

NEWS

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Illinois Study Finds Issues the Same for Rural and Urban Libraries

In September 2005, the Illinois Library Systems Directors Organization (ILSDO) surveyed library staff across Illinois to gather input on changes in technology and society and how Library Systems could help their member libraries respond to these changes.

One of the most significant findings of the study was that although the libraries in different Systems vary widely in terms of size, budget and demographics, the areas of concern were very similar for library workers across the state. For example, though awareness of new technologies such as podcasting, RSS, blogging and instant messaging was high among library staff, application of new technologies in their libraries was low. This was consistent between urban and rural libraries

The survey also asked libraries to identify the key demographic, political, and business/economic trends that might force them to change their focus and the services they offered. These trends were also the same for libraries across the state. The top demographic trends were ethnic/language diversity, aging population, and increasing poverty. The political trends were opposition to tax increases, intellectual freedom, and security concerns. The key business/economic trends were customization, instant gratification, and consumer choice.

ILSDO is looking at ways that Systems can work cooperatively to help libraries be more responsive to current trends as well as to more effectively promote their value to the public.

For development and application of new technologies, continuing education classes on how to use these technologies in the library would be offered.

ILSDO is currently looking at the issue of ethnic/language diversity and has already held a diversity workshop for Library System staff and members. The workshop was led by two representatives from the American Library Association, Tracie Hall, Director, Office of Diversity and Satia Orange, Director, Office for Literacy and Outreach Services, and Vandella Brown, Diversity Services Manager for the Illinois State Library. Each system is preparing a plan for addressing the diversity needs of their members.

The executive summary of the survey can be found on the ILSDO Web site at <http://www.illinoislibrarysystems.info>.

Illinois is served by nine multi-type library systems, each providing services to participating libraries in its region. Statewide, over 2,500 academic, public, school, and special libraries are members of Library Systems. Funding for Illinois Library Systems is provided through the Illinois State Library and the Secretary of State with funds appropriated by the Illinois General Assembly.