Arkansas State Library seeks volunteers to participate in needs assessment study

The library landscape is changing dramatically these days. As it does, libraries and library users develop new needs that require attention by the Arkansas State Library.

During the remainder of 2010 and early 2011, the RSL Research Group will be conducting a needs assessment study of the Arkansas State Library.

State Librarian Carolyn Ashcraft commissioned this study to solicit input from the State Library’s major stakeholder groups—specifically, state government and libraries. Representatives of these two groups will be asked to help identify existing and foreseeable user needs the agency might attempt to meet, or meet better, in the future.

Three methods of soliciting input from State Library clients will be used.

First, focus groups will be interviewed to ensure that the full range of existing and foreseeable needs is considered. In August, Keith Curry Lance of RSL will conduct focus group interviews of the Arkansas State Library Board as well as selected public library directors when both groups meet in Little Rock.

In September, he will return to conduct focus group interviews of public, school, and academic library personnel from throughout the state during and immediately after the Arkansas Library Association annual conference in Little Rock.

Second, key informants will be interviewed by telephone and e-mail. State Library staff and others are being asked to identify state and national leaders from whom expert recommendations can be solicited regarding several specific issues.

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State Library celebrates 13 years of Traveler

When Arkansas students return to school this month, they will again have access to a powerful research tool to assist them in their studies. That’s because for the 13th year the Arkansas State Library will provide free online references and resources to Arkansas public, school and academic libraries through the Traveler database project.

Not only will students benefit, but most Arkansas public library patrons can use Traveler to conduct online research in the library or at home using remote access. All you need is a computer and your public library’s access instructions.

The Traveler project began in 1997 when the State Library began using funds from the Library Sciences and Technology Act to purchase full-text databases for more than 230 Arkansas public libraries. Through the years, the project has grown to include additional reference resources for more than 1,250 libraries in the state. In recent years, additional funds have been provided by the Arkansas
Needs assessment study…

Third, during October and November 2010, state government and library personnel statewide will be surveyed to gather their input to help shape the future of the State Library.

The focus of this project is on “futuring” about the State Library and its clients’ needs. It is not an evaluation of State Library personnel or existing services, nor is its intent to justify any action other than helping the State Library to do a better job of serving its clients in the future.

If you wish to volunteer for one of the focus group interviews in connection with the state conference, please contact Lance at keithlance@comcast.net. Be aware, however, that volunteering may not guarantee your participation in one of those interviews. In order to obtain useful results, the selection of focus group participants must be based on the number and nature of the focus groups, and decisions about these issues will be somewhat constrained by scheduling and logistics.

If you wish to provide any other input as the design of this project unfolds, please contact Lance directly at the above e-mail address.

The report on this needs assessment study will be delivered to the State Librarian in early 2011.

13 years of Traveler…

Department of Education.
A Network Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from public, school, academic and special libraries selects the annual database subscription for Traveler. Each year the new subscription is made available to libraries on August 1.

Why use Traveler instead of an Internet search engine?
Traveler searches provide thousands of licensed resources from known sources without having to worry about ads, spam or spyware. All resources in Traveler have been reviewed and verified. In addition, Traveler has safe resources for students of all ages with easy access for younger students.

On the other hand, if you use Google, Yahoo, Bing or any other Internet search engine you will get anything that is on the Internet, including ads and links to inappropriate websites. The top results in these searches are purchased for their location on the list.

What’s in the 2010-2011 Traveler subscription?
The 2010-2011 subscription released Aug. 1 includes Encyclopaedia Britannica, EBSCOhost, Gale Discovering Collection, Gale OneFile, and Ebook selections from the Gale Virtual Reference Library.


EBSCOhost contains 18 databases of business, consumer, health and general news periodicals and newspapers. Arkansas Democrat-Gazette articles are included.

OCLC FirstSearch includes the WorldCat bibliographic database, the World Almanac, and many others.

Gale Discovering Collection covers the major subject areas of history, literature, science and social sciences. It includes hours of video and audio clips.

Gale OneFile provides periodical and news information for researchers at all levels.

Sally Hawkes, manager of network services, is the Traveler project coordinator. Additional information on Traveler can be found on the State Library’s website, www.asl.lib.ar.us.
Changes are coming to E-rate

E-rate is the common name for the Schools and Libraries Support Mechanism of the Universal Service Fund through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and now the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC). The Schools and Libraries Support Mechanism was implemented through the Telecommunications Act of 1996 to provide telecommunication services such as local and long distance calling and high speed lines, Internet access and the internal connections—equipment—necessary to deliver these services specifically to public schools and libraries. Any public library recognized by the Arkansas State Library as a legally established public library according to Arkansas state law can apply for E-rate.

A successful application allows the public library to receive discounts on the costs of services provided by the vendors. The discount rate ranges from 20 to 90 percent.

Last December the FCC announced that it was proposing changes to E-rate and giving stakeholders an opportunity to comment. The comment phase closed in late July. There is no news on when changes may be implemented.

More details on the changes can be found on the Public Library Information page on the Arkansas State Library website, www.asl.lib.ar.us/PublicL/erateinfo.htm.

Watch our website for updates on this process.

Meanwhile, the State Library is in the process of hiring a coordinator to work with public libraries on E-rate applications. This position is being funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s Opportunity Online broadband pilot grant program.

This fall, the Schools and Libraries Division (SLD) of USAC is offering several E-Rate training sessions. The Arkansas State Library will be sending Extension Services staff to SLD training and offering a training session to Arkansas public library staff in early November. If you have any questions, please call or email Ruth Hyatt, manager of extension services, 501.682.5288, email: rhyatt@asl.lib.ar.us.

—Ruth Hyatt

First-ever national study: millions of people rely on library computers for employment, health, and education

77 million people used library computers and Internet access in past year

Nearly one-third of Americans age 14 or older – roughly 77 million people – used a public library computer or wireless network to access the Internet in the past year, according to a national report released recently. In 2009, as the nation struggled through a recession, people relied on library technology to find work, apply for college, secure government benefits, learn about critical medical treatments, and connect with their communities.

The report, Opportunity for All: How the American Public Benefits from Internet Access at U.S. Libraries, is based on the first, large-scale study of who uses public computers and Internet access in public libraries, the ways library patrons use this free technology service, why they use it, and how it affects their lives. It was conducted by the University of Washington Information School and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Low-income adults are more likely to rely on the public library as their sole access to computers and the Internet than any other income group. Overall, 44 percent of people living below the federal poverty line used computers and the Internet at their public libraries.

The complete report can be found online at www.imls.gov/pdf/OpportunityForAll.pdf.
If All Arkansas Read the Same Book 2010

“10 books in 10 months”

An Intimate Evening with Charlaine Harris

7 p.m.
Friday, October 29, 2010
Book signing to follow (One book per person)

Pulaski Technical College
North Little Rock campus
R. J. Wills Lecture Hall, Campus Center Bldg., 2nd Floor
3000 West Scenic Drive, North Little Rock, 75518

Extremely limited seating.
To attend you must reserve your seat. Individual reservations only.
No block reservations.
Call 501.682.2874 or email crystal@library.arkansas.gov to reserve your seat.

We will start accepting reservations September 1, 2010.

For more information, please visit www.arkansasreads2010.blogspot.com.