

FACT SHEET

Library Service for the Future

BACKGROUND

The MBLC Futures Institute held June 26-27, 2002 at Worcester Polytechnic Institute provided a unique experience for school, public, academic and special librarians in the Commonwealth. It gave them the opportunity to examine the technological, governmental, societal and educational trends in the world at large and to discuss their implications for the future of library service. As central information providers to community constituencies, libraries need to examine how technological developments have restructured our services and to anticipate change to meet our communities' needs. The Futures Institute demonstrated that the mission of our institutions has not changed, but the vision has. The rapid advance of technology is driving change, but the key to successful adaptation for our institutions is the building and maintaining of relationships among staff, users, and the various power brokers in our communities.

Among the discussions which ensued from the Futures Institute was the idea of the library of the 21st century as gateway of the community. It serves as a community commons, a destination place. Whether it is public, academic, special or school, the library should be at the intersection of community life. It should afford a physically comfortable, light, safe and welcoming environment and provide a flexible space to meet the ever-changing needs of its customers. The library will continue to provide outreach services to a variety of groups—children, teens, senior citizens, and underserved populations.

The library is identified as a learning place which proactively encourages the use of new technology and shares its information expertise with the community. This positions the library as a key player, increases its value and helps it to build relationships with local and governmental agencies as well as with other types of libraries.

Marketing the library with a strong web presence is necessary to promote library services and provide access to resources, reinforcing its role as the place to find information either electronically or in person. This includes moving toward more universal design to meet the needs of the aging population as well as those with any special needs. Management needs to help staff understand the future and coach them in new roles. Our skills must expand—we are becoming facilitators, information entrepreneurs and preservers of our local memory. Future problem solving for work and social issues will increasingly depend on experience, creativity and the intellectual capital of a well trained and well managed staff.

MASSACHUSETTS LONG-RANGE PLAN GOAL/OBJECTIVE:

Goal 6: Increase public awareness of the intrinsic value of libraries in promoting personal and economic growth for every resident in every community through the wide array of programs and services that libraries offer.

Objective 1: Manage and expand the statewide public awareness campaign to inform Massachusetts residents of the value of libraries for personal and economic growth in every community and the essential roles of librarians as information professionals.

Objective 3: Support approaches, strategies and programs that increase community connectivity, build social trust, and affirm the value of libraries as centers of civic life.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Libraries will be eligible to apply for grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$20,000 to plan and implement a program which will build on a theme developed in response to the future of library service. Regional library systems may be eligible for larger amounts depending on the scope of the project. This may be a one- or two-year project.

Projects may involve any or all of the following:

- Building local/regional teams to share information, presentations, and support. Consider pooling funds with other libraries (including multi-type)
- Electronic and traditional marketing approaches
- Other topics generated from reading and discussion of library service for the future. From more ideas, consult the Futures Institute Webliography:
<http://www.mlin.lib.ma.us/mblc/institutes/futures/>.

ELIGIBILITY:

Libraries of all types are invited to apply:

- The applicant must be a member of a Massachusetts regional library system
- The applicant must have a long-range plan on file at the MBLC by October 1 of the prior year (October 1, 2004 for the FY06 grant year), that meets the requirements of the *Massachusetts Long-Range Plan, 2003-2007* (see Appendix B). If a plan **is** already on file, an updated Action Plan must be on file by December 1 of the prior year

INTERESTED?

Applicants must submit a **Letter of Intent** by the date on the LSTA announcement calendar with the “Open Grant” option checked off under **TYPE**. On a separate sheet of paper, applicants must indicate that they are interested in carrying out a Library Service for the Future project and briefly describe some activities they would like to include. An informational workshop to assist applicants in completing an application for this program will be held in late January or early February of the grant year. A preliminary schedule is enclosed. If you need more information about this program, call Shelley Quezada at the MBLC at 800-952-7403 ext. 235, or by email at shelley.quezada@state.ma.us.