

## SERVICE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

This document summarizes the conclusions and recommendations of Jeanne Goodrich, who prepared a detailed analysis of Library services and resource utilization from statistics available from the Library and other sources.

### OVERVIEW OF LIBRARY STATISTICS

#### Conclusions

1. Compiling and analyzing data that accurately reflects the services provided by the library system and the resources required to provide these services is essential to determining both effectiveness and efficiency. Data provided by FWPL to both DAI and others contains some inconsistencies and inaccuracies, which makes both internal and external comparisons problematic. Different methodologies, definitions, and practices have been used over the years. Data provided for FY 2001 has been more carefully scrutinized by staff, so it offers a better foundation upon which to develop analyses of current services and resources. Earlier data has not benefited from this heightened scrutiny, so comparative and trend analysis must be reviewed at a more global, conceptual level.
2. Generally, the data being kept is both overly detailed and lacking in detail. Like the data kept by most public libraries, it often overwhelms in complexity and yet often does not provide data needed to make management and service decisions.

#### Recommendations

1. Appoint a data coordinator for the Library and train local data collectors.
2. Collect data only to the level of detail that will be utilized to make management and program decisions.
3. Develop standardized report forms and analytical tools so that the data can be put into context and made useable to managers and staff members throughout the system.
4. Make the reports and charts widely available in electronic form.
5. Experiment with data presentation modes, using modern office suite software, that combine narratives, tables, spreadsheets, and charts in ways that convey information in an easily understood manner.

## **SERVICE TRENDS**

### **Conclusions**

Monitoring trends in selected service and resource indicators provides a way to analyze basic movements and to make comparisons that indicate whether or not the system is making true progress (such as noting both the increase in operating funds and in per capita expenditures).

### **Recommendations**

1. Analyze trend information using the indicators presented in the full report to see if usage and investment in resources are moving in tandem.
2. Determine the best investment mix, using the data provided by the user and community surveys and the service priorities developed in the long range planning process.
3. Conduct additional user research to find out how collections can be better designed to meet the needs and interests of users so that collection dollars can be spent most effectively.
4. Continue to set goals for increases in relevant service measures and link that process with the goals and objectives from the long range service plan so that improvements are set as quantifiable goals or percentages.

## **INTERNAL COMPARISONS**

### **Conclusions**

The Fort Worth Public Library serves its community through a central library, two satellite branches in public housing communities, and twelve branches. The communities served by these facilities are quite different from each other and the usage patterns of the branches vary widely.

1. There are significant differences among the branches in terms of user (and potential user) demographics and in terms of usage made of their services. These differences provide information that can be used both to develop service priorities and to measure the success of goals and activities established in the long range service plan.
2. Usage will be influenced by the resources the library system provides as well as by the demographics of the population to be served. Correlation analysis of FWPL statistics shows a much higher correlation with resources than with demographics. In other words, there is a very high positive relationship between circulation and questions answered and the hours a facility is open,

its size and the size of its collection and a much more modest relationship between these typical library usages and the income and education levels of people within the facility's service area.

3. Data currently collected about collections and programs does not easily break down into information that could be used to more precisely target service to the unique population served by each branch.
4. There is very little correlation between program attendance and either the age of children served by the branch or the resources (in terms of hours open and branch staff) that the branch has. There is very poor correlation between the actual number of people who attend programs and the number of staff who are available to plan and staff these programs. Program attendance does not appear to correlate with social factors, resources invested in the branch, or the other service indicators.
5. Program attendance comparisons for both attendance per hour open and attendance per capita (using the entire branch service population) shows that some facilities (notably BOLD and COOL), while not serving a lot of people per hour open, are serving a significant percentage of their target population. Interesting variations also exist between the regional libraries and some of the smaller libraries open 42 hours per week.
6. Library work is changing. Much of what is now done in libraries is not captured by traditional library data gathering efforts, especially for new services. Statistics for this kind of work do not appear to be collected by FWPL at this time.
7. Other libraries have found, and FWPL's latest analysis of collection statistics, confirms, that if appropriate materials and services are provided to and publicized, they will be used by Hispanic residents and by those for whom English is a second language.

### **Recommendations**

1. Continue to monitor the service indicators of individual branches along with the identified social and demographic characteristics.
2. Question whether usage patterns are appropriate, given service priorities and goals and objectives established in the long range service plan.
3. Develop numeric goals for resource utilization.
4. Develop a coordinated approach to programming throughout the system based on the service priorities in the long range plan.

5. Establish success indicators for programming and track them both system-wide and branch by branch.
6. Consider the relationship between success indicators and the branch service area demographic profile and make adjustments accordingly.
7. Review both the accuracy and methodology of collecting circulation statistics.
8. Review the role and function of Spanish language materials and services in relationship to the number of Hispanic and Spanish speaking people who live in the various service areas.
9. More copies of selected titles should be purchased both throughout the system and for individual branches within the system.
10. Measure and analyze what work is being done in the library system after deciding upon the most meaningful measures, report them on a regular basis, and track and analyze for trends and variances.

## **EXTERNAL COMPARISONS**

### **Conclusions**

1. Based on data collected and reported by the Fort Worth Public Library, it appears to be doing a very good job as compared to the other major Texas libraries and nationally. However, because of discrepancies found in the data collected and reported, this picture cannot be fully embraced at this time.  

The area that is most subject to analysis is that of circulation. Despite the fact that the Texas State Library, the federal government, and the Public Library Data Service define circulation as checking library materials out to use outside the building plus the renewal of those materials, it appears that the FWPL has reported the total of those activities, as well as in-house usage in their circulation figure. If that is so, then these comparisons in the following areas (circulation, circulation per capita, circulation per registered borrower, and collection turnover) are subject to review.
2. Areas of concern include the support level, the low registration level, and the low level of library visits. Each of these areas is below the median level nationally, but above the levels of the comparable Texas libraries.
3. Benchmarking against national and state standards can be useful in terms of assessing the relative standing of FWPL. It may be of limited practical usefulness, however, even when reporting errors and discrepancies are corrected.

### **Recommendations**

1. Correct reporting errors and misunderstandings regarding definitions of key performance indicators.
2. Strive for accuracy and consistency in gathering and reporting library statistics.
3. Utilize the Data Coordinator position to assure that the importance of keeping accurate, consistent statistics is understood within the system and that statistics are gathered and reported accurately both internally and externally.
4. Identify areas where more improvement would best serve the various communities the library serves, regardless of the apparent relatively high ranking of FWPL in most measurement areas.