



Issues and Trends Facing Rural and Small Libraries

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Library Director's Dilemma	3
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Opinions from the Field

Commonalities Among Comments	Betty Jo Jarvis, Tennessee	18
Larry Grieco, Colorado	Jeanna Elaine Cornett, Kentucky	19
Rose M. Chenoweth, Illinois	Louis E. Mays, Ohio	19
Patricia Hector, California.....	James Elliott, Florida	20
Bonnie McKewon, Iowa.....	Vic Nunez, Florida	21
Ann M. Riegle-Coursey, Ohio.....	Ronald Moore, Florida.....	22
Mary Pasek Williama, Illinois.....	Sandra Gioia Treadway, Virginia.....	22
Karen Starr, Nevada.....	Judith A. Ring, Florida	23
Holly Van Valkenburgh, Nevada	Leslie A. Scott, North Carolina	23
Harold George, Florida.....	Deborah Hotchkiss, South Carolina	26
Karyn Schmidt, Wisconsin.....	Jan Walsh, Washington.....	27
Deb Biggs Thomas, Michigan	Jim Scheppke, Oregon.....	34
Elizabeth Kudwa, Michigan	Rich Greenfield, Alaska	40
Roger Mendel, Michigan	Sue Sherif & Aja Ruzmuny, Alaska	43
Sharman Bridges Smith, Mississippi ..	Carla Lehn & Jon Torkelsdon, California	45
Jan Haines, Ohio.....	Judy Greeson, Tennessee	48
Madge B. Walker, Tennessee		
National Rural Assembly		49
The Rural Compact.....		50
Perceptions of Rural America		51
Center for Rural Strategies		52
A Field Guide to Community Building (Heartland Center for Leadership Development) ..		53
Defining "Rural" in Rural America		54
Rural America at a Glance 2007 Edition.....		55
Challenges for Rural America in the 21 st Century.....		55

Articles and Reports

Kellogg Foundation's Rural People Rural Policy / Rural Policy Research Institute	56
Carsey Institute / Rural Sociological Society	57
Center for Rural Affairs - Rural Policy Program.....	58
Rural Policy Research Institute (RUP!).....	59
National Rural Network (NRN).....	60
The Daily Yonder	61
Understanding Communities and their Dynamics.....	62
20 Clues to Rural Community Survival	63
Enhancing Economic Development Through Libraries.....	64
Worth Their Weight: An Assessment of the Evolving Field of Library Valuation	64
International City/County Management Association	65
Five Ways Public Libraries Can Help Communities Achieve Strategic Goals.....	65
Local Government Managers and Public Libraries: Partners for a Better Community ..	66
National Association of Counties (NACO)	67
National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT).....	68
National Rural Education Policy Agenda	69
Urban Libraries Council (ULC).....	71
Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL)	72
Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services (ABOS).....	73
Notable Quotes.....	74

The Library Director's Dilemma

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*"You're better than ever at something
we don't need done anymore."*

- William Hamilton

Published in *The New Yorker*, 17 November 2003

THE BIG FEAR

Libraries (and what they can offer)
will be increasingly irrelevant and invisible
to the majority of people.

- Karen Hyman

Conquest's Laws

Everyone is a reactionary about subjects he understands.

The behavior of an organization can best be predicted on the
assumption that it is headed by a secret cabal of its enemies.

- Robert Conquest

The historian Robert Conquest formulated a principle that has come to be known as *Conquest's Law*: "Everyone is a reactionary about subjects he understands." His *Law* points to the notion that we are often so aware of the complexities of subjects with which we are thoroughly familiar, that, consequently, we are immune to fantasies of their fundamental change. Conversely, when it comes to subjects about which we have only superficial knowledge, we are prone to see change as natural and easy.

Nothing ever gets done unless it's done by a fanatic.

Commonalities Among Comments

Prepared by Graduate Students of the Clarion University Department of Library Science

Statistics:

Out of 26 responses (many responses included more than one issue):

53.8 % of responses mentioned **technology**

53.8 % of responses mentioned **funding**

38.4 % of responses mentioned **staffing**

30.7 % of responses mentioned **library's place in community/ community access to library**

23 % of responses mentioned **changes in community outside of the library**

11.5 % of responses mentioned **collaboration**

11.5 % of responses mentioned **change in patron base (seniors, immigrants)**

7.6 % of responses mentioned **equality of service between rural and urban areas**

7.6% of responses mentioned **ILL and delivery methods**

7.6 % of responses mentioned **Library Boards.**

Summary of Responses (repeated issues have not been recorded):

Technology:

- high-speed (Broadband) internet connection
- wireless local area networks
- computers available for public use
- maintain current technology/computers
- rural broadband telecommunications
- bridge the digital divide
- libraries need less stuff and more computers
- technology is always an issue
- great disparity in our state in terms of access to the internet

Funding:

- budgets are declining
- larger tax bases to maintain status quo
- gas prices make traveling for staff training expensive
- State prohibits increased taxation
- Cost of getting authors/programs to rural areas
- Will not get full funding on any vote to support libraries
- local funding can't keep up with increased costs
- state funding is drying up
- property tax rates have been reduced
- need to close library for hours to cut back on utility expenses
- expansion plan has been scrapped
- Friends' efforts not enough

- Concerned about cuts to government revenues
- Inadequate funding by localities

Staffing:

- hiring of professional librarians as directors
- online training
- difficulty of staffing in rural libraries
- education (in library service and continuing education)
- Small staff does not allow time for conferences
- Continuing education, training, and retraining
- Aren't being replaced because of costs
- Most do not have Masters' level librarians
- recruitment issues

Library's Place in Community/ Access:

- Center of culture in community
- Increase attendance at programs
- Economic gardening
- serve entrepreneurs/ small business owners
- difficulty getting to the library (need to renew books for longer periods of time)

Changes in Community Outside the Library:

- Rising gas prices
- Consolidation of schools
- Decline in "family farms"
- The eco-friendly Green trend
- Shift in population from urban areas to rural for second-home/ retirement

Collaboration:

- Be part of system to connect libraries in region or state
- Need to be part of system to benefit in purchasing of services, materials, programming

Change in Patron Base:

- Increase in baby boomers retiring to rural areas
- Increase in large print materials
- Young people who become educated leave the smaller towns
- Changes from newly arrived immigrants

Equality of service:

- Meeting the needs of patrons despite rural/small status
- Issue of the unserved

ILL/ Delivery Methods:

- Cost of OCLC
- Impact of gas prices

Library Boards:

- Need to be educated advocates
- Be knowledgeable about human resources
- Need to conduct self-assessments
- Are micromanaging with little knowledge

National priorities for small libraries:

- 1. Connectivity - every small library in America needs a high-speed internet connection.** In many rural areas, especially, access to high speed internet is not readily available. Here in Gilpin County, partly because we are in the mountains, even people who have computers at home may have a dialup internet service provider, with particularly slow internet speed, and they still come to the library to work on the internet or even just to check their email.
- 2. Wireless local area networks in every small library.** My experience with internal wireless networks is such that a compelling sidebar to wireless networking is that patrons can park outside the library, 24/7, to have internet access on their laptops. This is an inexpensive and extremely valuable service to offer the public. Another advantage to wireless networks is that patrons come to the library during regular hours and sit anywhere they want with their laptops—it alleviates the pressure of having enough public computers available at all times. Two, three, or more people at any given time are anywhere they want to be in the library, using their personal laptop, to access the internet. Just as in #1 above, people come to the library, even if it's just to the parking lot, to pick up a signal on their laptop for high speed internet access that they don't have at home.
- 3. An adequate number of computers available for public use.** Through the generosity of the Gates Foundation, computers have been made available in most small and rural public libraries for patron use. Through this invaluable source, and other sources, the campaign to equip small libraries with enough computers must continue. Furthermore, every couple of years these computers must be upgraded, with new operating systems, software, etc., that keep even the smallest library on the cutting edge of current technology.
- 4. Hiring of directors who are library professionals in possession of the core values of librarianship.** Every community in America, no matter how small, deserves to have a public library that is managed by a library professional. This isn't a matter simply of library skills training, but rather speaks to professional ethics, intellectual freedom, privacy of patron records and usage, and those other somewhat abstract values that we assume (hope) library schools instill in their students. If small communities do not have the resources to hire a library professional, then there should be grant money available, perhaps administered by state libraries, to supplement the salary and benefits of a professional librarian.
- 5. A level playing field.** People who live in small, rural communities should not have to give up in their small library, certain services and advantages we attribute to larger libraries and library systems. Small and rural libraries should be attempting to provide services that meet or exceed the needs of the public they serve. In some cases this may mean emulating the larger urban and suburban libraries, but in other cases it calls for an accurate assessment of the local needs and a commitment to meeting them.

The above can be termed both national and local priorities. What follows might be more accurately described as **local** priorities of small and rural libraries:

- 1. To be the center of culture in a small community.** There is no public institution better suited to be the center of culture in a community than the public library. Through public programming, for both adults and children, the library can offer a number of interesting themes, from book clubs to author visits, film series, educational programs, poetry readings, crafts workshops, summer reading programs, “let’s talk about it” programs, art exhibits, and many more. This often is not identified as a priority, taking a back seat to provision of meeting room space, interlibrary loans, reference services, etc.
- 2. To provide services that are taken for granted in larger communities.** Free coffee might be offered all day during library hours. At least one person on the staff, most likely, but not necessarily the library director, should offer notary services free of charge. Best sellers and high demand books, movies, audios, etc., should be available. Clean restrooms. Perhaps a U.S. mail dropoff box. Other things in response to a particular community’s stated or discovered needs.
- 3. To be a part of whatever system physically connects libraries in the region or state.** By this I mean courier or shuttle services that make interlibrary loan transactions possible. This is standard in larger libraries or systems, and smaller or rural libraries should be given the opportunity to participate in it. If money is not available to include a small library on the courier service route, then the library should be provided the service gratis, and larger libraries would contribute to the extra costs of the service.

Larry Grieco, Director
Gilpin County Public Library
15131 Highway 119
Black Hawk, Colorado 80403
lgrieco@co.gilpin.co.us
Member, ARSL Board of Directors

My ideas on trends, sadly, are mostly negative:

1. Budgets are declining. This is everywhere but it is much worse in the rural community, especially in counties that choose tax caps. In those counties, budgets are declining and the libraries will ultimately disappear if something is not changed in the formula. People want to pay less taxes and may not realize what that means until important services like libraries are lost.
2. With the growing costs of energy especially fuel, rural enterprises are threatened because they have to travel farther for shopping and basic services. Farming is an extremely high energy consuming profession. The high energy costs could very well drive many farmers out of business. This, of course, would have a major impact on rural communities.
3. Schools are consolidating and consolidating again, removing the grade schools in communities, the one organization in town that everyone rallies around. Our small towns are getting smaller and I suspect many will disappear in the next 10 to 20 years.
4. Farms are getting BIGGER and are run by agricultural corporations. The family farm is being lost. This is contributing to the declining populations in rural areas.
5. The growing GREEN trend may help counter some of these negative trends. Focusing the U.S. on the value of respecting nature and its resources could benefit rural communities.
6. In our particular library system, people are moving from Chicago (3-6 hours away) to our rural communities to get away from stressful city life. Some of these homes are second homes for get-away purposes and some are retirement homes.
7. Now for just public library issues:
 - a. They need larger tax bases to just maintain the status quo.
 - b. They need access to cheaper, higher quality broadband. A handful or less of our 258 libraries have dial-up but many have low-end DSL which is not adequate to their needs.
 - c. The declining budgets are hurting their ability to maintain current technology. Many of our smaller and/or rural libraries have 5 and 6 year old computers for the most part with a new computer being a rare investment.
 - d. With the cost of gas, leaving the library for training is becoming too expensive. We are planning to do more online training through Horizon Wimba.
 - e. The fast-growing, burdensome costs of OCLC will probably lead to most of our school and public library members dropping out of OCLC membership. This is a hot issue in our state and we are still talking about solutions. I fully expect that our small libraries will revert back to interlibrary loan methods of 20 years ago if OCLC costs are allowed to grow unchecked.

Rose M. Chenoweth, Library Development Consultant
Alliance Library System
600 High Point Lane
East Peoria, Illinois 61611
rchenoweth@alliancelibrarysystem.com
Member, ARSL Board of Directors

I think lack of **broadband access in rural areas** is probably on everybody's list, but as the article in the latest *Public Libraries* ("Connecting with Connectivity: Why Librarians Need to Care") points out, there are librarians out there that don't know what kind of bandwidth they need, how to get it and, in some cases, don't really care. The Internet isn't going away and is a tool that will become an even more integral part of our lives. We need to educate ourselves about this important issue and make sure our libraries get the access to serve our patrons.

My second concern is the **impact of gas prices on ILL and delivery**. The small libraries in our regional system depend on each other's collections to provide materials for their patrons. Some of them are looking at cutting down on frequency of delivery because of higher prices. Some of them have stopped providing ILL materials to libraries outside of our physical delivery because postage is expensive.

The last thing is the **difficulty of staffing our rural libraries**. Our libraries have gone through a tremendous amount of turnover in directors mostly from retirements and it has taken a year to a year and a half to find replacements. The librarians also report that it is difficult to find qualified staff in their small communities.

Patricia Hector, Assistant System Director
Mountain Valley Library System
North Bay Cooperative Library System
North State Cooperative Library System
55 E Street
Santa Rosa, California 95404
pattynbc@sonic.net
Member and 2008-09 President-elect, ARSL Board of Directors

My observations aren't so much a trend for small, rural libraries as they are on-going needs:

- **Library boards need to be educated advocates**
- **Library boards need to see themselves as "employers" and be knowledgeable about human resources**, understand and exercise their role in it, be much better at the "recruitment & retention" piece of human resources, work to improve salaries in small libraries
- **Library boards need to conduct self-assessments** (themselves as individual trustees and collectively as a group)

Not sure how to re-frame these thoughts to be seen as trends, and maybe you don't need to. But in my regional system, these are on-going challenges and I'll bet they are universally found in most small libraries.

Bonnie McKewon, Director
Northwest Iowa Library Services
P.O. Box 1319
Sioux City, Iowa 51102
mckewon@nwils.lib.ia.us
Member, ARSL Board of Directors

I think the two trends that will impact our small library the most over the next few years are **funding and collaboration**. The US economy is bad but the Ohio economy is worse. We have so many people without work. This makes it hard to run a library on limited budgets which diminish more as tax dollars decrease, but it also means our services are more valuable to the community than ever before. They need computer access to look for work or register for benefits, they need free education and recreation.

Secondly, collaboration will impact us. The state may force libraries (and other service agencies) to join together to make the most of limited money. Even if they don't make us do so, we should be looking for ways to conserve our funding by joining forces when we can.

Ann M. Riegle-Coursey, Director
New Madison Public Library
142 South Main Street, PO Box 32
New Madison, Ohio 45346
coursean@oplin.org
2008 Chair of Ohio Library Council Small Libraries Division

The issue I would like to see tackled most is the **issue of the unserved** in the entire nation. Without a federal (dream on) law or state laws that mandate library service to all, there will always be people left out of the public library loop, and I think this is tragic! It's bad enough when a parent chooses to not support or buy a card at a distant library, but the children who grow up in those unserved areas are at an immediate disadvantage, and if they don't have a decent school library, then they're out of luck to compete with the rest of the nation's kids and that includes access to the Internet.

Possible implementation: laws must be made at the state level because leaving it to local decision will never include all. We need to be mandatory, as part of the education of our citizens. We need lobbyists on our side; we need an entire branch of our organization dedicated to government lobbying. A formidable job!

Mary Pasek Williams, Former Director
Towanda District Library
301 South Taylor
Towanda, Illinois 61776
Member and Secretary, ARSL Board of Directors

Rural broadband telecommunications accessibility and sustainability in cyclical resource based economies losing their economic base to overseas industries, whether those are resource based or commodity based.

Karen Starr, Assistant Administrator, Development
Nevada State Library and Archives
100 North Stewart Street
Carson City, Nevada 89701
kjstarr@clan.lib.nv.us

My first concern for the rural and small public libraries is **education** - getting a basic education in library service and then continuing to learn as new information is made available and new technologies develop. It is the virtual world that I feel will be the solution, but so far I have yet to see the technology I would prefer; that would include visual contact and co-browsing in online communication for trainings.

Holly Van Valkenburgh, Consulting Librarian
Nevada State Library & Archives
100 North Stewart Street
Carson City, Nevada 89701
hvanvalk@clan.lib.nv.us

I received your message via the FLA listserv. I am the Branch Manager of a 5,000 square foot library in the small town of Hastings, Florida, and we are the **bridge to the digital divide** in this small town. Actually, I sometimes feel like we are the bridge to MySpace, but that is ok, as long as we establish a relationship.

As you might expect, the biggest chunk of our circulation is Movies and Music.

A big challenge is getting young people to read, and creating better attendance for our programming, especially children's programs.

Hope this helps!

Harold George, Branch Manager
St. Johns County Public Library System, Hastings Branch Library
6195 South Main Street #B
Hastings, Florida 32145
haroldgeorge@yahoo.com

Trends that I observe at my two libraries (Ettrick and Taylor, Wisconsin -- population c500 each) --

More demand for services, both from local library and from system. There are easily obtainable statistics to back up this assertion. Circ is increasing about 20% each year. Delivery volume is expanding -- the vans are not. I'm really glad that Wisconsin values resource sharing, but it does require a rather expensive and extensive infrastructure.

Little increase in resources from village or state. The village is hamstrung because the state prohibits increased taxation. Yet the library is expected to keep up with more demand for technology, information and best-sellers. And the librarian is expected to make the new technologies work. (I learned to punch IBM cards when I went to library school.)

No expectation of expansion. Taylor has enough space for the collection and programming, but Ettrick is land-locked in a corner of the elementary school with no possibility of expansion. That means I have to weed a LOT. (Can't use Round-Up on these weeds! Wouldn't if I could -- this is an organic library.) That means that if we need more computers, we use laptops. Luckily, some people bring their own. (This will increase, so instead of librarians helping people with computers they know, they'll have to navigate other email and browser configurations set up by nephews who "know lots about computers".) This is only going to get worse as more businesses expect people to apply for jobs online, and physicians insist that their patients learn about their conditions at the Mayo Clinic website instead of explaining it themselves. Fortunately, recent high school graduates are more-or-less computer savvy, so they don't have to learn the basics of windows, as the older folks do.

Cultural expectations rising. I do a lot of consultation on making Windows work for people in their 70s. And I really don't mind helping 40-year-olds sign up for Yahoo mail that they have to get in order to fill out a job application. But I am bothered that employers assume that it's no imposition to force people who have so little money that they are applying for jobs at WalMart to have email. The trend: people will be bypassing the internet with wireless phones that can receive email, so libraries will only be needed for the initial application. Of course, people working at WalMart will have to choose between paying for their cel or child care, but that's their choice.

Decreased travel as expenses rise. You hope I'll come to Sacramento for a conference, just as a bunch of vendors think I'll be coming to ALA. Dream on! I am really lucky in having library boards that support continuing education. I go to the state public library gathering in the spring and the Wisconsin Library Association meeting in the fall, as well as the system's continuing education workshops. I even hit the exhibits at PLA this year. But the plane fare to Sacramento is more than my whole CE budget. Getting time away from the library is a huge hassle -- I don't take time off lightly. That's because small library = small staff. If I'm not there, I need a substitute. I just closed the library for a meeting, because none of the regular subs were available. (It's hard to train someone who works maybe once a month -- it's too easy to forget the protocols when they're not rehearsed enough. And the library is a very complex organism.) My solution -- more email listservs -- use technologies for community building. If my medieval recreation group can do it, so can libraries.

By the way, the Wisconsin Small Libraries Roundtable defines a "small" library as one serving a population of 5,000, not 25,000. The difference between a library serving 500 and one serving 1500 is considerable. There are several "jumps" between 500 and

25,000. I have little in common with such large communities. So much of the advice to small libraries involves connecting with community newspapers, TV, doctors, retirement communities, businesses, etc. Right. We could put up a sign in the gas station, I suppose.

More demand for government money. Nature has been giving this state a hard time. Our system escaped with very little damage -- but one of the towns just south of us was hit by their second tornado in a year's time. Libraries were damaged by floods in another system, though we're all glad we're not in Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, or Iowa City. We won't even notice as prices of gas and food climb as a direct result of this weather in the heartland, because we've watched the prices rise for other reasons. I hate to see state resources siphoned away from libraries because of bad weather -- but I don't know how the state can rebuild roads and libraries with the same money.

Considering ecodisasters like floods, hail, tornadoes... multiply by \$5 diesel fuel for combines and tractors... and the cost of the poisons and fertilizers... It's no wonder that the movement is to scale back and go local and sustainable -- at least for those farmers who have not sold out to corporate farming. Will they make it? I hope so, because my library depends on their survival.

These are a few thoughts. I'm sure they'll be echoed by others. I'm sorry if I've been repetitiously redundant, but this has been written between customers. I'm sorry I won't be in Sacramento -- I hope you have a great conference.

Karyn Schmidt, Director
Ettrick Public Library
Ettrick, Wisconsin
and
Taylor Memorial Library
Taylor, Wisconsin
ettrickpl@yahoo.com

I just wanted to set the stage, as it were, to let you know that here in Michigan we've been exploring and hopefully developing partnerships with other groups working on the concept of **economic gardening** -- involving small and rural libraries in helping to provide the information piece for small business and entrepreneurs -- and in development and growing small business in general. ! Given our troubled economic times, small and rural libraries can with help provide a key link in helping the economy to better itself by assisting small business and entrepreneurship.

Deb Biggs Thomas, Michigan eLibrary Coordinator
Library of Michigan
702 West Kalamazoo
Lansing, Michigan 48909
BiggsThomasD@michigan.go

I've been working with Deb Biggs Thomas, on a number of issues pertaining to entrepreneurs and small business, some of which include service to these groups in rural/small library communities.

In doing this work, it's become clear that, especially in our economy, it is and will continue to be very important for rural/small libraries to be able **to serve entrepreneurs/small business owners**. You may have already received an email from another colleague of mine at Michigan State University mentioning a concept called Economic Gardening. **Economic Gardening** is an economic development tool that is very different from traditional economic development (ED) methods. You may know that typical ED methods involve attracting companies to come to your area and set up shop. With economic gardening, the focus is on helping existing small business owners to grow and flourish and to help provide an entrepreneurial climate for them in which to do this.

There are a few ways to implement economic gardening, but the one that involves libraries centers on providing database access to entrepreneurs via the library. Even small libraries subscribe to 1 or 2 databases that could help an entrepreneur research a market and keep up on trends. In addition to connecting entrepreneurs to these database, librarians should also be trained to some degree to help these entrepreneurs make sense of the information that they find in these databases. Having managed a small branch library, I do recognize that staff at small/rural libraries wear numerous hats and probably will feel that they don't have time to take on the additional task of being an analyzer of information, but there are some things they can do to make their communities more aware that they can get market research information at their local library...just making the resources more visible will be a great first step...pathfinders for business resources including websites geared for entrepreneurs and small business owners could also be something a small/rural library could provide. In addition, developing relationships with local Chambers, local SCORE offices (Service Corp of Retired Executives), local Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) and civic groups can be another way to make the library more visible in the community as a place to go for business information.

Elizabeth Kudwa, Business Librarian
Capital Area District Library
401 South Capitol Avenue
Lansing, Michigan 48933
kudwae@cadl.org

Costs for getting authors/programs to rural remote libraries are very expensive and will continue to increase with the cost of fuel rising.

Unemployment in states like Michigan means that more of the unemployed will be looking to libraries for help with resume and job searching and will place even greater demand on the public access computers in libraries.

Couple the above comment with the fact that increased use of Internet means a greater demand for broadband into rural areas, areas that economically the private sectors does not see as profitable.

Increased need for rural libraries to be part of a regional library system so that libraries can benefit from economies of scale in purchasing services, materials, and programming.

With the increased number of mortgage foreclosures, rural libraries as well as urban libraries will not get full funding of any voted levy/millage used to support library services. This means less money at a time when libraries will see increased use by their residents.

With baby boomers retiring there will be an increased number moving to rural areas. In Michigan communities in the northern Lower Peninsula and the Upper Peninsula will see an increase in the number of seniors moving to their areas. A growing number of seniors are retiring with smaller pensions and so moving out of state is not as feasible as it was a few years ago. Many seniors are looking to cheaper costs of living in rural areas. This means greater demand on services and the need for rural libraries to provide programming geared to the over 60 population. Diminishing school enrollments may mean reducing children's' programs and increasing programs for adults, esp. seniors.

Roger Mendel, Director
Mideastern Michigan Library Cooperative
503 South Saginaw Street Suite 839
Flint, Michigan 48502 810-232-7119
rmendel@flint.org

I truly do believe that public libraries can play a major role in sustaining and revitalizing rural communities. If I may say so, I also believe **funding, technology and staffing** are the most critical issues facing rural public libraries. The key to success of a rural public library lies with the library's leadership (the staff). All the money in the world and the best, most up-to-date technology that money can buy, mean nothing without good library staff. Continuing education, training, and retraining of rural library staffs are paramount to the success of any library, particularly rural libraries.

Sharman Bridges Smith, Executive Director
Mississippi Library Commission
3881 Eastwood Drive
Jackson, Mississippi 39211
sharman@mlc.lib.ms.us

One of the things affecting rural and small libraries is the **lack of broadband service**. Even though the enclosed document states that 92% of Ohioans have access to broadband service, there are pockets of Ohio that have no service. Statewide resource sharing is a goal, but not possible for those in certain areas of Ohio. Affordability, lack of computers in the home and lack of knowledge of how computers can improve lives are part of the issue.

http://connectohio.org/_documents/COArticle_92percentGongwer_062708.pdf

http://connectohio.org/_documents/COArticle_BroadbandclickswithhalfthestateDispatch_062808.pdf

Businesses are closing in small towns and small cities. People are driving further than before for employment that doesn't pay well. The following article from my hometown newspaper says a lot about trends. My brother-in-law is in social services and he's seeing a trend for people to stop trying because of the cost of fuel.

<http://www.recordherald.com/main.asp?SectionID=1&SubSectionID=1&ArticleID=131275&TM=37210.41>

Even though we have Learning Express which can be very helpful, the **lack of job opportunities in small towns often defeats the purpose**. AND, there are only so many jobs in small towns for people with a lack of education. Often the school system, county government and the library are the major places of employment.

Young people who become educated leave the smaller towns. Some older people who have enough money to settle in rural areas return, but they expect the same services as in larger cities.

A lot of the rural areas close to cities are seeing housing developments, but the libraries aren't ready for the demands. Once again, the new residents expect the same services as in urban areas.

Librarians are hunkering down and not attending conferences and workshops unless they are very close. A lot are attending one event a year per person.

Staffing is also short and it seems as if it will remain that way for a while. Staff aren't being replaced because of costs.

Some boards are still micromanaging with little knowledge of what really goes on or what the needs are.

In very small towns, the library is it - **it's the source of air conditioning, entertainment for kids in the summer who want to hang out on the computers**. This can cause problems because the libraries have too few computers and staff can spend a lot of time trying to coordinate use of the computers by everyone. Unemployed people often go to the libraries to hang out on the computers as well.

Small and rural libraries need less stuff and more computers. Librarians need to take a harder look at what materials are necessary. For example, one small library in NW Ohio is a reading room. The director realized that's what the community members want, so it's a great place to get popular books and lots of periodicals. She can get other items in a couple of days through resource sharing if necessary. She isn't wasting money on materials that stay on the shelves.

Some directors are reconfiguring the buildings to accommodate trends. They are wise to do so and are finding it much easier than trying to expand for the sake of expanding. Using space wisely will continue to be important.

None of this is new, but it is still a concern in Ohio.

Jan Haines
Library Development Consultant
State Library of Ohio
Columbus, Ohio
JHAINES@sloma.state.oh.us

We are currently seeing the impact of high oil prices and the dwindling buying power of the dollar. Our patrons are requesting that we change the policies and allow them to check out books for longer than 2 weeks because they can't come to town as often with the high gas costs. We have one office staff member that answers the phone and she says all she gets done all day is renewing books. She is behind on other jobs because of this. We are at an all time high in registering new library borrowers families. Instead of going to the movies they are coming to the library for DVD's and books for entertainment. Many families have had their high speed internet disconnected and are coming here to use the internet. Those of them who have a laptop are coming because we do have free wi-fi (courtesy of Comcast). This is straining our seating at tables. I have had to purchase more copies of the local newspaper because families are canceling their subscription and coming to the Library and reading ours. We have also had an increase in usage of Senior Citizens. Actually many of them are not coming to check out materials but are coming to find a cool, comfortable place to rest because they can't afford air conditioning. These seniors are asking for more and more large print editions of books, CD's and Audios. They are aware that these items are available from the State program for the Blind and Visually Handicapped, but they say they do not have up-to-date materials they want to read or listen to. We are using more of our resources for non-print materials than ever before and still cannot supply the demand. As more of our county population ages, I expect their demands to increase. Since revenue is down for the city and county, we do not expect any raise in our budget for the next couple of years. When an employee leaves, we are living with the idea that they may not likely get replaced. We are relying more and more on volunteers to help us do our work. This year we are using several kids from the local college as well as girl scouts. They do a great job but require a lot of supervision which ties up one of us.

Hope this helps. It sounds like I am unhappy because we are so busy, but actually we are having the time of our lives. It's nice to know that the teens think the library is a "cool" place to be and our seniors are always bringing us homemade cookies and fresh produce from their gardens. You want more details, let me know.

Madge B. Walker, Director
Greeneville-Greene County Library
210 North Main Street
Greeneville, Tennessee 37745
mwalker@ggcpl.org

Local funding can't keep up with increased costs. "Alternative or creative" funding approaches including "renting" high demand items to provide fast access to popular materials and charging for public computer classes, increases the divide between the haves and have nots.

Bookswim is here and its very scary. One of my libraries actually started "renting" high demand items as a challenge to the Bookswim alternative. See above.

Global access to information is changing the role of public libraries yet we aren't keeping up. Web 2.0 classes, internet reference classes and other continuing education efforts are still not getting a reference desk on the floor of most of the libraries I work with. Not everyone who works in the library is a librarian. Patrons don't know this and unfortunately, neither does the staff.

Agricultural communities in transformation (end of tobacco subsidies, etc.) can't compete in a computer-literate world when high speed internet access isn't available to entice the corporate world to move to the area. The infrastructure isn't in place and small communities don't have the tax base needed to build it. The **young adults are leaving for "greener pastures"** and I don't mean another farm. They are looking for opportunities for education, training, and careers where currently only small businesses or factory work is available in towns where they grew up. Once they get their education, what will entice them back?

Commuting trends in the last decade indicate people are commuting further than before, but with the recent surge of gas prices, will this trend continue?

<http://www.physorg.com/news88967500.html>

A new report suggests U.S. commuting trends are rapidly changing, mainly due to increasing immigration and more people reaching retirement age.

The report -- Commuting in America III -- is the latest decadal review of the nation's commuting patterns from the Transportation Research Board <http://www.TRB.org> . Author Alan Pisarski notes although the personal vehicle remains the most common way to go to work, public transit and carpooling are becoming increasingly popular.

"One of the most significant changes will probably come from newly arrived immigrants," said Pisarski. "Unlike most native-born Americans or immigrants who have been in the United States for more than five years, many new immigrants either carpool, bike, walk, or use public transportation for their daily commute."

Other findings in the report include:

- The number of workers with commutes lasting more than 60 minutes grew by nearly 50 percent between 1990 and 2000.
- Men comprise the majority of early-morning commuters from midnight to 7:30 a.m.; women make up the majority of commuters after approximately 7:30 a.m.
- Only about 4 percent of workers live in households with no vehicle.

Will changes to NAFTA have an effect on our communities? Will the factories come back?

Betty Jo Jarvis, Director
Highland Rim Regional Library
2118 E. Main Street
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37130
bettyjo.jarvis@state.tn.us

I work primarily with very rural and very small libraries, just to explain my frame of reference, and here are some issues that I see affecting these libraries:

- Most of the staff in the libraries I serve do not have formal library science backgrounds. Most of the libraries cannot afford to pay well enough to attract masters' level librarians. Because the requirement for masters' level library directors is based on population, and many of the counties I serve are in a population decline, I am afraid there will actually be libraries that are now required to have a masters' prepared director that in the near future will no longer have this requirement.

- Our libraries have long relied on state funding, through state aid, tuition reimbursement, construction grants, and other grants. This funding appears to be drying up, and many libraries in my area will see their growth stunted in direct correlation to the lack of state funds available.

These are the two largest issues that I see affecting my libraries. If I think of any additional issues before July 11th, I will send those to you, as well.

Jeanna Elaine Cornett, Regional Librarian
Cumberland Valley Region
875 South Main
London, Kentucky 40743
jeanna.cornett@ky.gov

I have worked in a small academic library in a very rural area of Appalachian Ohio for 30 years. Besides **obvious funding and identity issues** facing small rural libraries, I think a significant issue facing our population is the **lack of broadband Internet**, or a lack of competition for broadband, to bring costs down.

As you know, there's a major digital divide in this nation. Urban and suburban areas, and small towns, have some sort of broadband access. The only access left to rural residents is expensive satellite. Our small community has been trying for years to bring a wireless ISP or even Verizon DSL to the area. We have hit one snag after another.

Rural library users either use dialup or don't have access at all. We not only have to take a leadership role in bringing broadband to rural areas, but we also have to change the mindset of many rural residents that access to the Internet is critical and essential in today's society. Even if many of our residents had access, they would not be willing, nor could they afford, to pay for it.

Louis E. Mays, Professor/Librarian
Learning Resources Center
Southern State Community College
12681 U.S. Route 62
Sardinia, Ohio 45171
lmays@sscc.edu

Florida is in a very unique position right now in terms of rural libraries. Due to the passage of a constitutional amendment, Property Tax rates have been reduced, which means that all counties funded by property taxes are being forced to cut services. In our case, that means an 18% cut to the library budget. In addition to this, the State Legislature also cut the amount earmarked for Library Aid from the State. For us that means a 50% cut from 131,000 in aid funding to 64,000. A big hit, I'm afraid.

For us that means we have to re-shuffle our monies around to keep our staff from a) being laid off or b) taking a pay cut. Both are options that the county was considering, and I was fighting. It seems I have won on that front, however, if any of our staff leaves, we cannot fill the position due to a hiring freeze imposed by the county.

Where it will hurt us is in services to our patrons. We may have to close the library extra hours per week to cut back on utility expenses; we will definitely have to cut back on the number of books we purchase or replace; new shelving or fixtures are definitely out of the picture no new computers will be able to be added or existing ones upgraded beyond current level. Last month almost 1,000 people came to the library and signed in to use the public access computers. Many of these computers don't even have a front USB port to accommodate Flash/jump/thumb drives.

Our children's services librarian complains about the state of the Children's/YA book section, as many are very dated, contain outdated racial and gender stereotypes, and inaccurate factual information. We are also lacking in School Reading list materials, and have to tell students, "we're sorry, but we don't have any of those books".

In addition to looking at losing hours, we are considering for the first time ever charging a fee for use of the community room, and increasing the prices on our printing from the computers.

Our five-year plan included an additional branch in the county, as we only have the one library building at the present time, and no bookmobile of our own. That item has been scrapped.

We have a literacy teacher on staff, who brings the library to the poor and migrant in our community. She has been forced to cut her budget and operates solely on the basis of a grant, which will expire soon. We cannot afford to pay her salary once she goes off the grant. With a 33% adult literacy rate in the count, and Jefferson being the fifth highest illiterate county in the state, we cannot afford to lose her position. She is vital to the community, but the county cannot afford to take her on, either. She teaches as many as 64 adult students reading and writing, ESOL, and Spanish-English competency. Her classroom space is donated by a local church, as we cannot afford to rent space, and the library is too far for many of these students to travel.

Fortunately all is not lost. We are members of a larger consortium, the Wilderness Coast Library System, who provides bookmobile service for our county as well as two others, and who lobbies on our behalf for state grants. But these must be shared with the other counties, and so it is a mixed blessing.

Our Friends group is also behind us and contributes substantially for funds through their book sale and other fund raising efforts. But it is not enough.

James (Jim) Elliott, Director
Jefferson County Public Library
375 South Water Street
Monticello, Florida 32344
jelliott@jefferson.lib.fl.us

Right now, most everyone around here is concerned about how **cuts to government revenues** will impact library services. It seems to us that the legislature and governor mandate cuts in spending, as a direct result of the input of the people they represent; it's how the government is supposed to work, some say. In Florida, nearly 2/3 of the voting population voted to cut taxes. Yet, when a commensurate cut in services occurs, there is a wide outcry. I attached a copy of some stories I found about one case-in-point, a rural library in Rainbow Lakes Estates, near Ocala, Florida, from around March, 2008.

I'd rather we did it the other way around, that is we'd identify needs first, how much it costs, and progressively rate out taxes to pay for it all. A lot of stuff is known ahead of time, like salaries & benefits, vehicle expenses, and so on. I imagine there'd be quite an outcry there as well.

Libraries are just one facet, after all. There are so many community needs going unmet, because people want their tax bills cut. Few realize that their cut will only be \$50 or \$100 a year for most folks; the people who are really benefiting the most are those who live on the ocean or in exclusive enclaves. Their taxes will decrease by thousands, given the value of their homes, but only the top 1 or 2% realize that benefit. "Realize" is a bit of a pun, as these are the same people who can afford to back the neo-Gilded Age legislators and Executive that we now "enjoy" (my tongue is firmly in my cheek), and promote the tax cuts. These Rainbow Lakes folks were a majority vote in favor of the tax cut, but probably don't recognize who really benefits from all this, but it's not them.

Technology is always an issue. Many of our libraries received Gates grant computers a few years ago. Ours are aging and need replaced, so hopefully the grant will continue. If not, we'll have to begin replacing the PCs, or come up with another scheme, perhaps with more thin-client servers or dumb terminals, than stand-alone PCs. We've been able to install wireless routers, so that helps increase access. We have excellent tech support from our cooperative (Polk County Library Cooperative), but funding cuts threaten that support too.

Our staffing has been good, and maintained. Our city supports our library, though I'd guess a majority here voted for the tax cut recently, and will probably vote for more cuts in November. They can't seem to understand how they are being manipulated through the press, particularly broadcast media.

Our collection budget will decrease some for now, but we are expecting less funding going forward. Much of this is from cuts to our state funding, plus less revenue locally. Our multi-type cooperative (Tampa Bay Library Consortium) funding has been cut, so I expect less training opportunities to be offered next year.

One more thing: the Sunshine State Library Leadership Institute used to be offered for free, next year it will cost attendees \$150. I wonder how many potential leaders will have to reconsider because of the fee, not to mention less support locally for travel to the monthly meetings.

Vic Nunez, Reference Librarian
Bartow Public Library
Bartow, Florida
vnunez@pclc.lib.fl.us

There certainly are a number of issues that are related to Small & Rural Libraries in America today. I feel one of the top issues is that of being able to **access the libraries in rural regions**. The main problem being transportation, specifically the price of gas for our patrons, is a huge problem now. That coupled with the fact that there is little to no public transportation in the area, we have seen a drop in our program attendance. We offer a lot of great programs for our patronage, and sometimes no one shows or 2-4 people show up for programs.

Another issue is **budget cuts** in all areas of librarianship. Some libraries here in Florida, are cutting back hours, laying off staff, not filling vacant positions, etc.

Libraries can thrive in times of hardship, and as more and more people are out of work, the library becomes a vital place for all.

Ronald Moore, Branch Manager
Paisley County Library (a branch of Lake County Florida)
24954 C.R. 42
Paisley, Florida. 32767
rmoore@lakeline.lib.fl.us
Co-chair of the Small and Rural Libraries Group, Florida Library Association

From my perspective, what distresses me about Virginia's small and rural libraries is that they seem with few exceptions to be losing ground rather than gaining it. The gap between the best and worst library systems in the state has grown in recent years, and although in some cases the most disadvantaged are in blighted urban areas, by and large the poorest libraries are in depressed rural areas of the state. **Inadequate funding by localities** that don't have a strong enough tax base to support services is a large part of the problem (though there are some communities where the ability to pay is there but the will isn't). We are struggling in Virginia to figure out some way to equal the playing field a bit more through state funding -- but we can't yet get the state to fully fund the state aid formula that exists, let alone come up with a plan to offer more to our poorest library systems.

But of equal concern to us is the **great disparity in our state in terms of access to the Internet**. Many of the rural library systems in the state do not have any broadband connection and are still using dial-up connections. If broadband is provided by a rural library, it is at a very slow speed. We know that the Gates Foundation is exploring ways to change this, but they tell us that Virginia ranks among the bottom 10 states in this area. In Virginia, there is a statewide network but a library has to be able to get to it and the cost of that, often through local phone systems, is too high to be a realistic option.

We will look forward to the final report that comes from the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship with great interest, and if we can be of further help, please let us know.

Sandra Gioia Treadway, Librarian of Virginia
Library of Virginia
800 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
Sandra.Treadway@lva.virginia.gov

At your request, I had my development staff brainstorm trends and issues. With the economic downturn in Florida and the recent tax reform legislation, rural libraries are having a very difficult time. I look forward to receiving the results of your discussions.

“Our first step will be to identify those trends and issues that will affect rural and small libraries and their communities for the next several years.”

- Maintaining technology
- Maintaining expected levels of service in light of reduced resources
- Adopting and adapting new technologies
- Finding/seeking new resources (i.e., volunteers, private money, etc.)
- Restructuring staffing patterns
- Recruitment issues
- Coping with reduced dollars from federal, state, and local sources
- Keeping up with patron demands
- Refining and redeveloping policies
- Dealing with change in county/legal service area population (such as population influx, development, population or ethnicity changes)
- Embracing cultural diversity
- Communicating the value of libraries to residents and governing officials in the local community

Judith A. Ring, Director
Division of Library and Information Services
Department of State
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32308

We have seen in NC the emergence of public libraries -- business librarians in particular -- as key players in networks of people who help entrepreneurs, especially in at least two of our rural regions.

Many startups and aspiring entrepreneurs use the library as a first point of information and it's great when the business librarian knows the other resource people in the region.

In the Rocky Mount region east of Raleigh there is a group of public libraries across 3 counties working together through a grant-funded project called Business Information Center Outreach Services Program (BICOS) on improving their entrepreneurship-related resources. They are subscribing to more business “intelligence” sources, and they have recently started offering on-site counseling through SCORE. See <http://www.bicos-nc.org/> for more info. If this all goes well we should encourage them to become an economic gardening site! www.ncruralcenter.org/entrepreneurship

Leslie A. Scott, Director
Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship
North Carolina Rural Center
4021 Carya Drive
Raleigh, North Carolina 27610
lscott@ncruralcenter.org

Thoughts on rural libraries....by library directors in South Carolina

Issues:

Demographics:

Libraries in small, rural counties in South Carolina are affected by all the negative demographic issues: poverty, joblessness, single parent families, Lack of youth activities, lack of transportation, poor school and health systems. Declining populations leading to shrinking tax base

Generally, not only are the residents poor, but so are the county governments...resulting in a lack of local resources for library facilities, staff, and materials. Even if the will to fund libraries were there, the dollars are not...especially with the tax cap (SC act limits increase in county budgets by no more than 15% in five years) and lack of growth due to local economic conditions.

Illiterate populations leads to further loss of industry/commerce/jobs and less of all of these coming into the community (again money).

Public libraries in rural areas are serving a very different clientele from the cities and suburbs. Patrons from less affluent backgrounds are not as familiar with library services and are more likely to be put off by traditional library "rules."

Mindset (new South with new set of problems such as indifference and apathy: old South gone but leaving legacy of small upper class who have theirs and don't care about anyone else)

Population migration due to limited economic opportunities. Rural towns across America, indeed across South Carolina, have witnessed steady out-migration of their youth and working-age populations to adjacent urban areas for jobs and affordable housing. A recent cover story in the Spartanburg (SC) Herald-Journal newspaper showed a marked loss of residents of rural counties(e.g. Union, Laurens, etc.) into neighboring(urban)Spartanburg and Greenville counties. Small towns must identify and recruit small business, manufacturing, agri-business, distribution centers and other viable employers to provide jobs to sustain their economic survival.

Aging populations will have a significant impact on programming, outreach, and collections of small libraries well into the 21st century. The percentage of residents ages 65 + in many small towns is rapidly approaching 25 percent and higher. Libraries must hire and/or train staff to target services to senior citizens and, equally important, the ballooning number of active baby boomers living in or retiring to these rural areas. Large print materials, audio books, assistive devices, instructional classes for seniors, and targeted outreach to the homebound as well our mobile seniors are all essential to serving a graying community nationally.

Digital Divide:

Currently, public libraries have a corner on the public access computer market in rural counties...very few areas have much broadband coverage. This digital divide issue will be critical to what happens in the future, both for public libraries and for SC citizens. If broadband can be deployed in the rural areas, jobs and opportunities may follow.

Free access to the latest technology is critical. Rural & libraries still remain the only gateway to free internet, e-mail, and research databases for their rural, geographically isolated patrons. Also, many outlying areas which may or may not have internet access need increased bandwidth, satellite internet service, plus training on how to use the multiple technologies and resources available in the digital age. Sadly, rural towns and counties continue to have significant numbers of residents with little or no internet access or computer skills.

Public Services:

On the other hand, public libraries offer a neutral community center that is hard to find in many rural areas...the ability to provide better facilities and programming would bring more people to the library.

We are often the only option for cultural and educational resources outside of the public schools...it's hard to buy books locally and most people can't afford them. The local recreation groups may do dance or sports or martial arts, but few other agencies do any type of storytelling or arts-related programming for children.

Access to timely health care information and services. As rural residents age and small towns find it more difficult to recruit trained medical professionals to practice in their communities, libraries have outstanding opportunities to provide health and medical information for healthy living to their communities. Rural residents often seek current, confidential answers to medical questions at their public library by reading current books and magazines. Hospitals, the NLM, and medical schools have all partnered with rural public libraries in recent years to offer health databases, educational classes, and diagnostic screenings at little or no cost to residents. Libraries must expand their role in educating their patrons using the ever-growing array of health information resources.

Funding:

Consistent local and state government funding must be available to rural library services and the communities they serve. Communities have successfully secured funding by partnering with local or regional agencies, organizations, schools, and businesses to collectively persuade their elected local and state leaders to fund library technology, facilities, and programs. A collaborative effort often makes the most efficient use of limited resources and can convince elected leaders of the need for funding projects of equal importance to libraries such as schools, roads, water and sewer projects, and parks and recreational facilities. In the future, libraries must vigorously lobby government at all levels(using Friends, professional associations, and constituents) to fund them adequately so they can fulfill their roles as the sole providers of lifelong learning in the majority of rural communities.

Staffing:

Limited funding sources mean lack of support for quality staff and collections. It is hard to grow when you have to fight to keep budgets from being cut each year.

Library staff cannot participate in the latest trends for lack of staff, equipment and facilities so our patrons are behind the times.

Bottom line:

Small and rural libraries have service needs that are greater than current or future resources. And, limited funding sources mean lack of support for quality staff and

collections. It is hard to grow when you have to fight to keep budgets from being cut each year.

It all boils down to money. Money really does buy better facilities and more (and better-trained) staff to provide services.

What can we do?

- Continue to argue our case before the legislature.
- Develop better data to support our requests for more dollars. (Perhaps some statistics that address specific rural county issues?)
- Develop some benchmarks for service and develop some tools to help convince local governments to meet them.
- Invite the Clarion folks to South Carolina for a program or conference...even most of the larger public libraries have at least one or two branches that might benefit from some insights into rural services.
- Have a “summit” of just rural South Carolina public libraries to spend a day talking about issues. Share some success stories.
- Redistribution of wealth through tax reform
- Different approaches to service
- Creative business recruitment outside the box - this is happening somewhat
- Creative fee and local taxation strategies
- Rethinking governmental approaches

Case Study of a Success:

A new library facility in a ***small rural community can be a catalyst for renewing the downtown areas of a small town.*** For example, the new Pamplico (Florence Co. SC) branch opened about six months ago. Computer use, circulation and door counts have gone up approximately 500%. The new meeting room is used by the community for numerous events, children's activities and community forums. The old library building has been renovated and is now the town hall. Utilizing a \$500,000 grant from the Commerce Department the city removed telephone lines, repaired side walks and re-landscaped mainstreet. The downtown area is much more appealing and new businesses are interested in moving downtown. The new library was the base to start this revitalization. All of these communities are excited that they will also have the opportunity that Pamplico had to revitalize their downtown and at the same time to bring quality library facilities and services to their communities.

Other communities involved in new buildings and revitalization of towns in SC includes: Johnsonville & Olanta branches (Florence Co.); Headquarters libraries for Marlboro Co. and Calhoun Co.

“In these times of economic turmoil and high gas prices, rural community libraries may be the only game in town.”

Deborah Hotchkiss, Director
Library Development Services
South Carolina State Library
P.O. Box 11469
Columbia, South Carolina 29211
Dhotchkiss@statelibrary.sc.gov

**Issues for Rural Libraries, 2008:
A Collaborative Paper from Western Council States
Jan Walsh, President
Western Council of State Libraries**

The following contributors embraced this subject and sent valuable information and papers: Susan Barrett and Rand Simmons, Washington State Library; Jim Scheppke, Oregon State Library; Susan Oberlander and staff, New Mexico State Library; Sue Sherif, Aja Razumny, Rich Greenfield and Kay Shelton, Alaska State Library; Carla Lehn, Jon Torkelson and Susan Hildreth, California State Library. Because several submitted thoughtful and comprehensive papers for this summit, I have included their papers in full at the end.

Development of a national plan for rural library services is a major step forward. Because the nation's geography and cultures are diverse, however, and areas are uniquely and wonderfully different, one from another, a plan must address regional differences and be adaptable by state libraries in planning to address state needs. For instance, in the west, the determining factor in community economic vitality and growth is still usually geographic location.

One of the important issues to address is how to get the library involved in the rural issues discussions on a local, regional, and national basis. For example, participation in the National Rural Assembly and other national rural meetings and organizations, working with state and regional rural issues organizations and forums, and having a presence and voice in local efforts, are all critical to the future of rural libraries. We need to figure out how to get there and how to speak with one voice.

While all those concerned with rural libraries are doing their best to collaborate and keep in touch, unfortunately many rural libraries are not aware that this wealth of resources is available, and those who are aware often find themselves overwhelmed, not empowered, by them. It still seems apparent that to move forward substantially we need something to collaborate around – an entity, a clearinghouse, or at least a national plan, to serve as the “one clear voice” on behalf of rural libraries. *(Please see California State Library's Carla Lehn and Jon Torkelson's paper, pp.45-47.)*

Key factors for success to rural libraries are strong leadership, adequate and stable funding, access to excellent training, and the availability of connectivity and information technology. In addition, macro issues in rural areas significantly impact their public libraries.

Macro Issues in Rural America

- Providing a forum to focus on the future of rural libraries is a very good thing. However, this is not just a library issue. It is one part of the numerous issues concerning the future of rural communities. For example, the availability of technology, rural health, rural economics, and support for rural local government services are all related and are a few of the rural issues that affect the library as well as the community.
- The economic downturn has had a severe effect throughout the nation
 - For instance, most rural Alaskan communities are currently in crisis, mainly due to rising fuel¹ costs, but also due to several other pre-existing and long-term

¹ Rural residents may pay 100% or more than their urban counterparts for fuel. Where residents of the three largest Alaskan urban areas pay 4% of household income for fuel, rural households -

factors, including lack of balanced local economies² (which results in high underemployment) and global warming and de-population trends.³ In rural areas more than urban ones, the overall cost of living now ties directly to fuel costs: food, manufactured goods, electricity, etc. - everything costs more as the cost of fuel goes up. Some of these increased costs have yet to ripple through the Alaskan economy, although rural areas in other western states have been impacted. The dramatic rise in fuel costs may be temporary or short term, or it may be recurrent or long term. In any case, however, a national plan for rural library services must take into account the overall trend.

- Rising fuel and utility costs are issues everywhere, but in Alaska they have reached a point where the cost of keeping a building warm and lit may overtake the ability of the community to support their library and other public buildings.
- As the cost of transportation of goods rises, and the costs, financial and environmental, of energy production increase, it seems possible that rural areas could become critically important to energy production and economic health. The production of ethanol from corn and the construction of wind energy facilities in rural areas are indicative of this development. The rising cost of the transportation of food products may increase the importance of the availability of locally grown food.
- Gas lines and exorbitant prices for gas and food are changing the lives of Americans.
 - Rising gas prices will affect rural libraries in several ways:
 - Distances that rural folks have to travel seem farther with the gas crisis.
 - High gas prices may result in more people moving out of rural areas, leaving rural libraries with fewer people to serve and thus less funding.
 - Patrons who live a good distance from their nearest library may be less inclined to visit it.
 - Some patrons increasingly will turn to the internet for their information and personal interest reading needs, especially with the rise of inexpensive book rentals and ever-increasing information resources; however, this also presents an opportunity for libraries, as they can provide quality subscription databases that patrons can access remotely.
 - Libraries will have to pay more to engage in resource sharing with other libraries, having to either absorb that cost themselves or pass it onto their patrons, or perhaps eliminate the service.
 - Staff in rural libraries will have fewer opportunities to travel to professional development opportunities such as training and conferences, leading to further isolation and lack of up to date skills.
- Global warming has effects on communities in rural western states.
- In many states, location is the key to economic viability and growth.
 - In Alaska, the determining factor in community economic viability and growth is still usually geographic location. Historically, the great majority of rural Alaskan communities developed along the coastal and inland waterway systems, which until the last century were the only “roads” in Alaska. Those communities now on

with much lower average household income - are paying as high as 40%.

<http://www.iser.uaa.alaska.edu/Home/ResearchAreas/fuelcosts2.html>

² Rural communities are often based on seasonal forms of resource exploitation like, hunting and logging.

³ *Fuel Costs, Migration, and Community Viability Final Report*

<http://www.iser.uaa.alaska.edu/Home/ResearchAreas/fuelcosts.html>

the state road or marine highway systems inevitably have had the benefit of a lower cost of living due to cheaper delivery of goods and services than the cost of living in communities supported only by barge and air. Only 34 of Alaska's 103 libraries are on the road system, while the rest are only reached by air and water. Although approximately 90 per cent of Alaskans live within official library service areas,⁴ out of a total of something less than 400 communities, over 200 - 14 of which have populations of over 600 - have no public library. Of the 14 communities with populations over 600 and no public library, all are off the road system.

- In Washington, one has to fly from eastern Jefferson County to western Jefferson County, or drive through multiple counties to reach a destination in the same county. The sheer geographic distance, as well as overwhelming geographic diversity (i.e., high desert, mountains, forests, beach, and the rolling hills of the Palouse in Washington) is an obstacle to transportation and services. Coupled with weather which can brutally close all mountain passes connecting the western regions to the eastern regions of Washington and Oregon, the distance and diversity can be overwhelming.
- Rural communities and rural land will become increasingly important and valuable in the near future.
- The knowledge and skills of rural people in their communities, as well as their “do-it-yourself” attitude, will be important to the economic viability of our society.
- Professional people are moving into the rural areas, past suburban sprawl; they have high standards and expectations of their library.
- There is the beginning of a rural population influx, the first in a long time, with small farmers among them.
- On the other hand, there is a decrease in the number of folks interested in commuting from their rural “ranchette” into cities to work, so there is a decrease in the out-spreading of suburbs.
- Farm products are in great demand (wheat, corn, soybeans) and farm income is rising for the first time in a long time.
- Large numbers of factory farms are owned by corporations with stockholders to please, but there is often no interest in rural dynamics or social network.
- The devastation from floods and fires has long-term, multiple years' effects on their communities.
- Post-Katrina distrust of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has spread to distrust that “the government is here to help you”.
- There are fewer transportation choices, with no more Greyhound bus service, no local trains (except in the Northeast), and fewer short-hop airlines available.
- Some perceive a real income dichotomy, in which the “rich” still have the ability to pay to do things, but “everybody else” cannot.
- Increased immigration raids often drive the Spanish speaking, some of whom used libraries, out-of-sight.
- People are again looking at their libraries as centers of their community, or library as place; in many rural communities, the library has always been just that.

⁴ 100% if “Books by Mail” and other Regional Service programs are counted. Out of a 2007 population of 676,987, 73,524 Alaskans were eligible for these services.

Technology Presents Both Opportunities and Challenges

- Many rural libraries lack the funding to purchase new technology that will allow patrons to fully utilize the internet and attract patrons; however, libraries that are able to provide new technology, such as games and video editing software, can do well to attract patrons with it.
- Technology offers rural libraries the opportunity to take the lead in assisting citizens, business leaders, and those in public offices in their communities.
- Broadband access to telecommunications is still not available in many rural areas yet technology has ultimately decreased the distance of rural communities from the more urban parts of their states.
- A segment of the population still does not have full and automatic access to computers, and the library can be a hub as the provider for those folks.
- However, more people may turn to the internet to receive information and even read for pleasure instead of visiting the library.
- Even if broadband telecommunications are stretched at great cost to reach remote villages in Alaska, will there be a physical place where people may access the services that digital connections might bring?
- Modern telecommunication facilities can be used to provide and maintain a wide variety of library services, including the delivery of multimedia substitutes for more traditional formats. Access to digital library services, however, are increasingly dependent on high-speed connectivity (i.e., broadband in the low megabits or above) and often require end users have advanced Internet and PC skills. Alaska rural residents, already on the wrong side of the urban/rural economic divide, are also the least prepared to make effective use of online library resources, lacking access to and experience with the Internet.
- Providing affordable broadband to all residents of Alaska is a problem that the state, working with the telecommunications industry, has yet to resolve, despite substantial annual subsidies from the Universal Service Fund. Once again, this is largely due to geography and the dispersal of the rural population of the state in over 150 village communities. Communities in Alaska not on the state road system have higher telecommunication, often by factors as high as 10 or 20 times. (*Please see Rich Greenfield's paper from the Alaska State Library, pp.40-42.*)
- Projects such as Washington's *Rural Heritage*, which includes digitization of small and rural libraries' local historical treasures, provides a mechanism for conserving and providing access to historical items, many of which have been in drawers prior to the project. In addition, it markets the wealth of heritage materials in the rural library to both the local community and the state.

Funding – Always an Issue

- For many rural towns, there is a preponderance of seniors, but no manufacturing jobs, just retirees and returnees.
- As the population struggles with a downturn in the economy, libraries have the opportunity to provide free information or entertainment.
- There is an increase of concern on how to develop and support the infrastructure due to inadequate funding.
- Soft money (one time funding) bridges the gap temporarily, but sustainability is a huge issue for rural libraries.
- State and federal funds cannot close the gap; local funding is drying up in light of public safety, including police and fire, and physical needs, such as water.

- Due to new interpretations of regulations for LSTA, many of the services formerly provided by state libraries will no longer be available.
- Increased government reliance on electronic documents (tax forms, driver's license renewals, job applications) has already created unfunded mandates for libraries in communities where the public owns few home computers to access materials online and library staff must intermediate with members of the public who are not Internet-literate. Even kiosks require some sort of technological support and someone to stock them.
- In Washington, a 1 per cent lid on levies (limited to 1 per cent increase per year) is beginning to have a significant negative effect.
- Some funding models do not work, e.g. Oregon's Jackson, Josephine, Douglas County libraries closing.
- Loss or severe lessening of timber tax revenues is a devastating factor in western states such as Washington.

Leadership is Critical

- Vision often creates support.
- With strong leadership, the rural library can meet the needs of a diverse community.
- Most librarians and other library staff do not begin their careers wanting to be political, yet it is impossible to avoid the political scene at some level in libraries today.
- Library leaders need to understand the concept of running the library as a business.
- Those who manage rural libraries need to understand and excel at advocacy.
- They need to comprehend and practice the roles of Board, Director, Friends, and staff.
- It is critical that they have the skills and develop the will to work with their government entity, such as a city, and with the board to develop programs that meet the needs of their community and that are adequately funded.

Training and Staff Development are Essential

- The fact that so many staff members in rural libraries are place bound is being addressed with distance learning and technology; this is a major step forward, yet we need to encourage those in rural libraries to avail themselves of the education and training that is available via distance education.
- States and associations must address training and skill development for those who have little or no formal training in librarianship or library management.
- Training remote library staff is a key concern in a high tech environment.
- Standardized certification competencies raise the bar and enable those in even the smallest of libraries to develop skills necessary to successfully manage the library, e.g. Western Council Certification, certification from state libraries.
- Western Council partnered with ALA to develop the certification for support staff.
- Tribal libraries are also rural libraries and the skills of those staff must be addressed, e.g. the Western Council Tribal Libraries Conferences (Oklahoma and Oregon).
- An LSTA-funded program, the Rural Library Initiative (RLI) of the California State Library makes training and program services available to libraries in remote areas so that they may serve the needs of their local, often isolated, library users. Training for library support groups, access to meetings and training through virtual methods, access to resources through an electronic clearinghouse, and delivery of high need workshops to geographically isolated areas are supported by the RLI. Rural library directors and staff are included in the planning of the services provided by the RLI, as well as in the choice of workshop topics. The RLI provides access to training and resources to help rural

community members get better library service, and to help rural library staff members be better able to do their jobs. This has been a successful relationship.

- Mechanisms for training have expanded with newer technologies. For instance, the Washington State Library provides training via KWSL, a *First Tuesdays* program featuring a select topic, offered once a month to staff of rural libraries using Wimba.

Additional Factors for Success

- Larger units of service are important, with efficiencies and economies of scale; underfunded and under-performing small, rural public libraries struggle, often in vain, to provide the quality services often provided by rural libraries that are part of a larger library. *Please see Oregon State Librarian Jim Scheppke's memo, attached.*
- The problem of under funding has been exacerbated by the need to incorporate technology in addition to what is considered the traditional role of the library.
- The librarian must be key to the community.
- The importance of the role that public libraries can and do play in having a positive impact on local economic development because of the resources they provide is discussed in the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs *Rural Research Report*, Winter 2008, attached as a separate document. How each library can participate in and support the economic health of its community may be important to the viability of the rural library.
- A network or community of libraries enable sharing and learning, e.g. the tribal group, Keepers of the Stories, in Washington.
- While improved Internet access is essential for remote communities, Alaska Bush villages function better in a high-touch rather than just a high-tech environment. It's an integral and valued aspect of their lives in a non-urban environment. In addition, while technology can support education, it does not replace the role of live children's programming in promoting early learning and oral language experiences, for example. The "library as place" is still a major role of rural libraries throughout the west.
- Alaska has a number of combined school/community libraries, which seems a logical way to go, but the buy-in for local schools to support a true community library on their premises is marginal. Because so many rural school districts have minimally supported their school libraries, the presence of a community library in the school gives some school administrators license to drop their actual support of the school library almost completely, so neither the poor school library nor the struggling community library succeeds. Is there a new model of providing both types of library service from a school building that could be promoted and rewarded with special incentive grants?
- In Alaska, Alaska Native populations make up over 95 per cent of some of their rural communities, and their needs and concerns about cultural integrity and local languages must be addressed in a national plan.
- The role of the library will vary depending on the community and its needs, but the rural community will need to address the issue of what services it can support with the available dollars, and the library should be at the table during this discussion. The important issue for rural libraries is to find out what role their communities want them to play in this process.

Questions and Issues to Ponder, or Random Thoughts, Beyond 2008:

- What are the factors that enable the success of the rural library?
- What is the base level of services? Is the library more than a reading room?
- Is leadership more important than budget?
- How can we achieve sustainability? When there is an opportunity such as the Gates grants to the states, e.g. connectivity, does the rural library have the ability to sustain the forward movement?
- Can rural libraries get beyond the negative image (donated books, little old ladies in charge) that some have had in the past? Conversely, one might ask if the urban library can develop the community feeling of so many rural libraries.
- What forms of collaboration could help the rural library?
- Is the MLS degree necessary for management of a rural library?
- Does the Board have the skills necessary, including boardmanship, or does it micro-manage?
- Do some rural libraries have a victim or welfare mentality? If they do, can they get beyond it?
- Earlier plans encouraged regional systems in rural areas to provide economies of scale in administration and centralized services. These successfully brought library services to rural areas in many lower 48 states (Washington, Illinois, North Carolina, for example). These were never launched in Alaska because there was no road connection among most rural libraries. Now that libraries can be linked electronically, is there a model for creation of a new type of region linked digitally to provide technical services for very small libraries? Could shared web-based cataloging services and automation systems work to allow rural library staff to concentrate on some of the high-touch services like early childhood, adult literacy initiatives, or cultural programming tailored to particular community needs? (*Please see paper from Sue Sherif and Aja Razumny, Alaska State Library, pp.43-44.*)
- What are successful and appropriate services for rural communities? How much of rural library service needs to be delivered in a physical location:
 - services for children
 - services for parents with preschoolers and infants
 - services to rural teens, who often have few gathering options
 - homework help for students with no staffed library program at school
 - adult basic and information literacy
 - meeting rooms in small communities where there may be few other public buildings
 - book collections where there are no supermarkets or book stores
 - book mobiles where there are roads
 - how much can be delivered effectively electronically or at a distance
 - government information
 - reference and interlibrary loan services
 - books by mail.



Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

State Library

250 Winter St. NE
Salem, OR 97301-3950
(503) 378-4243
FAX (503) 588-7119
TTY (503) 378-4334

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jan Walsh, President
Western Council of State Libraries

FROM: Jim Scheppke, State Librarian

DATE: June 25, 2008

SUBJECT: The Future of Small and Rural Public Libraries

Thank you Jan for agreeing to represent Western Council at the July meeting to discuss a national action plan for improving small and rural libraries. In your June 9th email you asked the members of Western Council for input to help you prepare for the meeting. This is a topic that I have pondered and worked on for the past 27 years, beginning in rural West Texas, where I headed a regional library system, and then in state libraries in Texas and Oregon. It is a subject I have very strong feelings about, particularly because I have seen so little progress, and really relatively few effective efforts, nationwide, in the past quarter century. I hope you will permit me to describe the problem as I see it, and to suggest what I see to be the only real solution that could result in high quality, high performing public libraries for rural America.

What is the Problem?

In 1948 the American Library Association published *A National Plan for Public Library Service*.⁵ It was authored by Carleton Joeckel and Amy Winslow who led the ALA committee that developed it. As far as I can tell it was the last major national plan for public libraries adopted by ALA. The plan described public

⁵ Carleton B. Joeckel and Amy Winslow, *A National Plan for Public Library Service* (Chicago: ALA 1948)

library service for the U.S. population at the time as falling into three categories: 50 million Americans with good quality library services (as judged by library income per capita), 50 million Americans with poor quality services; and 35 million Americans without library services (p. 21).

I am not familiar with any comparable categorization of public library services in the U.S. that has been done recently, but I think it's accurate to say that we have seen progress in the past half century in providing more Americans with quality public library services. We have made major progress in reducing the number of Americans without public library services. I did an analysis awhile back, using NCES data from 2004, that indicated that only about 7.3 million Americans lived outside of the legal service area of a public library, about 3% of the total U.S. population. We have also seen progress in the overall quality of public library services. In my experience, I think it is accurate to say that most Americans who live in urban and suburban communities enjoy reasonably good public library services. This is true in my state, with only a few exceptions.

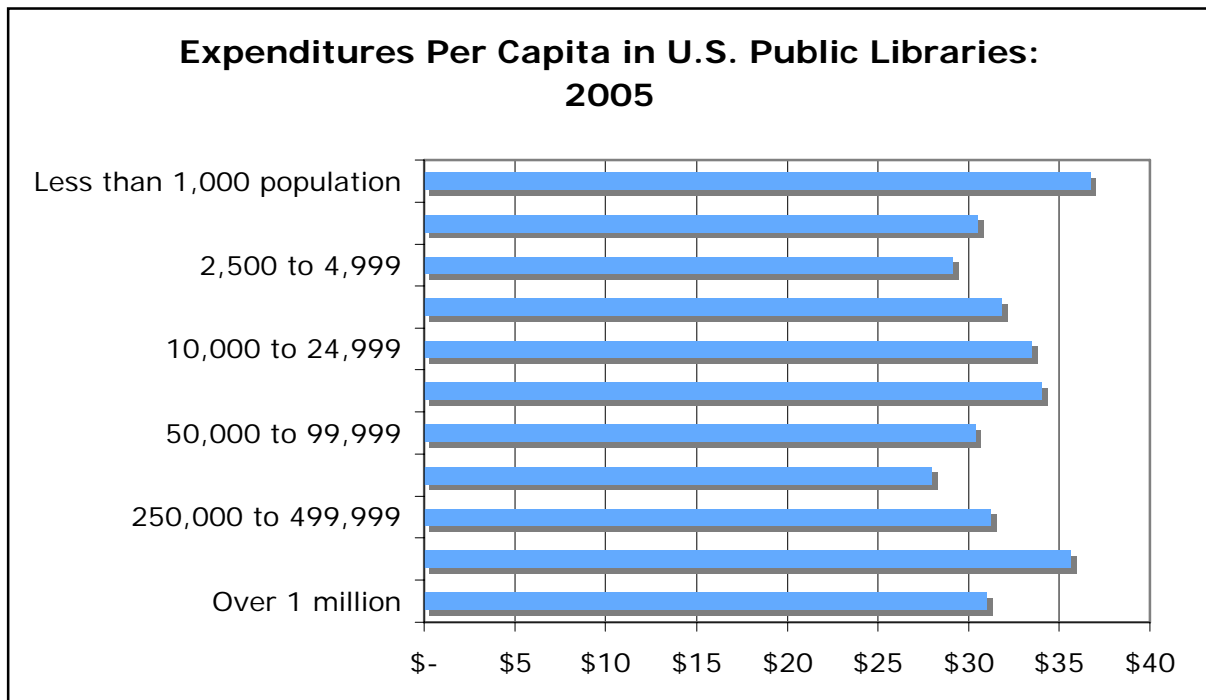
Where we have seen the least progress over the past half century, since the *National Plan* was adopted, has been in improving the quality of public libraries in small and rural communities in the U.S. I think my state is pretty typical in this regard. In Oregon we currently have 129 public library administrative units, and 71 (55%) have service area populations smaller than 10,000. Together they only serve 7% of my state's population. The average service area population of these 71 libraries is about 3,500.

These small and (with only a few exceptions) rural libraries in Oregon, collectively, lag behind the rest of the libraries in my state in quality and performance. Most are under-funded. As a group, their expenditures per capita in FY 2007 were only 72% of the average in my state. This situation is worse than it may appear at first glance, because these libraries miss out on significant economies of scale that larger libraries enjoy. I've always believed that for a small /rural library to be equal to a larger library in the quality of their staffing, operating hours, collections, technology, etc., it takes a significantly higher per capita operating budget. Because of their underfunding, these libraries are open to the public an average of only 34 hours per week. Only 18 of the 71 libraries can afford to employ a professional (MLS) librarian (a total of only 21.62 FTE librarians are employed by the 71 libraries). Their collections expenditures per capita are only 70% of the state average. Because of these quality issues, these libraries' performance lags behind the larger libraries in Oregon. Their circulation of library materials per capita is only 75% of the state average. Their reference transactions per capita is only 68% of the state average.

Underneath all these numbers is the sad reality that our colleagues in Western Council know only too well from onsite experience. I'll never forget the "librarian" in a small West Texas town in the early 1980s showing me around her small, shabby, storefront library and pointing out the fiction books and the "true books" (and I could name some Oregon libraries that are not any better than this one was). It's easy to laugh about experiences like this, but it's not funny for people in that community who could benefit greatly from a much higher standard of service.

Some of these Oregon numbers are not atypical with the rest of the country. Looking at the NCES statistics for 2005, I see that 59% of all the libraries in the U.S. have service area populations under 10,000. The average operating expenditures for these 5,432 public libraries was just over \$100,000, which is not enough to pay a living wage and benefits to even two full time library staff, and still have enough money left for adequate library materials and technology, and the other costs of a public library. Only 20% of these libraries employ a professional librarian.

Some of the national numbers may appear to run counter to my assertion that small and rural libraries are, compared to larger libraries, under-funded and under-performing. Unlike in my state, expenditures per capita in the U.S. remain fairly constant across all population sizes:



But as I stated earlier, I believe smaller libraries require larger per capita budgets in order to match the quality of larger libraries, because of comparable fixed costs

and lack of economies of scale. As the chart above indicates, the public libraries serving the smallest populations in the U.S. have the largest per capita expenditures (\$36.73). But even so, an average library serving less than 1,000, — say a library serving 900 people — would only have spent about \$33,000 in 2005.

Also unlike numbers in my state, national numbers for library circulation per capita are higher, not lower, for smaller libraries. I suppose this deserves more research before one could conclude that small libraries across the U.S. under-perform larger libraries. But I would guess that lower circulation per capita in larger U.S. libraries has more to do with their demographic profile than with the quality of their services. My hypothesis would be that if demographics are held constant, small libraries in the U.S. do under-perform larger libraries by a significant extent.

What is the Solution?

If you agree that we have a problem with under-funded and under-performing small and rural public libraries, what is the solution?

In my 27 years of attempting to work on this problem in two different states, I have come to the conclusion that the 1948 *National Plan for Public Library Service* got it right:

“A second basic fact about the American public library system is that most of the administrative units are too small — both in population served and in income. Public library income, moreover, should meet two different standards: the standard for total income, and the standard for per capita income...Of the 7,500 American public libraries, relatively few meet these standards...One of the great tasks of library planning, as these figures show, is the organization of a structure of public library units large enough and financially strong enough to provide effective service... A body of experience accumulated through the last quarter of a century demonstrates that a union of small units into a county or regional library provides the most economical and efficient method of supplying books and library service to all the people...Obviously, continued progress in the creation of larger units of library service is urgently needed.” (p. 20-22).

The *National Plan* called for reducing the number of U.S. public library administrative units from approximately 7,500 to 1,200. It also called for each of these libraries to have annual operating income of not less than \$37,500, which would be about \$345,000 in today’s dollars. Sixty years after the *National Plan* was adopted by ALA, it’s obvious that we have not come near this goal. As of 2005 we have 9,198 public libraries in the U.S., more than in 1948, and, as noted

above, the smallest public libraries (under 10,000 population served) have budgets that average less than a third of the amount recommended in 1948.

While it is clear that the *National Plan* has been a failure at the national level in solving the problem of small and rural libraries, it should be noted that a handful of states have done well in executing the ideas in the *National Plan*. Your state of Washington, Jan, is one of them, as you know, with only 65 library administrative units serving a population of 6.1 million in 2005 — an average service area population of 94,308. Other states that deserve praise for doing their part to help meet the *National Plan* are California (205,530 average service area population), Florida (229,051), Georgia (149,138), Hawaii (1,263,000), Maryland (229,958), Nevada (114,500), North Carolina (113,880), South Carolina (100,548) and Virginia (81,374). Is library service better for the average rural resident of these states? That is a question that would make a great research project for some graduate student somewhere, but I am confident that the answer is ‘yes’. Another question to investigate is whether library service is more equal in quality for urban, suburban and rural residents of these states than in other states. I’m almost certain that the answer to this question is ‘yes’ as well.

I have long admired the effort that was made in your state of Washington to develop some of the best rural library services in the country through the creation of multi-county regional library districts. I was delighted when your former State Librarian, Maryan Reynolds, published her first-hand account⁶ of how this took place beginning with the creation of the State Library Commission in 1941 and the passage that same year of the Rural County Library District Law. She recounts how in 1948 Dr. Charles Bowerman of the University of Washington worked with the State Library Commission to create a master plan calling for regional library districts with minimum annual income of \$100,000 (\$861,000 in today’s dollars). The Bowerman Report became the blueprint for your library development work over the next several decades. When the Library Services Act was passed by the Congress in the 1950’s, your state library devoted nearly all of the LSA funds to demonstrating and creating regional library districts in rural Washington. As you know, the execution of the Bowerman Report was not 100% successful. You still have a few small and rural libraries that are determined, to this day, to go their own way. But I’d say it was at least 80% successful, and the Washington regional library districts, often combining urban, suburban, and rural populations into one strong and well-supported administrative unit that gets significant economies of scale, are a model for the nation.

What is the solution to the problem of under-funded and underperforming small and rural libraries in the U.S.? I say go back to the *National Plan* and to the

⁶ Maryan E. Reynolds, *The Dynamics of Change* (Pullman: WSU Press 2001).

Bowerman Report for the solution. Would it be difficult, given that most small and rural libraries now have a century or more of history as independent entities behind them? In my experience of trying to effect this kind of change in my own state, I'd say it's not only difficult, it may be impossible in all but a few cases. What might make it more possible would be for communities to be provided major incentives for change, similar to what your state did in the 1950s and 1960s with LSA funds. I wish we could interest a major U.S. foundation in this.

Is there any other way to solve the problem of small and rural libraries in the U.S.? I am pretty confident that there is not. State libraries have been trying less aggressive strategies over the past four decades. In the 1970's it was thought that regional library systems, overlaid on top of the status quo, might be the answer. I used to run a regional library system so I have seen them from close up. I think there is ample evidence that they have done little to significantly improve the quality of service in small and rural libraries. Some state libraries have embraced training of rural library staff as the answer. Training can't hurt, but it doesn't often even touch the fundamental problems of under-funding and the lack of economies of scale. State libraries (mine included) and national foundations have taken on various supports and subsidies for small and rural libraries — licensed databases, public-access computers, telecommunications, website hosting, even a statewide open source integrated library system in Georgia. These efforts shouldn't be discounted, but one has to wonder if they might have done more to prop up the status quo than to effect significant, sustainable service improvement. Keith Lance, now retired from the Colorado State Library, and I used to kid about a “co-dependency” relationship between state libraries (and regional library systems) and the small and rural libraries they serve. Though we joked about this, I think there is an element of truth here.

I will close by wishing you and your colleagues at the Clarion University meeting the best. I hope I might have inspired you to go to your stacks and find a copy of the *National Plan for Library Service* (hope it hasn't been weeded!) and maybe, while you are at it, a copy of the Bowerman Report. I believe they hit the nail right on the head!

Alaska Rural Library Recommendations: Rich Greenfield

Alaska State Library – July 2008

To what extent will the success of any national program for improved services to small and rural libraries always be heavily dependent on the economic health of the communities in which those libraries reside?

In Alaska, the determining factor in community economic viability and growth is still usually geographic location. Historically, the great majority of rural Alaskan communities developed along the coastal and inland waterway systems, which until the last century were the only “roads” in Alaska. Those communities now on the state road or marine highway systems inevitably have had the benefit of a lower cost of living due to cheaper delivery of goods and services than the cost of living in communities supported only by barge and air. Only 34 of Alaska’s 103 libraries are on the road system, while the rest are only reached by air and water. Although approximately 90% of Alaskans live within official library service areas,⁷ out of a total of something less than 400 communities, over 200 - 14 of which have populations of over 600 – have no public library. Of the 14 communities with populations over 600 and no public library, all are off the road system.

Most rural Alaskan communities are currently in crisis, mainly due to rising fuel⁸ costs, but also due to several other pre-existing and long-term factors, including lack of balanced local economies⁹ (which results in high underemployment) and global warming and de-population trends.¹⁰ In rural areas more than urban ones, the overall cost of living now ties directly to fuel costs: food, manufactured goods, electricity, etc. - *everything* costs more as the cost of fuel goes up. Some of these increased costs have yet to ripple through the Alaskan economy. The dramatic rise in fuel costs may be temporary or short term, or it may be recurrent or long term. In any case, however, a national plan for rural library services must take into account the overall trend

As a result of its oil revenues, Alaska is in the odd situation of being a very rich state in terms of its budget surplus; but, at the same time, a state with increasingly poor rural communities due to the same high oil prices. There is, unfortunately, no current statewide consensus on how rural communities can or should be assisted by the state. In the absence of such assistance, it is unclear how many of the smaller rural communities, including those with libraries, will survive the next decade should these trends continue.

Any national program to strengthen library services should take such state-specific facts into account and retain a certain degree of flexibility at the state level to respond to rapidly changing demographics. Between 1990 and 2000, Alaska’s percentage of urban population grew faster than any other state’s (4.5%), while its rural population contracted by a similar percentage.¹¹

⁷ 100% if “Books by Mail” and other Regional Service programs are counted. Out of a 2007 population of 676,987, 73,524 Alaskans were eligible for these services.

⁸ Rural residents may pay 100% or more than their urban counterparts for fuel. Where residents of the three largest Alaskan urban areas pay 4% of household income for fuel, rural households – with much lower average household income - are paying as high as 40%.

<http://www.iser.uaa.alaska.edu/Home/ResearchAreas/fuelcosts2.html>

⁹ Rural communities are often based on seasonal forms of resource exploitation like, hunting and logging.

¹⁰ *Fuel Costs, Migration, and Community Viability Final Report*

<http://www.iser.uaa.alaska.edu/Home/ResearchAreas/fuelcosts.html>

¹¹ U.S. Statistical Abstracts, , <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/tables/08s0029.xls>

That trend is only accelerating. The increased local investments in Alaskan public libraries experienced over the last decade may become a thing of the past as the economies of rural communities in the state falter and limited local funding is refocused on maintaining basic municipal services like water, electricity and waste disposal. This could mean that rural communities in coming years will be more receptive to federal or private foundation financial assistance, and, to a lesser extent no doubt, the attached requirements that come with the funding, the enforcement of which is a particular difficulty is rural and remote communities. At the same time, it would also mean that a national program would have to carefully define those communities which would qualify for the program and those which would not, about as sensitive a subject as which military bases should be closed.

Ideally, library services delivered to small and rural communities, whether through a traditional library building or a “library-in-a-box” web-based digital library, might provide an anchor for economic development, particularly when bundled with adult education programs and other forms of federal and state training and outreach. One concept that is worthy of study is the deployment of a statewide videoconferencing network in rural communities, which might be library-based or library-oriented in terms of services, and also carry the kind of community-focused, educational programming just described.

How do the Internet and other technological advances since the 1948 Plan was envisioned affect the underlying strategy of that document?

Modern telecommunication facilities can be used to provide and maintain a wide-variety of library services, including the delivery of multimedia substitutes for more traditional formats. Access to digital library services, however, are increasingly dependent on high-speed connectivity (i.e., broadband in the low megabits or above) and often require end users have advanced Internet and PC skills. Alaska rural residents, already on the wrong side of the urban/rural economic divide, are also the least prepared to make effective use of online library resources, lacking access to and experience with the Internet.

Providing affordable broadband to all residents of Alaska is a problem that the state, working with the telecommunications industry, has yet to resolve, despite substantial annual subsidies from the Universal Service Fund. Once again, this is largely due to geography and the dispersal of the rural population of the state in over 150 village communities. Communities in Alaska not on the state road system have higher telecommunication, often by factors as high as 10 or 20 times.

For example, a T1 (1.5 mbps) over fiber in the Lower-48 or Anchorage may average between \$300-400 per month, but equivalent bandwidth via satellite, often the only alternative in remote and rural areas, can easily range from \$3,000-10,000 per month. While fiber can be run parallel to roads and gas lines, there is no evidence that it can be run over or under tundra and permafrost without significant environmental damage. While Alaska is experimenting with larger microwave installations (e.g., DeltaNet) and adding marine fiber cable in several coastal areas (e.g., Southeast, Kodiak), it's dependence on almost \$200 million in annual USF monies is frightening, given that USF will probably undergo major reform in the next few years.

Because Alaska has more schools than libraries, and because E-rate is the most successful program for subsidizing Internet connectivity to rural communities, a digital divide has developed between schools and homes in rural villages, a divide reflected in the split between children and their parents with respect to access to and knowledge of the Internet. In Alaska, libraries (with \$1.4 million in E-Rate funding in 2007) have not participated in E-Rate to the

same extent as schools (nearly \$20 million in funding in 2007) for several reasons, including: the administrative paperwork burden; the First Amendment aspects of CIPA-required filtering; and a lack of overall IT vision and IT support for greater connectivity and networking.

Given its large budget reserve, and its already disproportionate dependence on federal funding sources, this may not be the time for Alaska to become even more dependent on external funding, whether federal or private, unless there is a large component of self-help involved (e.g., economic development services planning) and a strategy which builds towards a sustainable future for those communities which can actually survive. Moving from the existing co-dependency between state-administered federal funding used to both induce and ensure local support, to other forms of “incentives for change,” may be a difference that is hard to distinguish, yet it is definitely a discussion in which Alaska librarians would like to participate.

Alaska recommendations for a national plan for rural library services
Sue Sherif and Aja Ruzmuny, Alaska State Library

For Alaska, the important issues that might be addressed in a national plan are:

1. What are successful and appropriate services for rural communities? How much of rural library service needs to be delivered in a physical location:
 - services for children
 - services for parents with preschoolers and infants
 - services to rural teens, who often have few gathering options
 - homework help for students with no staffed library program at school
 - adult basic and information literacy
 - meeting rooms in small communities where there may be few other public buildings
 - book collections where there are no supermarkets or book stores
 - book mobiles where there are roadsand how much can be delivered effectively electronically or at a distance
 - government information
 - reference and interlibrary loan services
 - books by mail?
2. How can these be addressed at a national level but still take into account regional differences? In Alaska, the fact that most communities and their libraries are not located on a road system and will not have high speed broadband access without huge infusions of funds exemplify regional differences. State libraries will need to adapt a plan to state needs.
3. Alaska Native populations make up over 95% of some of our rural communities. How would their needs and their concerns about their cultural integrity and local languages, for example, be addressed in a national plan? There appears to be no representation of Native American groups in the upcoming Ohio summit, even though many existing rural public and tribal libraries serve concentrated populations of these groups.
4. While improved Internet access is essential for remote communities, Alaska Bush villages function better in a high-touch rather than just a high-tech environment. It's an integral and valued aspect of their lives in a non-urban environment. In addition, while technology can support education, it does not replace the role of live children's programming in promoting early learning and oral language experiences, for example.
5. Where is the training for rural library staff to be able to function in the high-tech environment and to assist people not used to telecommunications technology? Where is the training for remote library staff in traditional library services? Training remote library staff is a key concern for us.
6. Increased government reliance on electronic documents (tax forms, Permanent Fund Dividend applications, driver's license renewals, job applications) has already created unfunded mandates for libraries in communities where the public owns few home computers to access materials online and library staff must intermediate with members of the public who are not Internet-literate. Even kiosks require some sort of technological support and someone to stock them with paper and printer cartridges or to bring them online when connection has been lost. Someone has to answer questions about how to use this technology, or the kiosks will gather dust or be new targets for community vandals.

7. Alaska has a number of combined school/community libraries, which seems a logical way to go, but the buy-in for local schools to support a true community library on their premises is marginal. Because so many rural school districts have minimally supported their school libraries, the presence of a community library in the school gives some school administrators license to drop their actual support of the school library almost completely, so neither the poor school library nor the struggling community library succeeds. Is there a new model of providing both types of library service from a school building that could be promoted and rewarded with special incentive grants?
8. When the only internet access in a community is through the school, the general public may not be welcomed or allowed to use the school's facility and may not find the heavily CIPA- filtered internet access useful, so simply improving bandwidth to a rural school may not have impact on the whole community and may not improve library service.
9. Rising fuel and utility costs are issues everywhere, but in Alaska they have reached the point where the cost of keeping a building warm and lit may overtake the ability of the community to support their library and their other public buildings. Even if broadband telecommunications are stretched at great cost to reach remote villages, will there be a physical place where people may access the services that digital connections might bring?
10. Earlier plans encouraged regional systems in rural areas to provide economies of scale in administration and centralized services. These successfully brought library services to rural areas in many lower 48 states (Washington, Illinois, North Carolina, for example). These were never launched in Alaska because there was no road connection among most rural libraries. Now that libraries can be linked electronically is there a model for creation of a new type of region linked digitally to provide technical services for very small libraries? Could shared web-based cataloging services and automation systems work to allow rural library staff to concentrate on some of the high-touch services like early childhood, adult literacy initiatives, or cultural programming tailored to particular community needs?

Rich Greenfield has prepared a separate Alaska telecommunications issues response.

Submitted by:

Sue Sherif, Head of Library Development, Alaska State Library

Aja Razumny, Public Library and Continuing Education Coordinator, Alaska State Library

**California State Library
Summit on Rural Libraries**

July 9, 2008

Notes by: Carla Lehn and Jon Torkelson

Need for “One Clear Voice” for Rural Libraries

In early 2007 a coalition of organizations (the California State Library; Califa, BCR, SOLINET, PALINET, WebJunction/OCLC, Nolichucky (TN) Regional Library, Northeast Iowa Library Service Area, and Clarion University) submitted an IMLS collaborative planning grant that was unfortunately not funded. Its goal was to bring key players in the national library community together (the partners plus others) to create a comprehensive national plan to effectively meet the communication, networking and continuing education needs of rural libraries, to ensure that no matter where they live, Americans have access to high quality library service. The funding was being requested to help bring these groups together to develop a comprehensive strategy, structure and implementation plan to address the need, AND to identify an entity that could serve as spokesperson into the future – “one clear voice” on behalf of rural libraries.

The thinking was at the time, and it still seems relevant, that an incredible window of opportunity exists to work on this because of the number of rural library service programs that have multiplied in recent years. Partial list: OCLC’s WebJunction and Rural Sustainability Project; ALA’s Committee on Rural, Native and Tribal Libraries of All Kinds; Western Council’s Library Practitioner Certification Program; TechSoup’s MaintainIT project; the Gates Foundation emphasis on rural broadband; various state library rural initiatives; and the re-invigorated Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL). ARSL has more than doubled its membership just since the Fall of 2007, is now a stand-alone entity with BCR as its fiscal agent, has a full and geographically diverse board, has a website partnership with WebJunction to create a “one-stop-shop-for all things rural” (www.webjunction.org/arsl), and has created partnerships with states to move its annual conference around the country – California in 2008, Tennessee in 2009, and Colorado in 2010. 2011 and 2012 conference locations are currently in discussion. Several states are providing scholarships for rural library folks to attend the California conference this fall – 300 participants are expected, almost double last year’s attendance in Columbus Ohio.

While all those concerned with rural libraries are doing their best to collaborate and keep in touch, unfortunately many rural libraries are not aware that this wealth of resources is available, and those who are aware often find themselves overwhelmed, not empowered, by them. It still seems apparent that to move forward substantially we need something to collaborate around – an entity, a clearinghouse, or at least a national plan, to serve as the “one clear voice” on behalf of rural libraries.

California Rural Library Initiative

An LSTA-funded program, the Rural Library Initiative (RLI) of the California State Library makes training and program services available to libraries in remote areas so that they may serve the needs of their local, often isolated, library users. Training for library support groups, access to meetings and training through virtual methods, access to resources through an electronic clearinghouse, and delivery of high need workshops to geographically isolated areas are supported by the RLI. Rural library directors and staff are included in the planning of the services provided RLI, as well as in the choice of workshop topics. The RLI provides access to training and resources to help rural community members get better library service, and to help rural library staff members be better able to do their jobs. This has been a successful relationship.

Regional Library Cooperatives

The regional library cooperatives in California, regional systems formed under the California Library Services Act, have been helpful in combining State Library and local resources in ways that have benefited rural libraries. Through the systems, rural libraries have been able to cooperate in developing and providing services, programming, and technology resources. This cooperation has had positive results in California.

Rural Libraries, Rural Issues

Providing a forum to focus on the future of rural libraries is a very good thing. However, this is not just a library issue. It is one part of the numerous issues concerning the future of rural communities. For example, the availability of technology, rural health, rural economics, and support for rural local government services are all related and are a few of the rural issues that affect the library as well as the community.

As the cost of transportation of goods rises, and the costs, financial and environmental, of energy production increase, it seems possible that rural areas could become critically important to energy production and economic health. The production of ethanol from corn and the construction of wind energy facilities in rural areas are indicative of this development. The rising cost of the transportation of food products may increase the importance of the availability of locally grown food.

Rural communities and rural land will become increasingly important and valuable in the near future. The knowledge and skills of rural people in their communities, as well as their "do-it-yourself" attitude, will be important to the economic viability of our society. The importance of the role that public libraries can and do play in having a positive impact on local economic development because of the resources they provide is discussed in the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs *Rural Research Report*, Winter 2008, attached as a separate document. How each library can participate in and support the economic health of its community may be important to the viability of the rural library.

Of course, the role of the library will vary depending on the community and its needs, but the rural community will need to address the issue of what services it can support with the available dollars, and the library should be at the table during this discussion. The important issue for rural libraries is to find out what role their communities want them to play in this process.

So, one of the important things to address is how to get the library involved in the rural issues discussions on a local, regional, and national basis. For example, participation in the National Rural Assembly and other national rural meetings and organizations, working with state and regional rural issues organizations and forums, and having a presence and voice in local efforts, are all critical to the future of rural libraries. We need to figure out how to get there. The plan to collaborate on "one clear voice" for rural libraries discussed above would help to address this issue.

Carla Lehn, Library Programs Consultant
Library Development Services
California State Library
P.O. Box 942837
Sacramento CA 94237-0001
Ph: (916) 653-7743
FAX: (916) 653-8443
clehn@library.ca.gov

Jon Torkelson, Library Programs Consultant
Library Development Services
California State Library
PO Box 942837
Sacramento, CA 94237-0001
jtorkelson@library.ca.gov
(916) 651-3037 phone
(916) 653-8443 fax

I am driving toward North Dakota. Time for some supper. I get off of I-94 at Custer, Montana. Population according to the sign (picture attached) of 145. I go into Jimbo's Junction City Saloon. I order homemade lasagna. Salad and garlic bread come with it. I say to the owner, I am going out to get my computer to download some pictures. He says "**fine, we also have wifi.**" Now folks, I am out in the middle of "nowhere" Montana. How cool is that!!

Jimbo's Junction City Saloon has a total of 10 barstools, 6 four-people tables, a pool table, five slot machines, and three tvs--all with the sound down on ESPN. I would take a picture in here but that might be too tacky. Just trust me.

The food was excellent. The host/owner is very nice. And the other folks in here--nine--not paying any attention to me--this strange person.



Judy Greeson, Retired Director
Clinch-Powell Regional Library
Clinton, Tennessee

National Rural Assembly

The second meeting of the National Rural Assembly was held in Washington, D.C., 16-18 June 2008. Over the past year organizers of the event have been busy identifying the “**critical policy needs and opportunities for rural America.**” The Assembly has written a “[rural compact](#),” (*see next page*) an extensive list of policy recommendations. The Assembly is funded by the W. K. Kellogg, Ford and Annie E. Casey foundations and [guided by a group](#) of non-profit organizations.

“Presidential Campaigns Avoid Specifics at Rural Assembly”

<http://www.dailyonder.com/print/1384>

“Speak Your Piece: Urban Issues, Yes. Rural....Maybe”

<http://www.dailyonder.com/print/1399>

Here's a sampling of what those attending the Rural Assembly want from the next new administration.

Education

- Make the Title 1 formula fair to low-income rural districts.
- Support teachers who are willing to work in rural communities that have a tough time attracting staff.
- Eliminate federal rules that encourage the closing of small schools.
- Change the No Child Left Behind act to include measures that would encourage rural community development.

Health

- Ensure that military veterans can find health care in rural communities.
- Allow the Department of Agriculture to guarantee loans to non-profit health care providers.
- Charge the Federal Communications Commission to study rural internet broadband.

Natural Resources

- Adopt policies that address global warming with renewable energy.
- Enforce federal anti-trust laws to ensure fair and competitive markets for farmers and ranchers.

Economy

- Hold a White House summit on rural America.
- Increase funding for the Department of Agriculture's rural development program.
- Adopt a goal of universal access to broadband by 2012.

The Rural Compact

http://ruralcompact.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7&Itemid=11

The Rural Compact is a set of principles for building stronger rural communities and a stronger nation. Here's what we believe:

Rural America is more than the land. It is a way we are connected in culture, heritage, and national enterprise. While it may be vast, it is far from empty. Sixty million of us live in the American countryside, and far more grew up there. Rural Americans reflect the full diversity of the country in who we are, what we do, and what we want to achieve.

When rural communities succeed, the nation does better, and cities and suburbs have more resources on which to build. Conversely, when rural communities falter, it drains the nation's prosperity and limits what we can accomplish together.

We now face the challenges of how we sustainably fuel, feed, and nurture both ourselves and a fragile world. A vital rural America has a contribution to make in this effort and the responsibility to take on that endeavor.

We offer this compact as a set of principles on which to build the kind of rural America that is needed now and a rural America that is ready to face the challenges to come.

Quality in Education

Every child should have an equal chance to learn, excel, and help lead America to a better, brighter future. Education policy should recognize the distinctive challenges and opportunities for rural schools and reflect the unique needs of those students, families, and educators.

Stewardship of Natural Resources

Eighty percent of our country's land is rural. It is a heritage and a trust. We all have a responsibility to protect the environment and develop and sustain our natural resources in ways that strengthen rural communities for the long haul. Good environmental practices and responsive public land management provide the opportunity to promote energy independence, grow healthy food in a sustainable manner, mitigate climate change, and develop stronger natural-resource-based economies.

Health of Our People

All people in America deserve access to good, affordable healthcare. If we want small towns and rural communities to contribute to the well-being of the nation, we need rural healthcare systems that work. These should include preventive care, health education, and both community-based and high-tech delivery systems.

Investment in Our Communities

To fight poverty, create wealth, and build sustainable communities, everyone in America needs access to a safe and equitable system for saving, borrowing, and building capital. To fully participate in and contribute to the American economy, rural communities need public and private investment, access to philanthropic resources, and the tools to develop their own community-controlled assets.

Perceptions of Rural America

A Research Study of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2001.

<http://www.wkkf.org/pubs/FoodRur/pub2973.pdf>

This study shows that respondents hold strongly positive views about rural life in America, seeing it as the repository of traditional values, closely-knit communities and hard work. At the same time, these perceptions are tempered by the economic and social challenges facing these regions and the poor prognosis for their economic future. This means that perceptions of rural America are centered on a series of dichotomies - rural life represents traditional American values, but is behind the times; rural life is more relaxed and slower than city life, but harder and more grueling; rural life is friendly, but intolerant of outsiders and difference; and rural life is richer in *community* life, but epitomized by *individuals* struggling independently to make ends meet. Rural America offers a particular quality of life including serenity and aesthetic surroundings, and yet it is plagued by lack of opportunities, including access to cultural activities.

It is difficult to imagine the suburbs or cities of our country evoking such a range of seemingly paradoxical views. They emerge because Americans both within and outside of rural America perceive rural America as a distinct culture in many ways:

- **Different economy** - Respondents perceive rural America as being based on an almost completely agricultural economy. In reality, farm employment is 7 percent of all rural employment. Adding .8 percent for farm input supplier employment, and 3.9 percent for processing and marketing jobs, the total is still only 11.7 percent for all agriculture related jobs in rural America.
- **Different values** - Respondents perceive that rural communities symbolize “America” because they revolve around families committed to religious values and the liberal traditions of self-reliance and self-sufficiency.
- **Different environment** - Respondents perceive that rural America is serene and beautiful, populated by animals and livestock and landscape covered by trees and family farms.
- **Different atmosphere** - Respondents perceive that rural America is friendlier and more relaxed than urban or suburban America. It is seen as a safe place to raise kids in the context of a society concerned with materialism and characterized by moral decline.

All of these differences mean that many respondents see rural America and its residents as making a distinctive contribution to American life. Rural America, as the people interviewed see it, helps perpetuate the values that define America, like individualism and self-sufficiency; rural Americans are the nation’s backbone as the suppliers of food, and they represent the last open space in an environment with a rapidly developing suburban landscape.

At the same time, survey participants see rural America in jeopardy. A significant proportion of respondents see a rural America plagued by persistent poverty, rooted in low wages and dismal job opportunities. When asked to name the most important problems facing rural America, lack of financial resources and other opportunities top the list. Taken together, lack of money (19 percent), price of crops (14 percent), and lack of opportunities (11 percent) account for 44 percent of responses. Respondents are also concerned about the decline of the “family farm” and the challenge smaller

farms face in trying to recoup their investments because of low commodity prices. They identify a number of reasons for this perception of rural life:

- The family farm, the symbol of rural living and values, is undermined by the rise of vertically integrated, corporate farms, which makes it more difficult to compete in a market with already depressed prices.
- Rural land and lifestyle is being overtaken by urban sprawl and suburban housing development, which prices land out of reach of ordinary citizens and reduces the availability of farmland.
- Government regulation, particularly environmental regulations and rules governing what people grow, prevents the market from working for rural residents.

Paradoxically, while many respondents identify low agricultural profitability and job insecurity as the most important problem facing rural America, few people mention other low-wage employment – either in the service industry or manufacturing sectors – as part of the problem. Instead, both rural and non-rural respondents are focused on the issues that plague agriculture, despite the fact that only 2 percent of rural residents interviewed identify themselves as farmers, and less than 10 percent of the rural populations even live on farms. Throughout the 1990s, a majority of U.S. farm operator households received wages and salary from off-farm employment.

In addition to problems with agricultural profitability and lack of jobs, many respondents (including non-rural respondents) are aware that rural areas face inadequate access to healthcare, fewer educational choices, few opportunities for professional advancement and few cultural resources.



The Center for Rural Strategies is a public-spirited communications organization that seeks to improve rural life by increasing public understanding about the importance and value of rural communities. Our goals are to

- use media strategically to reframe the broad public discourse that defines rural communities, and
- create an environment in which positive changes can occur.

The Center for Rural Strategies helps communities and nonprofit organizations incorporate media and communications into their work in support of strategic goals. We also design and implement information campaigns that educate the public about the problems and opportunities that exist in contemporary rural communities.

We believe that

- healthy rural communities are essential to the overall health of the nation,
- Americans' [overwhelmingly positive perceptions of rural life](#) are a starting point for creating better governmental policies and institutions that rebuild and sustain rural communities, and
- communicating the stories of rural America's struggles and successes to a broad audience is essential to creating positive change.

PERCEPTIONS OF RURAL AMERICA

Americans have strongly held positive opinions about rural people and places, according to a [report from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#) . But those opinions are often based on misconceptions about the reality of life in the countryside.

Because perception informs policy, the nation's response to rural America's challenges may not be as helpful as it could be.

On the positive side, both rural and urban residents associate the countryside with values such as

- hard work,
- a strong sense of family,
- commitment to their communities,
- deeply held religious beliefs, and
- self-sufficiency.

Americans think of the countryside as a place where residents are more likely to engage in simple but rewarding lifestyles. They generally consider people who live outside the nation's urban areas to be less concerned about material possessions and more concerned about family, spiritual matters, and community.

Overall, 84 percent of the people who participated in the Kellogg Foundation's study held positive opinions about rural America. A separate [sampling of members of the U.S. Congress](#) largely reinforced these positive images of rural America as did a third [study of state legislators](#).

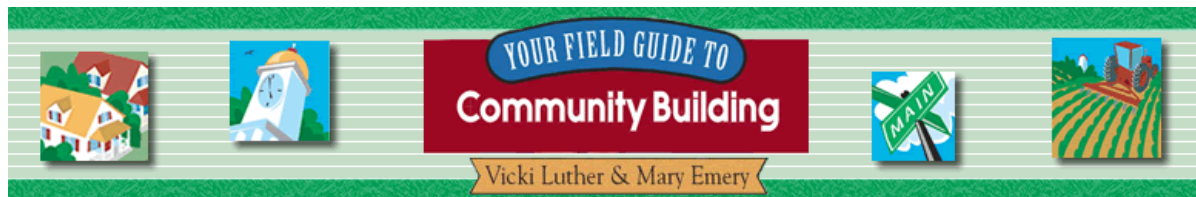
These positive perceptions of rural America are a powerful foundation on which to build a discussion about the value and role of non-urban areas in the nation's society and economy. But beneath this veneer of high regard lies misconceptions of how rural communities function, or don't, and what they need to rebuild and sustain their economic health.

A case in point is the common misconception about the role of agriculture in rural areas. Americans overwhelmingly think farming is the predominate economic force in non-urban areas. In fact, of the nation's 60 million rural residents, less than 2 percent earn their primary living from farming. Agriculture overall - including processing and marketing jobs - accounts for less than 12 percent of rural employment.

The single largest economic sector in rural America are service industries, which provide more than half of non-metropolitan jobs. The service and manufacturing sectors combined account for two-thirds of rural employment.

If rural communities are going to survive the sweeping economic changes of the 21st century, national policy must better reflect the true economic nature of non-metropolitan America. One place to start this conversation is through public information campaigns that paint an accurate picture of rural communities and their needs.

[**A Field Guide to Community Building**](#)



A web site produced with the Heartland Center for Leadership Development that combines "how-to" information about community development with stories that illustrate the impact of community work.

Defining the “Rural” in Rural America

The use of different definitions of rural by Federal agencies reflects the multidimensional qualities of rural America.

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/June08/Features/RuralAmerica.htm>

Rural Definitions: Data Documentation and Methods Identifying Nine Rural Definitions

The rural definitions presented here are based on four sources described in detail below: Census Bureau's list of places, Census Bureau's list of urban areas, Office of Management and Budget's metropolitan areas, and ERS rural-urban commuting areas. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/RuralDefinitions/documentation.htm>

Definition	Description	Percent of people and land area considered rural in the U.S. under definition (2000)
Rural definition #1	All areas outside Census places with 2,500 or more people	87.7 million people 31% of U.S. population 97% of U.S. land area
Rural definition #2	All areas outside Census places with 10,000 or more people	115.8 million people 41% of U.S. population 98% of U.S. land area
Rural definition #3	All areas outside Census places with 50,000 or more people	177 million people 63% of U.S. population 99% of U.S. land area
Rural definition #4	All areas outside urban areas. This places the upper limit of rural at 2,500, since urban areas must have at least 2,500 people.	59.1 million people 21% of U.S. population 97% of U.S. land area
Rural definition #5	All areas outside urban areas with 10,000 or more people.	70.6 million people 25% of U.S. population 98% of U.S. land area
Rural definition #6	All areas outside urban areas with 50,000 or more people.	89.5 million people 32% of U.S. population 98% of U.S. land area
Rural definition #7	All counties outside metropolitan areas in 2003 (based on 2000 census data)	48.8 million people 17% of U.S. population 75% of U.S. land area
Rural definition #8	Census tracts with 2000 RUCA codes 4 through 10	57.6 million people 20% of U.S. population 81% of U.S. land area
Rural definition #9	Locations outside places of 50,000 or more people and their associated urbanized areas.	101.9 million people 36% of U.S. population 98% of U.S. land area

Note that all of the above definitions are based on the 2000 Census. Over time, changes, additions, and corrections are made. For the most up-to-date Census and OMB definitions, see the links to their sites.

Rural America at a Glance 2007 Edition

US Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Service.
Economic Information Bulletin Number 31. October 2007.
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EIB31/EIB31.pdf>

- Rural Population Growth on an Upswing Due to Net Domestic Migration
- Employment Rises and Unemployment Falls From 2005 to 2006
- Poverty Declines, but Remains High in the South
- Rural Adults Continue To Lag in College Completion
- Creative Occupations Fuel Local Job Growth
- Over Half of All Ethanol Plants Are Located in Declining Nonmetro Counties

Challenges for Rural America in the 21st Century

Edited by David L. Brown and Louis E. Swanson. Pennsylvania State University, 2003.

Summarized by

Cornelia Flora (Iowa State University) and Linda Lobao (Ohio State University)

Some General Observations

1. The principle determinant of rural population redistribution is *migration* and this has been unpredictable during recent decades. Adapting to unpredictable fluctuations in population change is a continuing challenge for rural people.
2. Rural America is moving toward a demographic structure in which there is no numerically dominant ethnic group.
3. Recognizing the severity, complexity, and persistence of rural poverty, and leveling the playing field for the rural poor, is critical.
4. Attracting and retaining an adequate supply of high-quality jobs is a formidable challenge in the new millennium.
5. Rural America needs to strengthen local social relationships that contribute to communities' abilities to secure collective goals.
6. Challenge for local government is to find new role within the decentralized and privatized environment.



W.K. Kellogg Foundation

<http://www.wkkf.org/default.aspx?tabid=75&CID=274&NID=61&LanguageID=0>

Initiative Overview:

http://www.wkkf.org/DesktopModules/WKF.00_DmaSupport/ViewDoc.aspx?LanguageID=0&CID=274&ListID=28&ItemID=5000532&fld=PDFFile

Rural Policy Network Members:

<http://www.wkkf.org/Default.aspx?tabid=90&CID=274&ItemID=5000398&NID=5010398&LanguageID=0>

Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI)

Nonmetro America: Conditions & Trends. Kathleen Miller. Presentation to the National Governors Association. May 13, 2008.

http://www.rupri.org/Forms/RUPRI_NGA.pdf

Power point slides from the presentation: http://www.rupri.org/Forms/MM_NGAppt.pdf

What Reporters Should Know About Rural Residents. Charles W. Fluharty. Presentation to the 2008 Rural Health Journalism Workshop. May 2-4, 2008.

http://www.rupri.org/Forms/Fluharty_JSchool.pdf

Rural Policy - The Long View and What You Can Do About It. Brian Dabson. Presentation to the Association for Enterprise Opportunity. First Annual Rural Summit. May 20, 2008.

http://www.rupri.org/Forms/Dabson_AEO_May08.pdf

Reports on Rural America: Demographic Trends in Rural and Small Town America. Kenneth Johnson. Carsey Institute. University of New Hampshire, 2006.
http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/Report_Demographics.pdf

The Three Rurals - Place Matters: Poverty and Development Challenges in Amenity Rich, Declining Resource Dependent and Chronically Poor Regions. Mil Duncan. Presentation at the University of Wisconsin. March 12, 2008.
http://carseyinstitute.unh.edu/documents/Duncan_Place_Matters_talk_March%2008.pdf



<http://www.ruralsociology.org/>

Rural Realities

Getting Connected: Broadband Services a Key to a Vibrant Rural America.
Volume 2. Issue 1, 2007.
<http://www.ruralsociology.org/pubs/RuralRealities/Volume2Issue1.html>

Self-Employment in Rural America: The New Economic Reality.
Volume 2. Issue 3, 2008.
<http://www.ruralsociology.org/pubs/RuralRealities/Volume2Issue3.html>

Policy Brief Series on Rural Development - Challenges for Rural America in the Twenty-First Century.

This Policy Brief Series by the Rural Sociological Society and the Regional Rural Development Centers stresses the importance of community collective action and developing the capacity of people and organizations to meet the community's needs.

The Changing Face of Rural America. Number 1. January 2006.
<http://www.ruralsociology.org/briefs/brief1.pdf>

Catalytic Community Development. Number 6. January 2006.
<http://www.ruralsociology.org/briefs/brief6.pdf>



<http://www.cfra.org/>

Rural Policy Program

We work to replace the bias towards bigness and concentration in public policy with a commitment to strong rural communities, quality rural education, environmental stewardship, and genuine opportunity for family farms, ranches, and rural small businesses. By strengthening rural America, we strengthen all of America.

From influencing legislative and administrative action to grassroots organizing, the Rural Policy Program is a force that creates positive change.

The program engages in policy development, education, and advocacy for a “new generation” of rural policy that creates genuine opportunity for rural people, fosters small business and widespread ownership, strengthens family farms and ranches, protects the environment, and builds communities.

The program works to reinvigorate democracy by engaging rural people in shaping public policy and developing new options for public policy to improve rural life and create a future for rural communities.

Too often rural people and rural places seem resigned to the inevitability of rural decline. Too many citizens have eschewed participation in social change, often out of pessimism over their ability to make a difference or because they lack understanding of the issues and therefore lack confidence in being able to influence policy.

The Rural Policy Program engages rural people in the policy process in ways that celebrate rural traditions of active citizenship and social and economic justice. Development of the new federal farm bill will be a primary focus in 2007 and 2008.

In 2004, we published and released a report highlighting economic development strategies that were working for communities across the rural Great Plains. This report divided these opportunities into six categories that are crucial for viable rural communities, especially ones that are agriculturally-based. These categories are again highlighted in this report - one that looks at **potential legislation that is necessary for these economic opportunities to be replicated** in other communities, regions, and states.

Rural economic development has been neglected for too long. The mission of United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development, “to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for all rural Americans” is not reflected in funding for rural economic development initiatives. Three percent of the current fiscal year United States Department of Agriculture budget is dedicated to rural development. Of that three percent, 10 percent is devoted to rural business development—less than one percent of the entire United States Department of Agriculture’s budget (the remainder going to rural housing and utility programs).

Promising Opportunities: A Fresh Look at Opportunities for Rural Communities (October 2007) can be found at <http://www.cfra.org/files/Promising%20Opportunities.pdf>.

Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPI)

<http://www.rupri.org/>

RUPRI was founded in 1990 to address a concern of members of the Senate Agricultural Committee -- including Senator Kit Bond (Missouri), Senator Dale Bumpers (Arkansas), Senator Tom Harkin (Iowa), and Senator Bob Kerrey (Nebraska) - that no objective non-governmental source of external data, information, and analysis, regarding the rural and community impacts of public policy decisions was available.

Today, RUPRI is housed within the [Harry S Truman School of Public Affairs, University of Missouri-Columbia](#) and is a joint program of [Iowa State University, University of Missouri-Columbia](#) , and the [University of Nebraska-Lincoln](#) . RUPRI's reach is national and international and is one of the world's preeminent sources of expertise and perspective on policies impacting rural places and people. RUPRI's activities encompass research, policy analysis and engagement, dissemination and outreach, and decision support tools. The work of RUPRI is conducted through a small core team based in Missouri, Washington DC, and Texas, and through four centers and a number of joint initiatives and panels located across the United States.

Vision

- Rural people and places have the resources and capacities to create strong, viable, meaningful, and sustainable futures that can both withstand and turn to advantage the forces of globalization and economic, demographic, and social change.
- Rural and urban people find common cause and understanding about the future role and governance of rural places and the contribution that rural life and culture makes to national identity.

Mission

RUPRI's mission in support of this vision is to:

- Provide unbiased analysis and information on the challenges, needs, and opportunities facing rural America.
- Spur public dialogue and help policymakers understand the impacts of public policies and programs on rural people and places.

Commitment

RUPRI in pursuing this mission commits to:

- Provide timely, empirically-based, and non-partisan advice and assistance to policymakers on the rural impacts of public policies and programs and on options for improving the prospects for rural people and places.
- Foster understanding of and the search for effective solutions to the challenges of rural America by providing safe venues for people with a stake in the future of rural America to discuss openly concerns, issues, and opportunities.
- Encourage collaboration and common purpose among scholars to pursue research that supports effective policy and practice, and among institutions and agencies that have the expertise, resources, and responsibilities to impact rural people and places.
- Promote innovative, collaborative, and systems-based approaches to rural issues that engage decision-makers and rural people at local, regional, state, national, and international levels.



The National Rural Network (NRN) is a coalition of over 70 non-governmental national organizations (List of Member Organizations at <http://www.rupri.org/panelandnetworkviewer.php?id=13>), working to create awareness and understanding of public policies that enhance the vitality of rural America. The NRN represents the breadth of non governmental organizations whose constituencies comprise an emergent new rural reality. This coalition is recognized as the preeminent national stakeholder community in addressing these broad based concerns, challenges and opportunities.

Why Rural Matters III: The Rural Impact of the Administration's FY08 Budget Proposal <http://www.rupri.org/Forms/NRNBudget3.pdf>



The Daily Yonder

<http://www.dailyyonder.com/>

55 million people live in the rural U.S. Maybe you're one of them, or used to be, or want to be. As mainstream TV and newspapers retreat from small towns, *The Daily Yonder* is coming on strong.

We're your daily multi-media buffet of news, commentary, research, and features. Check us throughout the day for breaking news, updates from the best rural bloggers and pointers to streaming live radio from the coast of Maine and to the wilds of Montana.

How about those presidential candidates? *The Daily Yonder* is your source for news of all the campaigns -- how they're reaching (or ignoring) rural communities.

Please Send Us photos, tips, observations, links to stories about rural America. Send us stories about what you've seen, heard or witnessed. Make it meaningful, make it cool, make it good, make it Yonder.

The Daily Yonder is published on the web by the [Center for Rural Strategies](#) . Editors Julie Ardery and Bill Bishop have written for national magazines, for newspapers in Kentucky and Texas and authored books on American politics, art and culture. In the 1980s, they owned and ran the award-winning Bastrop County Times, the weekly newspaper in Smithville, Texas.

The Daily Yonder was developed with the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Media Democracy Fund (a project of the Proteus Fund).

Has a list of Rural Blogs: <http://www.dailyyonder.com/blog-roll>

The *Weekly Yonder* is a digest of the best and brightest stories from the *Daily Yonder*, delivered to your inbox every Wednesday. Subscribe at:
http://www.dailyyonder.com/user/register?destination=node/1327%2523comment_form

Understanding Communities and their Dynamics

Rural Communities: Legacy and Change. 2nd ed. Cornelia Butler & Jan A. Flora.
Westview Press, 2004.

The authors' **Community Capitals Framework** is an approach to analyze how communities work. Based on their research to uncover characteristics of entrepreneurial and sustainable communities, they found that the communities most successful in supporting healthy sustainable community and economic development paid attention to all seven types of capital: natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial and built.

The Floras define "community" as a place or location in which people interact for mutual benefit. The community need not provide all the services individuals require and may not necessarily offer community members a common sense of identity. They assume that social issues can be explained in terms of a community's history and the resulting capitals that are available to that community. Economic and policy choices made at the state and federal level and individual choices made by the communities themselves mean that, even for poor, remote rural communities, **trend is not destiny**.

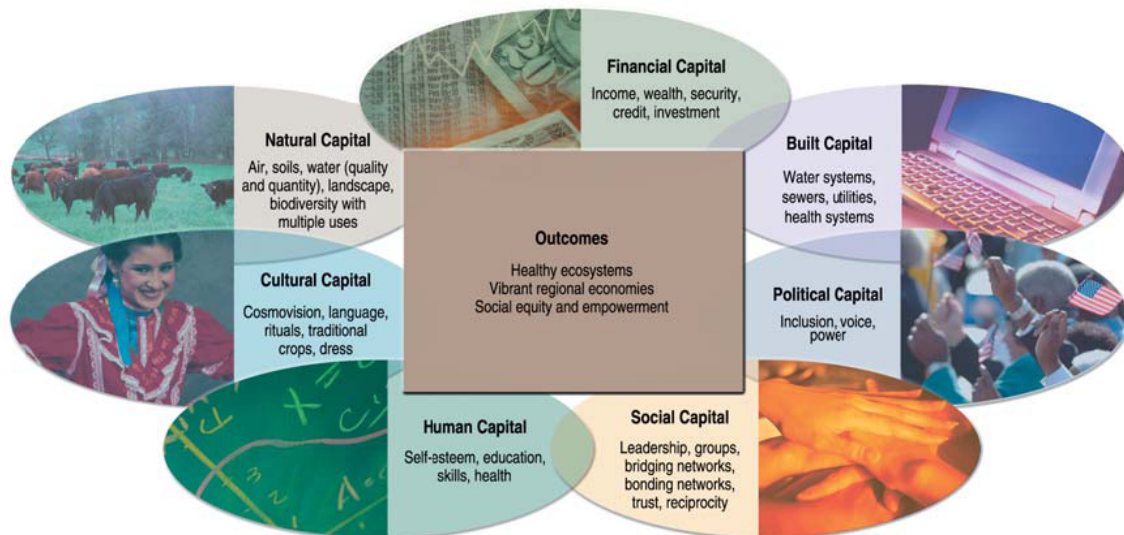
The intangible capitals are the unseen assets that community members possess, both individually and corporately.

Human capital consists of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of individual community members and how those individual assets can be invested into the community as a whole.

Cultural capital includes the general values and attitudes held by a community, including the way they tend to approach life in general.

Political capital is generally thought of as the amount of power a community has to determine the availability of resources and influence the distribution of those resources.

Social capital is comprised of the social networks and the amount of collaboration found among community members as well as between communities. A key component of social capital is mutual trust.



The tangible capitals are the visible assets that a community possesses.

Financial capital primarily consists of money that is used for investment into the community rather than for individual consumption. An important part of financial capital is its ability to be translated into other assets such as *built capital*.

Built capital is comprised of the assets that have been constructed in and around the community. Roads, bridges, public services, and buildings are all part of a community's built capital. This provides a foundation for community development and growth.

Natural capital includes the natural resources found in and around a community: landscape, water, flora, and fauna all are part of a community's natural capital.

20 Clues to Rural Community Survival

Clues to Rural Community Survival. Vicki Luther & Milan Wall.
Heartland Center for Leadership Development, 1987; 1998.

1. **Evidence of Community Pride:** Successful communities are often showplaces of care, attention, history and heritage.
2. **Emphasis on Quality in Business and Community Life:** People believe that something worth doing is worth doing right.
3. **Willingness to Invest in the Future:** In addition to the brick-and-mortar investments, all decisions are made with an outlook on the future.
4. **Participatory Approach to Community Decision Making:** Even the most powerful of opinion leaders seem to work toward building consensus.
5. **Cooperative Community Spirit:** The stress is on working together toward a common goal, and the focus is on positive results.
6. **Realistic Appraisal of Future Opportunities:** Successful communities have learned how to build on strengths and minimize weaknesses.
7. **Awareness of Competitive Positioning:** Local loyalty is emphasized, but thriving communities know who their competitors are and position themselves accordingly.
8. **Knowledge of the Physical Environment:** Relative location and available natural resources underscore decision-making.
9. **Active Economic Development Program:** There is an organized, public/private approach to economic development.
10. **Deliberate Transition of Power to a Younger Generation of Leaders:** People under 40 regularly hold key positions in civic and business affairs.
11. **Acceptance of Women in Leadership Roles:** Women are elected officials, plant managers, and entrepreneurial developers.
12. **Strong Belief in and Support for Education:** Good schools are the norm and centers of community activity.
13. **Problem-Solving Approach to Providing Health Care:** Health care is considered essential, and smart strategies are in place for diverse methods of delivery.
14. **Strong Multi-Generational Family Orientation:** The definition of family is broad, and activities include younger as well as older generations.
15. **Strong Presence of Traditional Institutions that are Integral to Community Life:** Churches, schools and service clubs are strong influences on community development and social activities.
16. **Sound and Well-Maintained Infrastructure:** Leaders work hard to maintain and improve streets, sidewalks, water systems, and sewage facilities.
17. **Careful Use of Fiscal Resources:** Frugality is a way of life and expenditures are considered investments in the future.
18. **Sophisticated Use of Information Resources:** Leaders access information that is beyond the knowledge base available in the community.
19. **Willingness to Seek Help from the Outside:** People seek outside help for community needs, and many compete for government grants and contracts for economic and social programs.
20. **Conviction that, in the Long Run, You Have to Do It Yourself:** Thriving rural communities believe their destiny is in their own hands. Making their communities good places is a pro-active assignment, and they willingly accept it.

Enhancing Economic Development Through Libraries

Norman Walzer and Karen Stott. Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, 1998.

Librarians can engage in community development efforts in several ways. For this report, we have used the eight basic strategies listed below (in no special order of importance) to categorize the efforts.

Certainly, librarians are not expected to participate in each strategy but, based on phone interviews and personal contacts, these strategies capture most of the ways that librarians in this project have become more involved in community affairs:

1. Assume new library responsibilities for economic development.
2. Raise visibility of librarian in the community and market library services.
3. Expand current library holdings and data collection.
4. Serve as hubs for community Internet access.
5. Become directly involved in community development efforts.
6. Preserve community history and serve as information center.
7. Establish library as community training center.
8. Redesign and customize library product line and delivery methods.

Building community support, however, requires an aggressive approach by librarians and it is not sufficient for librarians to simply “be available for service.” They **must be proactive in communicating with business and community leaders and in working with them to explore the potential contributions of the library.**

Expanding the business collection, for example, can bring significant returns in terms of community support because it not only provides a direct service to business leaders, but it also brings more people into the library to see other services they might find useful. The interaction with this larger number of potential clients also can help librarians assess community needs and identify potential new services. Identifying and adapting new service delivery methods by using innovative technology can be explored jointly by library staff and library users. In each case, however, broadening services and becoming more involved in the community require that librarians actively engage in community efforts and take an active position in identifying community interests and needs.

A constraint on library involvement in community development efforts raised several times during the project is that the library board is not directly involved in economic development efforts and, therefore, does not see the immediate value of library involvement. In these cases, the board does not wish to raise the funds (taxes) needed to support economic development. Permitting a librarian to be away from the library attending training and economic development organization meetings can bring problems, especially with limited staff. Ironically, having librarians active in community affairs may build greater interest by board members when they see what can be accomplished.

Worth Their Weight: An Assessment of the Evolving Field of Library Valuation

Americans for Libraries Council, 2007.

<http://www.actforlibraries.org/pdf/WorthTheirWeight.pdf>

Public library leaders and advocates are strongly voicing the need for new and convincing arguments that link library facts and figures to community development and social and economic prosperity.

International City/County Management Association

<http://www.icma.org/main/topic.asp?hsid=1&tpid=24>

Five Ways Public Libraries Can Help Communities Achieve Strategic Goals

Earlier this year, ICMA formed an advisory committee aimed at building city and county managers' awareness of the critical role public libraries play in supporting community vitality and sustainability, as well as the important leadership role managers have in supporting libraries. "One of our core responsibilities as managers within a community is to connect the dots horizontally and vertically to achieve the community's strategic objectives," according to advisory committee member Ron Carlee, county manager, Arlington County, Virginia. "We as managers need to think of public libraries as partners in this effort."

One result of the work of the committee, composed of [26 members](#), is a new [ICMA Management Perspective, Local Government Managers and Libraries: Partners for a Better Community](#). The publication features ways that libraries are used to address economic, educational, and social issues that challenge their communities, which include providing:

- A civic and economic anchor that attracts businesses and patrons to transitional neighborhoods
- A destination for creating community and civic engagement
- Services for hard-to-reach populations, including teenagers, immigrants, and senior residents
- Internet access in a world that requires online transactions and communication for jobs, schools, and social services for those without computers
- On-line databases and support for start-up businesses and a developing workforce.



Internet access has turned libraries into communication hubs for everyone.

Local Government Managers and Public Libraries: Partners for a Better Community

An ICMA Management Perspective Publication, 2007.

[http://icma.org/documents/Final_Mgmt_Prsvptv_Libraries_\(gates\).pdf](http://icma.org/documents/Final_Mgmt_Prsvptv_Libraries_(gates).pdf)

Managers Can Strategically Use Their Public Libraries to Achieve Community Priorities

As the most visible, physical symbol of a government's civic presence, libraries provide free and open access to knowledge and services to all residents regardless of income, race, and/or age. They are a neutral, respected gateway to information, a safe "third place" - a space between work and home - with equal access for all community members.

Building Communities. Libraries are viable partners in community development projects and anchors for new retail centers and residential development. Libraries provide stability in neighborhoods, as well as symbolize positive change and local commitment when new facilities are built. They provide a means for individual residents and businesses to connect to their immediate community, as well as to the global world.

Libraries are fundamental social and economic connectors in every neighborhood where they reside.

Education, Workforce, and Business Enhancement. According to a recent Urban Libraries Council report, *Making Cities Stronger* http://www.urbanlibraries.org/files/-making_cities_stronger.pdf, libraries are contributing to their communities in many new and innovative ways. Libraries encourage literacy within the community in the broadest sense of the word. Early literacy programs help parents and child-care providers prepare children of all income levels for school. Adult programs build an educated workforce. Libraries facilitate workforce development by providing access to the Internet and technology training that helps local residents learn new skills and apply for jobs. Many libraries are also offering technical assistance programs for small businesses.

Change Agent. Libraries are a focal point for neighborhood change. Several Chicago Public Library branches, have bridged affluent and previously blighted neighborhoods, helping to create new economic development, along with a safer, more stable community. In short, libraries can be important partners for local governments in improving the quality of residents' lives and increasing opportunities for all.

The changing roles of public libraries

Libraries are a dynamic resource and play many roles in their community. They are no longer just a place to get books and quietly study. Community needs are evolving and libraries are changing with them. And libraries function inside and outside their four walls through literacy programs and bookmobiles, and form nontraditional partnerships with other government departments to better serve residents. The rise of the Internet has turned libraries into a communication hub for everyone. Many libraries recognize that 50 percent of their patrons come for Internet access. Adults and children without computers come to the library and learn to use the technology. Many libraries offer free WiFi, giving business people and students another place to work. Visitors and tourists are able to come in and check their email. The Internet allows libraries to provide access to critical information and databases required by residents 24 hours a day/7 days a week.



National Association of Counties (NACo)

<http://www.naco.org/>

Objects and Purposes

The purposes for which this association is formed are

- to stimulate the continuing improvement of county government;
- to speak nationally for county government;
- to contribute to the knowledge and awareness of the heritage and future of county government;
- to serve as a liaison between the nation's counties and other levels of government; and
- to achieve public understanding of the role of counties in the federal system.

The association will seek to achieve these purposes by sponsoring conferences, exchanging information and advice, and conducting other activities that benefit county government and improve service to the public rendered by county government.

The words "county" or "counties" or "county governments" to describe members or membership shall include such other equivalent units of local government as have been accepted as active member counties.

Affiliates

NACo affiliate organizations http://www.naco.org/Template.cfm?Section=Affiliates-and_Partnerships&Template=/cfiles/naco/aff_list.cfm represent departments within the county government structure. There are procedures and criteria in place for completing the application process to become an affiliate, which includes a vote of the membership at the NACo Annual Conference. Each affiliate has one representative on the NACo/NACoRF Board of Directors.

National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT)

<http://www.natat.org/>

**Nearly one quarter of all Americans live in rural areas,
approximately the same percentage as live in central cities.**

The National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT) was formed more than 30 years ago to provide America's smaller communities – towns, townships and other suburban and rural localities* – a strong voice in Washington, DC. NATaT's purpose today, as it was then, is to champion fair-share federal funding decisions and to promote legislative and regulatory policies designed to strengthen grassroots local government. Since 1976, NATaT's staff and members have strived to educate lawmakers and other federal officials about the unique nature of small town government operations and the need for policies that meet the special needs of suburban and non-metro communities.

NATaT seeks flexible and alternative approaches to federal policies to ensure that small communities can meet federal requirements. As part of these efforts, NATaT advocates for fair share funding, technical assistance and other affirmative steps to address the inherent disadvantages that small governments face in our present intergovernmental system. Typical of these efforts was NATaT's key role in the passage of regulatory reforms by Congress aimed at reducing the burden of regulations on small local governments. NATaT has also successfully sought Congressional appropriations for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency specifically for small community outreach.

As the voice for nearly 13,000 towns and townships across America, NATaT has developed a proactive federal agenda to ensure that the needs and interests of small communities are reflected in all major federal statutory, regulatory, funding, and policy decisions made in Washington. The NATaT Board of Directors identified three primary advocacy goals on which members will focus:

- (1) securing tax benefits for local public service volunteers;
- (2) increasing federal funding for local economic development programs, water and wastewater infrastructure, brownfields redevelopment, and transportation improvements, including rural roads and bridges; and
- (3) ensuring that towns and townships receive their fair share of federal resources.

NATaT is working in collaboration with the other local government associations, the Administration and Congress to achieve these goals. [Click here for a copy of NATaT's Federal Platform for the 110th Congress.](#)

*Of the approximately 39,000 units of local government in the United States today, 85 percent serve communities with less than 10,000 people and nearly half have fewer than 1,000 residents. Nearly one quarter of all Americans live in rural areas, approximately the same percentage as live in central cities.

Marty Strange, Policy Director for Rural Trust, asked that I send this invitation to Rural Forum participants. Rural Trust is sponsoring an effort to form a National Rural Education Policy Agenda. Read below to learn more about the effort and how to participate.

National Rural Education Policy Agenda Education Policy As If “Rural” Matters

At this year’s REWG conference in Tuskegee, Alabama, we launched a year-long process to develop a national agenda for rural education policy that will come from grassroots rural America. I urge you to participate.

Why We Are Doing This

Rural Americans are dispersed among many small communities with diverse characteristics, histories, economies. We have very little voice in state education policy and even less in federal education policy. Yet we have learned from our REWG meetings that while issues vary from place to place, we have much in common, including our powerlessness. Many of us are organizing to change that and by working together, we can more effectively articulate rural perspectives on issues of national importance, share our knowledge and experience so that we are more informed about rural problems in places not like our own, and speak more clearly and in a louder voice to public officials. A grassroots process to develop a unified national rural education policy agenda is the first step. It will expand REWG’s role from information sharing to include shared decision making. It will lay the groundwork for more opportunities for shared action on shared priorities.

Who will participate?

This process is open to those who attend REWG and those who do not. Anyone who identifies as “rural” is welcome to participate. Participation will be primarily through conference calls, email and websites. The Rural Trust will pay for conference calls. Five committees were organized at the 2008 REWG conference and selected chairs and clerks. They are:

- Community Revitalization Committee, chaired by Dorothy Singleton, White Hall, Arkansas
- Curriculum Committee, chaired by Janeula Burt of Washington, DC
- Environment Committee, chaired by Lavina Grandon, Everton, Arkansas
- School Finance Committee chaired by Heather Perry, Greenville, Maine
- Student Success Committee, chaired by Sabrina Myers, Kendrick, Idaho

The breadth of these committee topics indicates the strength of our understanding the public schools are integral parts of the entire fabric of rural community life, and that issues like community revitalization and the quality of our environment are part of the context for good schooling.

Each committee should submit its report to the Rural School and Community Trust by November 1, 2008. The report should include at least the following:

- Statement of the issue and why it is important to rural people.
- Discussion of any ways in which the issue may be interpreted differently in different regions of the country.
- Statement of what should be achieved and what should be avoided by good public policy on this issue.
- Call to action: Who should do what about this issue?

Review and Comment on Committee Reports

Reports will be posted on the Rural School and Community Trust Website and the public will be invited to review and comment on them. Comments on any report will be sent to the members of the committee that authored the report and that committee may wish to respond to the comment or to discuss changes in their report that they consider appropriate. Any changes approved by the committee should be delivered to the Rural School and Community Trust by February 1, 2009. The Rural Trust will assemble the reports and write an introduction.

REWG 2009

The draft report will be included in the advance packet mailed to registrants for the REWG 2009 conference. The committee reports will be taken up one-by-one for discussion during the conference and amendments may be offered and approved by majority votes of those present. Each section will be voted on with approval requiring majority of those present. Finally, the entire policy agenda will be offered for approval or rejection by majority vote. All votes will be one-person-one-vote. However, once approved, organizational endorsements will be invited from anyone who has authority to speak for an organization.

Post REWG 2009

The approved National Rural Education Policy Agenda will be sent to individuals who have attended previous REWG events and others known to be interested with an invitation to endorse it, as individuals or as organizations. The document will be posted on the Rural Trust website where visitors will be invited to “sign on” as individuals or as organizations. Organizational endorsements can be at any level of organization - national, state, local, whether independent or affiliates/chapters of larger organizations.

To Join the Action

Just contact Kelly Brown at kelly.brown@ruraledu.org or at Rural School and Community Trust, 18 Merchants Row, Randolph, Vermont 05060, or by calling (802) 728-5899 and telling her which committee you would like to participate in.

The Rural Forum is an e-mail based discussion of topics affecting rural schools and communities. Please direct comments to ruralforum@ruraledu.org .



Urban Libraries Council

<http://www.urbanlibraries.org/>

Strengthening the public library as an essential part of urban life.

http://www.urbanlibraries.org/files/ULC_aboutus.pdf

A membership organization of North America's premier public library systems and the corporations that serve them, the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) has spent more than 30 years enriching urban communities by strengthening their public libraries.

Thriving public libraries are the result of collaborative leadership, trustees, library directors, and corporate citizens working together to grasp new opportunities and conduct research that improves professional practice.

Librarians for America's Neighborhoods 2

The Institute for Museum & Library Services has just awarded ULC a grant to continue the ULC Scholars program, "Librarians for America's Neighborhoods." We are delighted to lead the charge on this initiative, along with several ULC member libraries, to recruit the next public library professionals to the field and orient them to the diverse array of issues facing urban public libraries today.

From the perspective of directors leading large and complex urban public libraries, the need to recruit a diverse workforce with multi-cultural connections, broad flexible skill sets, and deep understanding of public libraries and local communities, is critical. This proposal seeks IMLS support for recruiting and providing unique support for the professional education of Masters level LIS students; students who will be the next generation of people shaping and delivering public library services.

In return for these unique professional experiences, ULC Scholars will be asked to contribute their ideas for reinventing public library services that meet 21st Century learning demands. ULC will create outlets for sharing the ideas of these new voices in the profession.

In sum, the goals of this project are to:

- [Increase the number and diversity of professional librarians in 21 Partner Libraries](#)
- Expand the scholars' understanding of the public library, community dynamics, and external forces shaping public libraries, and expand their connections with national colleagues and library leaders
- Increase the partner libraries capacity for recruiting and educating a diverse workforce
- Provide the profession with fresh views on practice and service
- Improve understanding between practitioners and selected educators about the needs of MLS students.



Association for Rural and Small Libraries

<http://arsl.pbwiki.com/>

<http://www.bcr.org/ARSL/membership.html>

**The mission of the Association for Rural & Small Libraries is
to provide a network of people and materials
to support rural and small library staff, volunteers, and trustees
to integrate the library thoroughly with
the life and work of the community it serves.**

The objectives of the Association are:

- To organize a network of members concerned about the growth and development of useful library services in rural and small libraries;
- To provide opportunities for the continuing education of members;
- To provide mechanisms for members to exchange ideas and to meet on a regular basis;
- To cultivate the practice of librarianship and to foster a spirit of cooperation among members of the profession, enabling them to act together for mutual goals;
- To serve as a source of current information about trends, issues, and strategies;
- To partner with other library and non-library groups and organizations serving rural and small library communities;
- To collect and disseminate information and resources that are critical to this network;
- To advocate for rural and small libraries at the local, state, and national levels.



Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services

<http://www.abos-outreach.org/>

The Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services is comprised of libraries of all types. Library administrators, support staff, governmental officials, trustees, friends of libraries, and professionals from other fields comprise this movement.

The mission of the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services is to support and encourage government officials, library administrators, trustees, and staff in the provision of quality bookmobile and outreach services to meet diverse community information and programming needs.

The purpose of the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services is:

- (a) to provide a forum for discussion of activities, programs, challenges and successes in the field of bookmobile and outreach services in libraries
- (b) to contribute to the education and training of library staff working in the area of bookmobile and outreach services in libraries
- (c) to promote bookmobile and outreach services as essential services in libraries
- (d) to serve as a channel of communication and instruction to improve bookmobile and outreach services.

To the success of any library various elements contribute: location; building, with its furniture, fittings, conveniences and attractions for readers; regulations; the books themselves. But the great element of success is the earnest, moving spirit which supplies to the institution its life. This should be the librarian, though often the one who bears that name is little more than a clerk ... Such a librarian will shape the other factors vary largely. Without [her] it is unlikely that they will be all they ought to be.

But the librarian is rapidly outgrowing the idea that [she] is concerned with books alone. The public pays its money, not to dignify books as such, but because it wishes information, or, still better, inspiration or innocent recreation, afforded in the best and cheapest way. This is oftenest through books, but . . . other means are found sometimes to be more effective or desirable.

Free public library service is an indispensable part of a well-rounded program of community life. It strengthens and extends appreciation of the cultural and spiritual values of life; it diffuses information and ideas necessary to the present welfare and future advancement of a community; it offers to every citizen the means of self-education throughout life.

- Conference of Southern Leaders

Librarians cannot continue to give library customers what they want.

The professional's responsibility is to provide what customers need, and need cannot be defined as request.

- Herb White

Part of the librarian's problem is to discover the needs of the community which the members of the community themselves have not recognized.

- Lester Asheim

Our personal sense of what is valuable really doesn't matter much at all unless it matches that of our customers.

- Eleanor Jo Rodger, Retired Urban Libraries Council CEO

If you don't like change, you're going to like irrelevancy less.

The Law of the Few:

It only takes a few people with connections, energy, and enthusiasm to set a trend or make something happen.

- Malcolm Gladwell in *The Tipping Point*. Little, Brown, 2000.

A group of people working together can come up with smarter decisions than one individual, no matter who he is.

- Ed Houcek, Vice President of Sales & Marketing, Dewar Information Systems.