also important to recruit the next generation of librarians and to provide practice in library work to current students. Our past internship programs have been highly successful, with 65 grants to libraries awarded over four years. Responses from previous interns who went on to become paid library employees included:

> "There is a lot more work involved in being a librarian than I expected. You also have to be a very big people person. You are always communicating and helping others during the job." —*High-school age student intern*
> "What did I like most about being an intern at the library? Being able to experience what a librarian does. I'm using all the great knowledge as a school library media specialist." —*College-age student intern*[13]

Need 2: Maintaining, Enhancing and Growing Technology Services

If rural communities are to survive in the 21st century, they must adopt sophisticated use of technology resources. "Rural community leaders are knowledgeable about their communities beyond the information base available in the community. In an increasing number of places, high-speed Internet access is revolutionizing all types of information access. Today, the applications are so widespread … that the capacity of small towns to make use of these resources seems to be a strong indicator of success."[14] Nebraska librarians who assume the role of community leaders and keep up with technology can position their libraries to assure that their services remain vital to these small communities.

Nationally, 71.4% of libraries are their communities' only source for free computer and Internet access, a number that increases to 78.6% for rural libraries.[15] In Nebraska, rural libraries answer the call for free computer and Internet access. All but eight of the reporting 189 libraries (95.8%) in rural counties provide free access to computers with Internet. And, while libraries in urban counties reported nearly 1.5 million annual users of public Internet computers in 2008, libraries in rural counties served yet another 1 million. Access to public Internet computers is in higher demand in Nebraska's rural libraries than in urban libraries. Of the reporting libraries in 2008, libraries in rural counties counted an average 2.40 annual users of public Internet computers per capita, compared to an average 1.52 in libraries in urban counties.[3]

In the wake of the recent economic downturn, the percentage of people turning to their local public libraries for free computer and Internet access has jumped dramatically. Libraries across the nation provide critical access to government information, computer and Internet skill training, and online services for job seekers.[16] Nationally, while a higher percentage of urban libraries provide computer and Internet skills training (49.9% compared to 31.9% of rural libraries), a higher percentage of rural libraries provide online access to government information (60.1% compared to 47.9% of urban libraries).[17] These data suggest that people in smaller communities turn to their libraries for online access because they do not have it at home or require more assistance and that smaller libraries have room for growth in services.

Nebraska's rural libraries are addressing technology infrastructure issues with new hardware and advocacy training in 37 libraries through a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Opportunity Online Hardware grant. Yet, "many libraries continue to face challenges in maintaining and enhancing their public access technology environment in spite of upgrades to their technology infrastructure."[15] Indeed, the challenge to have library staff with the skills to maintain, enhance and grow technology services remains. "Nebraska libraries have made significant strides in acquiring and implementing information technology. However, there remain large gaps between needed technology resources (hardware, software, online content, telecommunications, training, and support) and access to those resources." [6]

Many of Nebraska's small and rural libraries illustrate the national trend that "public libraries rely on non-technical staff to support their public access computers and Internet access. This is particularly true for rural public libraries. In fact, in nearly half of rural public libraries (47.2 percent) it is the library director who provides IT support, compared to 72.2 percent of urban libraries that report IT support provided by system-level IT staff."[15] According to one Nebraska library director whose library serves a population of 1,100, "We have a local independent computer technician who comes in and does major troubleshooting for us. I try to handle most of the troubleshooting, installing, and updating myself as our budget does not allow us to pay a professional for all of the things that may need to be done. Most of my IT experience comes from what I've learned in my previous jobs, personal knowledge, and sometimes just trial and error." Another library director from a town of 926 residents reports, "I am the IT department here. I have taken a few computer courses and have several friends that are in IT programs that I go to for questions that I can't figure out."[18]

In addition, Nebraska librarians reflect the national trend that "Staffing levels are not keeping pace with patron demand—both for those staff who provide training and other direct patron services, as well as for those staff who maintain the information technology infrastructure. Libraries cite the need for greater staff expertise and availability as a barrier to being able to support and manage public access technologies."[19] In 2008, the Nebraska Libraries Future Search Conference brought together stakeholders in the growth and development of library and information services. They highlighted several needs, including those based on customer diversity and gaps in customer 21st century and technology skills; library facility technology demands; and staff challenges in technology and 21st century skills. One participant stated, "Librarians need to be knowledgeable not only in the latest technologies and their use, but in most instances must have some basic knowledge of how to keep these technologies running. To do this successfully, librarians must have the ability to partner with each other to share information and expertise and the ability to reach out to other experts in the community to learn and grow."

Nebraska librarians themselves report the stress of keeping up with demand. At Library Camp Nebraska, held November 2008, fifty-two participants from across the state, plus staff from the NLC and the State Library of Iowa—discussed topics such as High Tech/High Touch, Hiring and Recruitment, and 2.0 Library Marketing. Quotes from participants follow:
- "People are expecting more technological knowledge from library staff."
- "Assistance with technology is high touch and it seems to be what people expect from libraries because they do other high touch services (e.g. reference interviews)."

Clearly, filling the gap between patron demand for technology-related services and the sophistication and skills base of librarians to meet that demand has been identified as a priority for libraries in Nebraska.

Impact

Increasing the number of qualified professionals and recruiting future librarians for employment in Nebraska libraries
This project will increase the formal educational levels of 40 current library staff in rural Nebraska as well as 30 new students. Of this pool of 70 participants, 50 students will enter at the preprofessional (associate and bachelor's) level and 20 students will enter at the master's level. Project activities will connect scholarship participants with other professionals at the state and national level, through social and person-to-person networking. The additional 60 internship opportunities of this project will increase awareness about the library profession and the opportunities for employment in Nebraska libraries. Students at all levels of the educational ladder will be better prepared for a career in library and information services and will be encouraged to further their educational pursuits.

Building greater skills and abilities in the library workforce
Through participation in value-added activities, these librarians will possess the knowledge and skills to position their libraries as community hubs for technology access and as centers of transformational 21st century learning.

Reflecting an understanding of library service needs in Nebraska's rural communities
Formally educated librarians will have a better understanding of the key role libraries play in rural communities in the 21st century. Participants will be equipped with the knowledge and skills to maintain, enhance and grow technology services and to implement 21st Century Learning Skills in library programming, especially important in rural libraries. And, staffing in Nebraska libraries will more closely reflect the changing demographic diversity of the state.

Diversity

The American Library Association reports that credentialed librarians differ significantly by race and ethnicity from the U.S. population as a whole.[20] This is certainly the case in Nebraska. Compared to the general adult population of Nebraska, Hispanics are an underrepresented group among library employees. Nearly 4% of the adult population (age 25 and over) is Hispanic, but only 1.5% of library workers are Hispanic. In other words, Hispanics are represented among librarians only a little over one-third as often as their proportion in the general adult population might lead one to expect.[21]

Nebraskans are an increasingly diverse population. For example, people of Hispanic origin became the largest minority group in Nebraska in 2000 (5.5%) and by 2007 comprised 7.5% of the state's population. Census Bureau estimates indicate that the Hispanic population in Nebraska grew 41.7% from 2000 to 2007. The increase was quite widespread: of the 93 counties in Nebraska, the Hispanic population increased in all but six of them.[22] Ethnic diversity in public librarians will be needed in Nebraska in the coming years to adequately serve their communities. Special recruitment efforts for underrepresented groups will ensure a more representative pool of scholarship applicants in this grant program.

Project Design and Evaluation

Planning Process

The NLC's *Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Plan 2008–2012* was developed based on the Commission's ongoing administration and evaluation of Nebraska's LSTA program; emerging issues and trends; input from the public and library community, including the State Advisory Council on Libraries, Commission members and staff; and regional public planning meetings. The long-range plan identifies personnel as a key issue facing Nebraska's libraries:
> "Nebraska's *Making a Difference* Five-Year Evaluation reaffirms that *people* make the significant difference in determining the quality of library services. A priority need is the successful recruitment of talented library personnel, provision of professional and continuing education (CE) opportunities, and improvement of a support system that places value on the work of library personnel and provides significant improvement in compensation."[6]

The success of our previous Librarians for the 21st Century grant demonstrated the strong need for scholarships and internships, with participants reporting the benefits to librarians and their library users. Central Community College's (CCC) newly revitalized preprofessional library education program provides an opportunity for the NLC to work with supporting partners to craft a plan to provide technology training; to broaden the horizons of library practitioners, especially in relation to technology; to provide training in 21st century skills; and to put in place an infrastructure to ensure the sustainability of skills transfer. This grant project will start with forming an advisory team, which will help to represent the interests of Nebraska libraries and library users in decisions made about project execution.

The project is designed to accomplish three goals, organized into objectives, activities, and expected results:

- **Goal 1:** Increase education levels of current library staff and new recruits in rural Nebraska.
- **Goal 2:** Enhance and improve the technology competency and 21st century skills among program participants, and among library staff in Nebraska libraries, improving library service delivery.
- **Goal 3:** Foster a supportive community among program participants and other Nebraska library staff.

Goal 1: Increase education levels of current library staff and new recruits in rural Nebraska.

Objective 1a: Identify and recruit 40 current library staff and 30 new students.
Activities: We will announce the program and available scholarships by Winter 2011. We will reach current library staff through established channels, and a special effort will be made to reach not only those potential students who regularly use electronic communications channels but also those potential students whose access to and/or use of computerized communications is limited. Marketing materials will be developed and disseminated through several channels. A Website will be maintained.
   To reach potential students not already part of the library community, our partner, CCC, will assist in recruiting efforts. We will disseminate information to persons and agencies that assist potential students to decide upon career paths and to

find financial aid. Our focus will be on high school guidance counselors, college and university academic guidance and financial aid offices, and career guidance agencies, as well as high school and public libraries. The project team will personally contact promising candidates. Library directors and the advisory team will be asked for recommendations. Project team members will make presentations about the program at various meetings.

Expected Results:
1. Marketing materials will be created in Winter 2010.
2. Outreach efforts will begin in Winter 2010 and continue through Spring 2013.
3. The NLC will receive continuous positive feedback regarding communications channels and recruitment.

Data Source and Collection: Marketing materials created, outreach efforts, and anecdotal communication (received by mail, e-mail, phone and in-person) will be documented in tracking system.

Objective 1b: Promote access by awarding 105 scholarships to selected candidates.

Activities: The project team will develop criteria for selection of candidates and will review and evaluate all scholarship applications. Scholarship applications will be available online and in print. We will award 70 scholarship packages for preprofessional education, at the associate level and bachelor's level, including in the package stipends for associated costs and value-added activities*, through the duration of the project. We will award 35 scholarship packages (including stipend) for study at the master's level for candidates for whom that level of study is appropriate, through the duration of the project. A student may apply serially for additional scholarships, when a previous scholarship is exhausted.

   *Note: Associated costs and value-added activities may include purchase of a laptop computer for each scholarship recipient (classes are delivered remotely); student memberships in a professional organization; expenses for attendance at the 21st Century Skills Seminar; and expenses for attendance at a national professional conference.

Expected Results:
1. Scholarship applications will be developed and made available in print and online in Winter 2011.
2. Scholarship applications will be received in spring, summer and fall of Years 1, 2 and 3.
3. Preprofessional (associate- and bachelor's-level) education: 20 scholarship packages will be awarded in Year 1; 30 in Year 2; 20 in Year 3. Total anticipated number of scholarship recipients: 50.
4. Master's-level education: 10 scholarship packages will be awarded in Year 1; 15 in Year 2; 10 in Year 3. Total anticipated number of scholarship recipients: 20.
5. 95% of scholarship recipients will report positive feedback on value-added activities.

Data Source and Collection: Program records will document numbers of applications received, scholarship packages awarded, and scholarship recipients. Tracking system will record results from exit surveys; in-depth interviews; and anecdotal communication received by mail, e-mail, and social network posts. Data will be collected by project team and external evaluator each year.

Objective 1c: Increase awareness of careers in libraries by awarding 60 internships.

Activities: We will send information about the internship program directly to library directors, who will then apply for the program and locally recruit high school and college-age interns. We will award internship funding on the basis of the pertinence of projects and activities proposed by the libraries. We will assist potential interns and interested libraries to connect. Prior experience has shown that the internship program has been utilized and found beneficial by both libraries and interns; we anticipate that the application process will be competitive.

Expected Results:
1. Internship applications will be received and 20 grants awarded in spring of each year.
2. 90% of interns will report positive experiences and increased interest in library careers.
3. 90% of participating intern supervisors will report positive experiences with the internship program.

Data Source and Collection: Program records will document number of applications received, number of internship grants awarded, and number of interns. Tracking system will record results from baseline and post-internship surveys and intern supervisor reports. Evidence of community impact will be sought. Data will be collected by project team each year.

Objective 1d: Bring the demographic distribution of the population of librarians into closer alignment with the Nebraska population as a whole.

Activities: As is the case nationwide, in Nebraska librarians tend to be female, white, and have a higher median age than the general population. With input gathered through focus groups with ethnic organizations, we will develop materials to inform potential students about careers in libraries, educational opportunities, and scholarships. Community college

minority recruiters will identify and recruit minority candidates. We will initiate special support activities when students need them.

Expected Results:
1. Recruiting efforts will begin in Spring 2010 and continue through Spring 2013.
2. Distribution of scholarship applications will more closely reflect the changing demographics of the state.

Data Source and Collection: Recruitment efforts will be documented in tracking system. Program records, indicating demographic status of applicants, will be recorded in tracking system. Data will be collected by project team each year.

Goal 2: Enhance and improve the technology competency and 21st century skills among program participants, and among library staff in Nebraska libraries, improving library service delivery.

Objective 2a: Scholarship recipients will participate in a 21st Century Skills Seminar.
Activities: In order to enhance specialized and specific training in 21st century skills, a 2-day residential seminar will be held in Year 2 of the project. Project participants will be strongly encouraged to attend and offered stipends to cover their expenses. The program for this seminar will be planned during Year 1 by a committee of the project team, headed by Michael Sauers and Laura Johnson. The seminar will emphasize technology, vision, planning, partnership development, and the ability to transfer the 21st century skills to the community.

Expected Results:
1. Planning for seminar programming will take place during Year 1.
2. Seminar will take place during Year 2.
3. Participants will report and demonstrate increased technology, vision, planning and partnership abilities and skills.
4. Participants will report increased knowledge of the 21st Century Learning Skills initiative and its application in libraries.
5. 60% of seminar participants will disseminate increased knowledge to the wider library community.

Data Source and Collection: Pre- and post-tests, and anecdotal communication received through social network posts will be documented in tracking system. Data will be collected by project team in Year 2. Dissemination of increased knowledge will take place during Years 2 and 3 through newsletter articles, special projects, social network posts or conference presentations.

Objective 2b: Project participants will actively take part in Web-based programs designed to enhance the educational experience.
Activities: Project participants, as well as the project team and other interested practitioners, will participate in periodic Webinars and other online programs designed to improve awareness of technology tools and their application in libraries and to answer questions that arise in library practice in Nebraska libraries.

Expected Results:
1. Online programming will take place on a regular basis during Years 1, 2 and 3.
2. Project participants will actively participate in at least 3 online programs.
3. Project participants will provide positive feedback concerning online program content and delivery.

Data Source and Collection: Topic-related posts in social network platform will be documented in tracking system. Data will be collected by project team in Years 1, 2 and 3.

Objective 2c: The curriculum of the Central Community College Library and Information Science program will be reviewed to confirm that it provides students with the 21st century skills that library practitioners need.
Activities: The faculty of the LIS program will research learning delivery methods and competencies needed, and compare them to the program in place. They will develop new learning objectives for their courses, as needed.

Expected Results:
1. Research and review of LIS curriculum will take place in Year 1.
2. Assessment of current LIS curriculum and proposed recommendations for improvement or changes will be made in Year 2.

Data Source and Collection: Report from LIS faculty review team will be submitted to project team in Year 2.

Goal 3: Foster a supportive community among program participants and other Nebraska library staff.

Objective 3a: Project participants will attend a national conference.
Activities: Scholarship recipients will be strongly encouraged to attend a national conference of information professionals. Attendees will receive stipends to cover expenses, and mentors will accompany students to ensure that conference experiences are fruitful. Participants will present a program or write an article about their experiences and what they learned, thus multiplying the learning.
Expected Results:
1. 40 scholarship recipients will attend a national conference.
2. Project participants will provide positive feedback and knowledge attained regarding their conference attendance.
3. 60% of seminar participants will disseminate increased knowledge to the wider library community.
Data Source and Collection: Dissemination of increased knowledge will take place during Years 2 and 3 through newsletter articles, special projects, social network posts or conference presentations.

Objective 3b: Project participants will engage in online social networking to enhance and encourage communication and learning.
Activities: The project team will develop an online social network using a tool such as Facebook for scholarship recipients and other interested Nebraska librarians to discuss issues and problems. This exchange will continue as a networking support tool beyond the life of the project. We will build an online Storybank (an archive of library stories and experiences) to provide mutual support of project development activities in Nebraska libraries, and in libraries across the nation.
Expected Results:
1. An online social network group will be formed by Fall 2010 and will be maintained for the duration of the project and at least two years after the completion of the project.
2. All scholarship recipients will join the hosted social networking group.
3. At least 20 professional librarians will join the hosted social networking group.
4. Posts and updates on the social network platform will reflect efforts to network and discuss library-related topics.
5. The online Storybank will be built in Year 1 and tested in Years 2 and 3.
Data Source and Collection: Number of social network group members and postings will be recorded in tracking system.

Keith Curry Lance, PhD, of RSL Research Group has committed to monitor our project and provide formative input towards continuous quality improvement. He has provided technical assistance during the development of this project and contracted with us on the previous 21st Century Librarian grant. Under his guidance project team members will contribute to the evaluation process by constructing an outcome based evaluation, developing survey instruments and a tracking system that will store all information gathered through the various data sources, and by developing quarterly reports. In addition to data sources listed above, the external evaluator will conduct key informant interviews with a sample of program participants on an annual basis. Formal reports will be presented to the project team on a regular basis in an effort to assure continuous quality improvement.

Project Resources

Budget

This cost-effective proposal, requesting $721,033, invests nearly 60% of the total project funds directly in student support. There is strong institutional support and cost sharing for this project. The applicant will contribute more than one-half the cost of the project, excluding funds for student support. Cost sharing requirements will be met through a combination of state funding and in-kind contributions. The applicant will contribute the salaries of all permanent staff on the project, except the Project Manager and Technology Instructional Designer. IMLS is **not** asked to fund indirect costs.

Throughout the project period, the partners will work to identify additional local supporting organizations and project partners to help support all aspects of the project. There are no plans for equipment purchase for the applicant's use. All partners and supporting organizations will support students through supplemental scholarships, internships, and stipends, and will take responsibility for recruitment and information dissemination. Detailed Budget, Summary Budget, Budget Justification, and letters from partner and supporting organizations are included in the Supporting Documentation.

Personnel

Project Director—Mary Jo Ryan has served as Communications Coordinator or Special Project Director for the NLC for twenty-three years, planning and implementing statewide library service activities (including the previous 21st Century Librarian grant). She has extensive experience managing library service marketing and promotional efforts, training and staff development, planning and evaluation, grant writing, grants and contracts management, and volunteer coordination. She will devote a minimum of 25% of her time to managing the project and 25% of her current duties will be assumed by appropriate NLC staff and contractors for the duration of the project.

Project Manager—Kathryn Brockmeier has served as Research Analyst/Special Projects Associate for the NLC for one year, writing and monitoring grants, managing student internships and scholarships, assisting in research and data gathering, and writing reports. She will devote a minimum of 50% of her time to managing the project and 50% of her current duties will be assumed by appropriate NLC staff for the duration of the project.

Technology Instructional Designer—Michael Sauers, nationally recognized trainer and author, has served as NLC Technology Innovation Librarian for nearly three years. He has extensive experience designing and delivering technology training (live and online classes), with an emphasis in using technology and social networking in library settings. He will devote a minimum of 20% of his time to designing and delivering technology instruction and 20% of his current duties will be assumed by appropriate NLC staff for the duration of the project.

Project Partner Leadership—NLC Director Rod Wagner will work with Dr. Eric Jones, EdD, Dean of Educational Services for our partner organization, CCC, to provide leadership and guidance for this project. Dr. Jones and Dr. Dianna Parmley, PhD, along with the staff and faculty of the LIS Online Certificate and Associate of Arts Degree Program, will provide curriculum development, recruitment, mentoring, and student supervision. Staff will also assist in information dissemination and serve on the Project Advisory Team along with other project stakeholders.

Project Supporting Organization Leadership—The Nebraska Educational Media Association, Nebraska Library Association, University of Missouri, and University of Nebraska at Omaha bring library education and service expertise to their commitment to leadership and guidance for this project. They will provide student support, recruitment and mentoring services, as well as assist in information dissemination and serve on the Project Advisory Team.

Project Professional Staff—NLC professional, MLS-trained librarians (noted in the detailed Budget and List of Key Project Staff) will commit a percentage of their time to assisting in planning and needs assessment, training and resource development, and evaluation data gathering and reporting.

Project Support Staff—Information Technology staff of the NLC will be identified to commit time to the project to develop Web-based resources. A half-time, temporary Public Information Technician will commit 10% of his time to work with design services to develop print and electronic resources and assist with data management. Administrative Support Staff are specified in the Detailed Budget.

Management Plan

The NLC, the state library agency for Nebraska, manages nearly $2 million in library service grants and contracts annually. It has successfully managed major grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Institute of Museum and Library Services, University of Denver, W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and other federal and private sources. The Nebraska State Auditor conducts an audit every two years to ensure compliance with all federal requirements. The NLC has in place the financial management system, staff, equipment, facilities, and associated resources to ensure responsible and successful management of the project.

Rod Wagner, the NLC Director, will provide the leadership for the successful development and implementation of the project. His direction of the advisory body for this project demonstrates top-level management commitment to this effort. Ongoing input and guidance will be provided by this broad-based advisory team, representing library organizations, staff and supporters from all types of libraries across the state. Individuals and organizations represented on this advisory team are listed in the Supporting Documentation.

Mary Jo Ryan, the Project Director, will have overall responsibility for implementation of the ***Cultivating Rural Librarians' Technology Skills*** project. Her previous experience directing large statewide library marketing and education efforts (including the previous 21st Century Librarian grant) demonstrates the ability to successfully manage this project. Kathryn Brockmeier, the Project Manager, will have day-to-day responsibility for management of grant implementation, evaluation, and reporting. John Felton will coordinate evaluation. Michael Sauers, Laura Johnson and Richard Miller will head the Curriculum Development team, bringing together a well-rounded group of Nebraska library educators to develop and implement the value-added learning experiences. These responsibilities will be carried out with the support and participation of the project partners and supporting organizations, and with the professional and support staff of the NLC.

The partnership to develop and implement this project is already in place and the relationships are strong and deep. Project partner responsibilities are specified in the attached partnership statement, and supporting organizational commitments are specified in the attached letters of support. The partners will ensure that obligations specified in the agreements are met, and the Project Director will monitor for compliance. Additional local supporting organizations will be identified to assist with all aspects of the project. Service providers will be identified and hired, as needed according to the rules and regulations of the Nebraska Department of Administrative Services, Materiel Division.

Dissemination

All project partners and supporting organizations will assume responsibility for dissemination. All developments, results, and lessons learned will be made accessible during and after completion of the project in the following ways:
- Press releases, partner newsletters, and other publications.
- Presentations at partner conferences and professional meetings.
- Updates via Website, Storybank, listservs, podcasts, Webcasts and Web 2.0 social networking applications.
- Materials offered to libraries and library-related organizations nationally, with the option of customization.

Sustainability

The activities of this project are essential to the growth and development of library personnel throughout Nebraska. The ***Cultivating Rural Librarians' Technology Skills*** grant will enable the creation and development of resources and assets, including the Website and Storybank, that will be maintained and continue to evolve after completion of this project. The Capacity Building training by the Nebraska Community Foundation will result in the identification of resources to help sustain these efforts and build a base of support for future recruitment activities. The focus on preparing Nebraska library staff to help community members build 21st century learning skills, especially technology literacy, has the potential for creating vast systemic change in Nebraska libraries and communities.

This project will build on activities which the partners have historically supported, and these activities will continue beyond the life of the project. Since 1990 these organizations have worked to bring in distance learning educational opportunities, enabling more than two hundred Nebraskans to receive library science education, including preprofessional and master's-level. The Nebraska Library Association (http://www.nebraskalibraries.org/scholarship.htm), Nebraska Educational Media Association (http://www.schoollibrariesrock.org/scholarships.html), and NLC (www.nlc.state.ne.us) will continue to seek additional sources of support for library science education and ongoing preprofessional and professional development activities. Information about these activities, including requirements and recent recipients, is available at www.NowHiringAtYourLibrary.org.

The NLC will own copyright on this content and will provide access through Creative Commons licensing (http://creativecommons.org) during and after the grant period. See www.nlc.state.ne.us/ncompass/ncompasslive.asp for examples of how NLC distance learning events are archived and made accessible.

This project has the potential to serve as a model program: all value-added learning content will be made available to library staff and supporters across the country.

Citations

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