Focus Group Report
Ramapo Catskill Library System

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Introduction

Between September 30 and October 6, Nancy Bolt and Debbi MacLeod, library consultants, conducted 13 focus groups in four locations in the Ramapo Catskill Library System service area. Participants from all libraries in the System were invited to participants. A total of 152 people attended from 41 libraries. There were five categories of focus groups: library trustees, library directors, children/youth staff, reference/adult services staff, and circulation/technical services staff. Appendices show the handout of the questions that was distributed and summary data on participation. This report presents the results of those focus groups.

The following questions were asked in the focus groups.

- What does RCLS do best that helps you provide better service for your users? What would you like to see changed in current RCLS services and programs?
- What future trends do you see within your community and within the library environment? What could RCLS do to support you in addressing these trends?
- It is the year 2020 and RCLS had received a major national award for their excellence as a library system. What did RCLS do to achieve this award and what should they do now to begin working toward these achievements?
- What does your library do now to advocate for your library? What can RCLS do to help you with this effort?
- Finish this sentence: Wouldn't it be great if RCLS……
- What did you come here to tell us that we did not ask?

There was a lot of overlap in the answers to the questions. What participants liked about RCLS was similar to the answers on why RCLS won a national award. What they wanted changed about RCLS was similar to what RCLS should start doing now to win the award. The discussion of trends brought some new thinking, particularly in the area of community trends thus, this topic is reported in a separate section. The discussion on advocacy was an endorsement of what RCLS is doing now with a request for some additional services. The responses to the last two bullets were a repetition of previous answers. No consensus was sought. The consultants sought to record the actual words or at least the intent of the participants.

The duplication of answers on some topics shows consistency in the participants' opinion across all counties and libraries. These should be considered for discussion and possible action.

The purpose of the focus groups was two-fold: to find ways to improve services to members and to obtain information for the program plan required by the New York State Library. The State Library provides a list of topics to be covered in the Program Plan. These topics

correspond closely with the information we received in the focus groups, thus the report is organized with that in mind with some changes:

- Virtual reference, digitization, and correction facilities were left out because there were no comments on these topics
- Cooperative collection development and coordinated services for members are combined due to the degree of overlap in comments
- Special client groups, adult literacy, and outreach are combined due to the degree of overlap in comments
- Youth and early literacy are combined due to the degree of the overlap
- Two topics were added: technology and administration due to the extent of discussion

Caveats:

- This report represents the opinions of the participants in the focus groups. There are some areas where there is high agreement on suggested changes and these should be given first consideration. To determine the opinion or consensus of all RCLS members and their staff, a survey based on these results should be considered. The same questions were asked in all focus groups but no attempt was made to direct the conversation, thus the groups took the discussion in the direction of most interest to the participants from their own perspective. Thus, it is difficult to show consensus of direction across groups if a topic did not arise in a group.   These qualitative discussions are typically used to gather topics for a quantitative survey to assess the support and interest of a broader customer group. We have tried to include the number of focus groups that mentioned a topic. The fact that only one focus group mentioned it does not mean that it is not of interest to other libraries whose focus group discussion did not go in that direction.
- For some topics, comments were few. The lack of comments does not equate with a lack of interest or appreciation. Construction grants are a good example. Library trustees and directors are aware of these grants, happy they exist, thrilled with the help they get from RCLS staff, and have no suggestions for improving the service. Thus comments were few and that section of the report is very short.
- The consultants are aware that many of the services requested are already being provided.   For some services, focus group participants were also aware of these services and often asked for "more of the same."   For some services, however, participants first learned of them from other group participants. We did not ask what services they would like to see eliminated and cutting services was only mentioned in one group by one person.
- The consultants erred on the side of providing comprehensive information in this report, thus the many, many suggestions made for services are included. It is unrealistic for

RCLS to provide all of the new services and assistance suggested. The consultants did not ask for consensus. In some cases we asked if there was general agreement but did not record that on all topics as time did not permit doing so. Since no consensus was gathered, RCLS staff should work with member groups to decide what is most feasible to undertake or to conduct a survey of staff to determine priorities. Frontline staff did ask that they be specifically included in the development of any services that directly impact their ability to serve users.

- The participants expressed appreciation that consultants from outside the System were engaged to conduct the focus groups. This allowed them to express their opinions frankly. While overall there is respect and appreciation for RCLS, the participants were not reluctant to also indicate areas where RCLS could be improved.

Overall RCLS was praised and all of the services received positive comments. One said "Staff help us when we don't want to be a librarian. They are the "librarian to the librarians." This was appreciated particularly when librarians were looking for information or support and RCLS staff provided a resource or a referral. Another participant said that RCLS was "trying to meet the needs of a wide range of libraries – they make a good effort – it's like herding cats." Others said "RCLS does a lot for local libraries – we couldn't exist without them" and "RCLS brings 46 libraries into the future."

Finally, given the opportunity, the participating librarians and library staff were prolific in the suggestions they offered. No constraints were placed on their ideas and all were recorded. In some cases, the comments may be interpreted as negative and some real problems were mentioned that need to be addressed. One participant summed up the balance between praise and criticism this way: "RCLS does way more good than our negative comments imply."

Major Issues
There are two types of input to this report. The first is a multitude of suggestions for what RCLS might do in the future. Some were extensions of services already delivered and appreciated. Some were new services. As mentioned in the caveats, we did not seek to find a consensus of which of these services might be prioritized. In this category, one area does stand out. It is the need to help local libraries deal with the changing demographics in their communities, particularly ethnic diversity and aging. The Trends section below shows the discussion on this topic.

The second type of input has to do with the operation of RCLS – how services are delivered, communication, and inputs into decisions. There was huge appreciation for the RCLS staff and the work they perform. The "big picture" is this: RCLS work is done well; members appreciate

it, and have a lot of ideas. However, there are some critical areas of concern that impact the overall RCLS program. In this area, four topics stood out:

- Eight groups felt that staff were overworked, that too many had been let go in budget cutting, and that more were needed now. Eight (one director, one trustee, two youth, and four staff groups) groups expressly asked for more staff at RCLS. The trustee and director group volunteered they would pay more for System services to obtain this consulting help but this was not discussed in all groups.   Three groups (one director, one trustee, and one youth) felt that current RCLS needed more time to think, plan, and create – thus the need for more staff overall.
- There was intense dissatisfaction with the current Symphony/Enterprise system. Eight groups (two director, two youth, and four staff) discussed this at length.   The section on the ILS details some of the issues with the ILS.
- Eight groups (two director, one youth, and five staff) specifically identified communication problems.   This fell into two categories. The first is involving frontline staff in decision-making. They felt that they were most knowledgeable about the community and the daily delivery of and getting more communication about system services.   The second communication problem came from front line staff who feel that information seems to go only to library directors who sometimes do not share it with all staff.
- Six groups (three directors, one trustee, and three staff) specifically mentioned RCLS staff attitude toward suggestions from members.   They felt that the initial response from staff was negative towards ideas from members. Two groups suggested members discussing problems without RCLS staff and then presenting possible solutions to RCLS staff.

These issues rose to the top the discussions and should be addressed.

Chart showing number of focus groups commenting on a topic

This chart shows the number of focus groups in each category that commented on a topic. Reference/adult services and circulation/technical services was combined into one group because the last focus group combined these four staff positions. There were also no significant differences in the opinions in these four groups.

In general, trustees and directors tended to focus on overarching trends and issues. Library staff working day-to-day with library users, tended to have more specific, "nitty-gritty" suggestions. The youth services librarians had the broadest perspective.

Another interesting observation is how few groups, other than the youth services group, mentioned youth services. We suspect, as with construction services, they are perceived to be excellent and the consultant from RCLS highly respected. Because of this positive attitude, it may not be perceived as an area of service that needs a lot of attention. However, the youth services staff expressed a desire for more attention and support for the services they deliver.

Number of focus groups in each category that mentioned a specific topic

Topic	Trustees (3)	Directors (3)	Youth Services (2)	Reference Adult Services Circulation Technical Services (5)	Total
Resource Sharing		3	2	4	11
Cooperative collection development	3	3		5	11
ILS		3	2	5	10
Delivery	1	3	2	5	11
ILL	2	3	2	5	12
Digital collection access –	1	1	1	4	7
Special client groups	3	3	2	5	13
Youth Services/early literacy			2		2
Continuing education	3	2	2	5	12
Consulting	2	3	2	4	11
Awareness/Advocacy/PR	3	3	2	5	13
Communication with and among Members	3	3	1	3	10
Collaboration	2	1	2	1	6
Construction	2	2			4
Technology	3	3	2	4	12
RCLS Admin	3	3	2	5	13

Trends – Community

Focus group participants were well versed in the changes affecting their communities. Cultural diversity is the overwhelming trend that the majority of groups discussed (eight groups: three staff, two trustee, two youth and one director).   There is an increase in diversity and one community was described as a mini United Nations. Overall, participants mentioned groups as diverse as Asian, Indian, Eastern European, Russian, Arabic, Muslim, Hasidic, Korean, and Creole. While Spanish language and Hispanics were the most prevalent (five groups: three

staff, one trustee and one youth), libraries need to support the populations living in their service area.

The increase of conservative Jewish populations in several communities caused concern (four groups: two directors, one youth and one trustee). They felt taking property off the tax base will reduce the library budget and therefore the service that can be provided to the community.

These changes are resulting in the following needs:

- Shifts in collection development to include materials in other languages
- Applications for library cards in other languages
- Providing citizenship, legal, and immigration information
- Increased demands for English as a second language classes
- Serving undocumented immigrants who are afraid to get a library card

Another diversity issue that most libraries are dealing with is the increasing numbers of patrons with mental health issues, the rise in autism and Asperger's, the people experiencing homelessness, and those with drug addictions (six groups: two directors, two trustees, one youth and one staff). Many are using the libraries as a shelter.
The older population is growing in many communities and this is creating demand for large print and audio (seven groups: one director, two trustees, one youth, three staff). Seniors want to be entertained but they are also using the library as a home base to learn technology, putting a strain on staffing.

Digital government has also driven many seniors and the unemployed into the library (five groups: two directors and 3 staff). They need help learning technology and writing resumes. High school dropouts need GED classes. Libraries are taking on more as other government agencies stop doing things such as providing tax forms. There is a feeling that "if they don't know what to do, they send it to the library."

Three groups discussed that seniors are aging in place and housing is not turning over to younger families. As a result, schools are closing. But most communities are dealing with other trends relating to school age patrons.

Reduction in school librarians is a trend putting pressure on the public library (three groups: one director, one youth and one staff). Common core and schools moving to Chromebooks are also an issue. Schools have locked down the Chromebooks & Google so students can't use them at public library after school. One school district is moving to eliminate textbooks altogether and have iPads for each student. Libraries would like more information from schools so they can support common core.

Schools assume that all children know how to use the technology, public library staff see this is not true, and the parents sometimes don't know either. They come to the library for help. Some children don't have Internet or computer access at home and can only get that at the public library. One youth group mentioned these trends, three groups wanted more information from schools to support common core standards.

As noted in one group, there are many reading level schemes that are used in the schools and it has been difficult for libraries to support parents who come looking for a book rated for a particular scheme level. Library staff need to understand the products and help buying books at these various reading level schemes. Libraries have also seen an increase in tutoring by outside tutors (two groups: one director, one staff), the need for homework help (two groups: one director, one trustee), and the growth of homeschooling in several communities (three groups: one trustee, two staff,). Safety issues exist as libraries are asked to be babysitters especially when kids are left unattended (two groups: one trustee, one youth).

Programming for school age children has become a challenge for many reasons. Primarily there is competition for people's time from alternate resources such as sports, afterschool activities, Netflix, Hulu, Redbox, or story times at local businesses (six groups: one director, one trustee, one youth, four staff). There are more working parents so grandparents are bringing children to story time and the library (two groups: one youth, one staff). While libraries have made shifts in programming, it has had minimal impact.

One youth group reported another interesting trend is the reluctance by parents to make commitments, resulting in less registration for programs. However, participants reported that Hispanic parents are more willing to make the commitment and bring their children to library programs.

Competition for time, attention, and availability of resources from other sources also affects adult patrons (six groups: three staff, two directors and one trustee). Some libraries see fewer patrons in their 20's and 30's. As a result circulation is changing. There are both increases and decreases, depending on the library, for materials such as books, e-books, non-fiction, and media, although the increase in DVD usage seems more prevalent. Games and crafts are popular. Many librarians in two groups are seeing a decline in reference questions and usage of the reference collection. Some see reader's advisory increasing. Other than the general increase in DVD usage, there did not seem to be a pattern.

Several technology trends affect libraries. Foremost, the Bring-Your-Own-Device trend (three groups: one each director, youth, staff) is putting great pressure on Wi-Fi bandwidth in most libraries affecting patron services (six groups: one director, two trustee, one youth, two staff). The lack of Internet access in the counties and even cellphone service in parts of Sullivan county

results in the community coming to the library for access and contributes to bandwidth issues. Also, users are showing up with scanned library card on their phone (five groups: one director, four staff), teens come in only to recharge their phones, and many use Wi-Fi in the parking lot after hours (two groups: one trustee, one staff).

Five groups (one director, one trustee, three staff) discussed these technology issues. Users need to learn how to use new technology and about digital literacy. Libraries have to serve people at all levels of experience, which is challenging library staff. Many times users have more modern technology than the library and staff don't know how to teach them to use it. Other concerns are with users bringing legacy technology to the library and expecting it to work. Thus compatibility issues are a problem. On top of all of this users have become impatient and don't want to wait for classes, they want to know now.

There is a consistent feeling that library budgets are in trouble (two director groups). The tax cap means board members are reluctant to spend money. While usage is up since 2008, the economic base is still flat. Voter turnout in elections is low and some think that libraries should advocate for people to vote in elections. Additionally a youth group pointed out that politicians see the library board as path to a political career. As board members they become more interested in cutting taxes and less spending.

These are several other trends of concern in a few libraries:

- The impact of the upcoming casinos is unknown – demands on library, traffic, increased development?
- Prisons impact as relatives move to be closer
- Rise of second homeowners who are generous with money may necessitate shifting open hours to the weekend to support them
- Patrons need help using databases
- Distance learning
- Overdevelopment in rural areas
- Accessibility to library if at a distance
- Section 8 housing bringing drug problem – safety issue

One thing seems clear, as mentioned by two groups, as door counts drop the users that do come through the doors demand more in-depth help with the collection and technology, more social services and more help with resumes and homework.

The following is a list of ideas on how RCLS could help member libraries with these trends:

- Wi-Fi – need more bandwidth – all the Bring-Your-Own-Device (BYOD) is putting strain on bandwidth – this was overwhelmingly the most requested item by six groups

- Spanish immersion course for staff
- Help attracting Hispanic community
- How to do bilingual story times
- Help initiate a cooperative relationship between the schools and public library
- Gather and share information about what schools are doing
- Take technology petting zoo on the road
- Update 55+ resources list
- Start immigrant assistance center
- CE on technology to stay current
- Need to communicate value to public officials that still have old perceptions of library
- More training on tech
- Encourage people to vote
- Support cooperative programming
- Help libraries establish a "book wagon" – little free libraries
- Provide sources for buying books in other languages
- Use RCLS trucks to deliver to homebound
- Job search grant – do more workshops at night at local libraries
- Provide list of attorney in system
- Create resource list of who in member libraries is bilingual
- RCLS provide hotspots to loan out
- Encourage small business development through training and create pilot projects which would encourage growth in the tax base
- PILOT – pay in lieu of taxes – help keep libraries current on when this is going on in their community
- Need language translation app
- Prepare a guide for services for homeschoolers like the 55+ guide
- Buy textbooks
- Provide list of streaming music platforms
- Maybe shift resources from little used databases to e-books or streaming video
- Help establish Friends groups to address funding issues
- Share policies on safety
- Help starting foundations
- Tech trainers for patrons

Trends – Library

Two of the biggest trends facing the library world are moving from collection to connections and becoming community centers or library as a Third Place (eight groups: one director, one trustee, two youth, four staff). As a result, there is a shift in space usage with an increased need for more meeting space and space for computers and people using their own devices. There is an expectation that the library is a multipurpose facility with Wi-Fi, Internet, food and

drink, noise, classes for kids, meeting rooms, and places for programs (seven groups: one director, two trustee, two youth, and two staff). The library is also becoming a disaster response center in times of environmental crisis (Three groups: one trustee, two staff).

All this leads to a need to redesign space. Space could be shifted from the reduced use of reference, due to Google and YouTube, and weeding collections that are not circulating. When considering a redesign some want to redesign the children's room to incorporate the Family Place Library concept which puts an emphasis on early literacy. "If Maine can do it, NY can afford it."   There was a lively discussion in one youth group.

One group thought libraries could teach business skills and help entrepreneurs, which would help to broaden the tax base.

There is concern in two groups: one director and one trustee, that the civil service job descriptions are old, not relevant and make it hard to hire people with the skills that libraries need today. The trend towards an increased minimum wage leaves many in one director group wondering how this will affect library budgets. Decreases in staff necessitates the remaining staff to do multiple jobs and many libraries are seeing more para-professionals replacing librarians. There seem to be less people available for part-time daytime positions and those that do work are not happy when they are asked to attend meetings off their regular schedules (one youth and one staff group).

Another trend raised by three groups (one trustee, two staff), one was the cost of benefits for staff. Each individual library has to go it alone in providing insurance and other benefits. Many thought that a collaborative approach to insurance through the System could lower the costs for all.

Libraries are also thinking about environmental issues. How can they mitigate the rise in oil costs and how could they reduce energy consumption? How can they incorporate green ideas into the library? One trustee and one staff group and discussed this at length.

There is also concern that people are using the library as a recycling center as they get rid of their personal books. Libraries need help on what to do with used books, not only theirs, but the ones left by the community (one director group.)

The following is a list of ideas on how RCLS could help member libraries with these trends:

- RCLS sponsor cooperative insurance benefits that all libraries could offer to staff
- Help with space planning
- Coordinate fingerprinting and background checks
- Advocate to counties about civil service job descriptions and the need to update
- Create system-wide intern program through community colleges

- Need pool for getting substitutes across the system
- Staff should get training on trends
- Share information on grants for new programs
- More programming and less collections
- Help with programming – create programs to share with all members
- Create some small Makerspaces
- Create resource list of people with maker skills
- Integrate calendars of all member libraries
- Need data from databases and ILS on individual library use
- RFID – need help on planning for this
- Depository for last copy in the system
- Need notaries – RCLS facilitate people getting certification
- Help with recycling used books – do a contract with Better World Books
- Help get rid of VHS tapes
- Shredding – bring this service back
- Take away their old computer terminals
- Grants to help purchase equipment
- Hire staff to create an energy evaluation audit, teach local libraries to use it, conduct for entire system, help libraries sort out future, greening of library

What Members Like about RCLS Services

We begin this section with a quick review of Question #1: what focus group participants like about RCLS services. We do this with some trepidation. Using the same question as a starting point, participants' discussion ranged in many directions depending on the perspective and concerns of the group members. As stated above, lack of mention does not mean lack of appreciation. More research would need to be done to determine full RCLS member opinion of any particular service. While the chart below focuses on what focus group participants liked about RCLS services, things they wanted changed is covered in each of the sections below to avoid duplication of the discussion.

Number of groups	RCLS Service, in order of mention by a group
Interlibrary loan	12 groups
Continuing Education	12 groups
Consortia buying, group purchases including mobile circulation, AccuCut	11 groups
IT support	10 groups
Consultants (many mentioned by name)	10 groups
Delivery	9 groups
Networking with other libraries, meetings by library type, by county	9 groups

The existence of an Integrated Library System (although there was general dissatisfaction with the performance of the current system)	8 groups
Advocacy activities	7 groups
Communication/newsletter	6 groups
E-resources, databases, Overdrive	5 groups
Management advice – help with finding a new director, annual reports, filling out forms, long range planning	5 groups (mainly trustees and directors)
Grant writing, helping libraries get grants	4 groups
SmarterMail (although they wanted it better); book preview	3 groups
Construction; keep up to date on trends; open to new ideas; cataloging	2 groups each
Organizing friends groups; e-rate; keep costs down; internet; professional collection; van transportation; program ideas; help serving prisons	1 group each

Discussion Topics

Resource Sharing

For the purposes of this report, resource sharing is defined as services such as pre-planned programs shared with members, gathering and sharing best practices, AccuCut, mobile circulation system, and facilitating networking among members.

Library participants were very appreciative of these services. They particularly praised being able to use the AccuCut machine, the mobile circulation unit, gaming, and book club collection. They appreciated the grant that provided training for patrons in job skills at different libraries. They wanted an extension of this program and more along this model. The also appreciated the assistance of RCLS in bringing groups together to meet and discuss issues and make recommendations on changes in RCLS services that will benefit all members. One participant summed it up by requesting "innovative collaborative cost saving services."

One or more groups suggested the following services:

- Provide a list of pro-bono or low-cost attorneys in system or hire a lawyer on retainer with the cost shared by multiple libraries
- Identify who from member libraries is bilingual and can be called on for translation if needed or help with bilingual story times
- Compile information on different topics such as women and minority business
- Help in discarding items such as video tapes, donated books, old machines, shredding
- Gather and share best practices in member libraries on a variety of topics

- Package programs that many libraries can use
- Offer insurance for library staff in the system – medical or any insurance
- Buy more central equipment such as a 3-D printer for libraries to use
- Update list of presenters and do an adult programming showcase
- Provide a guide for services to homeschoolers, purchase textbooks
- Add a photo image in AccuCuts "so you can tell the difference between dog 1, dog 2, and dog 3" (followed by laughter)
- Programs in a box that members can use on different topics

Cooperative Collection Development

There was little discussion on this topic in general. Libraries assume this is a given and this is done well. Libraries are thrilled with the Battle of the Books and Book Preview where they can get free books for their local collection.

There were some requests for changes:

- More youth focused e-books and databases
- More current books in the book dispensary for book clubs
- A better way to get more copies of new titles books clubs with interlibrary loan
- Make more large print available
- Shift resources from little used databases to e-books or streaming video
- Users need to know how library card works in all 48 libraries
- Dusty book list – make it easier to use – can't export and it's hard to read
- Citizenship and career training resources

While it was a big step to expand the "local holds" policy, there was much discussion and it is safe to say it is controversial. Some libraries like the change but others do not. Patrons can't get a book purchased by their local library and they are not happy about this. They feel that patrons should get priority at their own library. It was proposed that RCLS survey front line staff about local holds to get the full picture. Here are some suggested questions:
- How did it affect the library?
- What was the impact on circulation and ILL?
- What was the patrons view, positive or negative?

This unintended consequence is with the State Library was mentioned: The state felt that a library was spending too much money on books based on circulation but would not include ILL's from local holds in the circulation numbers.

ILS – Integrated Library System

While most groups agreed it was great that RCLS provides the ILS -- Symphony/Enterprise system-- there was an overwhelming frustration with the system. Eight groups mentioned this frustration specifically (two director, two youth, and four staff). Feelings varied from tolerate it to hate it. Much discussion revolved around the selection process. The perception was that cost would not be a factor but in the end that was exactly the deciding factor. Additionally, lack of transparency was an issue as many thought it was a five-year contract, but it turned out to be seven years. Some thought that review committees should have included front line staff that actually use the tools. Some questioned why they couldn't get an open source ILS?

There was discussion about paying more for a better ILS. There seemed to be a great deal of interest in this possibility. Members were interested in understanding the impact on costs before a decision is made on the next contract.

The move to Symphony/Enterprise resulted in losing some functionality and features and while they did get some new functions, it was felt that it was not a good trade off. They system is very complicated and results in a high learning curve for staff and especially part-timers.

The search function was described as the worst. The interface is slow and staff cannot get answers fast enough for users. Search results are unreliable. One participant said "Even when you know you have a book on the shelf it will sometime not show in the search results. You have to have exact title for it to show in results and even then it might not. It is also hard to search the catalog in non-roman alphabets."

Enterprise, the user interface, is also described as not user friendly and information access services to patrons have declined such as:
- In Enterprise, searching is also a problem.
- Users can't identify the format; what is a paper book and older customers don't like standard print and are looking for large print.
- Users can't tell who owns the book since they don't use "click for holdings" button and this leads to confusion.
- Library staff would like less library speak on Enterprise to assist the user's understanding.

Stability is an issue, each time there is an upgrade, new bugs appear. Some get fixed and others don't. Suggestions for new features are made but librarians are not sure what happens to these suggestions, as there is no feedback loop. There was a general desire to have a new discovery layer that works more like Amazon for searching in the hopes it would solve some of the search issues.

Participants asked for more training (six groups: two director, four staff) in Symphony/Enterprise but felt that RCLS staff only know the basics since they don't work in the trenches. They felt this understanding was necessary to do good in-depth training. RCLS staff

should spend a day on the circulation desk to understand the daily problems encountered by local staff in serving users. New library staff learn from current library staff and are limited by the current staff's knowledge. Another suggestion was that the staff most knowledgeable about the nuances of the system and how it works become a training corps for new staff and to offer refresher training for current staff. Some library directors asked for this training for themselves. Participants also felt that more webinars on the ILS would be helpful so staff could practice and that a "tip sheet" for staff and users would be useful.

In four groups (one director and three staff) there was lots of discussion about standardization around loan periods and fees; universal placement of barcodes and call numbers on spine labels. Patrons are confused with all the variations. Members believe that RCLS should act as mediator to find more common ground between members and help bring more standardization than currently exists. Libraries in Rockland county share patrons for example and this could be of immediate help.

There are several other issues that arose in conversation:
- Want email receipt function – why does it have to print?
- Want credit card payment function for fines
- CAPS records: there is no tracking of requests and takes way too long for RCLS to fix the records and patrons can't find books
- It was appreciated that RCLS fixes cataloging problems for the whole system but it was also felt that RCLS needed more cataloging staff
- Statistics from the ILS system is less than what they got from Horizon
- There is no instruction for editing a record and it is particularly hard for part timers
- Edit screen drop down menu should be cleaned up, limit options, tailor list to each library

The following is a list of ideas on how RCLS could help member libraries:
- Get a new ILS when the time comes
- Put Symphony on a tablet
- Provide support for mobile and remote services
- Provide refresher training
- Regional training on regular basis
- Want trainer with circulation and reference experience so they know the intricacies
- Ongoing training of circulation desk staff – there are several ways to do 1 thing so it is not clear what the best approach is
- More webinars on software so you can practice using it
- Create a tip sheet on working with Symphony
- Automate the catalog error form

Interlibrary Loan & Delivery

"This is huge!" was the sentiment from all the groups. "Helps small libraries have a big collection." And members appreciate ILL's from outside the system as well. Libraries feel that patrons take this for granted.

Libraries are very happy to have forward sorting in vans. However, sorting in the delivery trucks is very rough. DVD's get damaged and spines on large books break. Libraries request drivers be gentler (three staff groups). Could DVD's be sorted into separate bins? It was also suggested to get covers for delivery boxes to protect materials from weather when transporting the bins into the libraries.

Members would like the ILL forms to be automated instead of filled out by hand. Participants felt this was "old technology" and should be "brought into the 21st century."

The following is a list of ideas on how RCLS could help member libraries:
- Delivery 5 days/week to improve patron service
- Also could use 7 day/week delivery
- ILL via OCLC online form instead of paper
- ILL should be automated
- Friendlier drivers – some are but others not

Digital Collection

E-books are reported as a popular service, however, several groups felt that some databases were not used much either because the content was not as relevant or they were not aware of them. Libraries want more e-books. Youth librarians wanted more e-books appropriate for children and youth. They asked for more PR to promote databases, e-books, and library materials in general. Many felt that Overdrive was not easy to use and that an easier e-book system for patrons was needed (three groups: one youth, two staff.) Better user guides for the databases was also requested.

The following is a list of ideas on how RCLS could help member libraries:
- Look at use of databases, replace those not used with software for patrons to use such as Photoshop and Hoopla, or add to the collection of movies, audio books and music

Special Client Groups, Outreach and Adult Literacy

The State Library asks each System to identify special client groups that will be served. Adult literacy is singled out as an example as are outreach services to persons who are educationally disadvantaged; members of ethnic or minority groups; unemployed and in need bilingual job

placement assistance; have a disability; or confined in an institution. It's a broad category with different populations in different counties and local communities.

The question about community trends brought similar responses from libraries in RCLS. The two most often mentioned demographics were ethnic minorities and the aging population. The next two most frequently mentioned were people experiencing homelessness or mental illness and those who are unemployed and looking for jobs. RCLS might do an environmental scan to identify the number of people from ethnic minorities in the counties and local communities; the number of people experiencing homelessness; and the number of unemployed, and then plan cooperative services where it seems feasible and realistic. Forming partnerships with community agencies that serve these populations can lead to System-wide cooperative programs such as the packaged programs requested by several groups.

They expressed help in serving this population and suggested the following activities:

- Offer a Spanish immersion course for staff
- Help attract the Hispanic community and other minority populations
- Create PR materials in Spanish
- Train library staff to conduct bilingual story times and perhaps a traveling person to do this where there is a significant Hispanic population
- Help start an immigrant assistance center; provide citizenship and immigration information, some in other languages
- Provide sources for buying books in other languages or a traveling collection of books in other languages
- Create resource list of who in member libraries is bilingual
- Establish standards for bilingual staff hiring – "how to assess language skill of potential hires when you don't know the language"
- Use RCLS trucks to deliver to homebound patrons in the system
- Create a traveling toy library for children with disabilities with trained staff to work the children and their caregivers
- Extend the Job Search Grant and have more workshops at night at local libraries
- Offer workshops on dealing with difficult populations and on mental health with emphasis on youth
- Provide more information, resource lists, and workshops on being more inclusive
- Cooperate with community groups who are serving these populations and people with these needs

Youth Services/Early Literacy

This section is defined as services to youth from birth to age 18. Other than praising the youth consultant, no group mentioned youth services other than the two focus groups dedicated to these staff. As mentioned in the introduction, this could be because it is considered a well-run program managed successful by library staff who serve youth and the RCLS youth consultant. Alternatively, it could reflect that all participants simply spoke about their own area of responsibility knowing that youth services librarians were attending another focus group.

The staff serving youth and teens praised many of the RCLS consultants for their assistance in helping them serve library users and their caregivers. They appreciated the networking opportunities organized by RCLS, which helps them know what other children and teen librarians are doing and "provides a place for collaboration."

They mentioned several activities that they particularly liked:

- Battle of the Books
- Supplies and equipment such as AccuCut
- Source of other equipment they can share
- Book preview sessions where they can take the books home
- Summer reading workshops for planning
- Program preview for summer reading
- Professional collection

One theme from the youth service librarians was that there seemed to be a focus overall on adult services and collections in their libraries and the system. The lack of a mention of youth services in the other focus groups tends to verify their opinion. They wanted more youth-focused e-books and databases. They asked for "a wider range of continuing education so more staff can go." Along the same lines they wanted RCLS to help youth services librarians to get more recognition and to ask library directors to let youth staff go to continuing education courses, even if they are not directed specifically at youth.

The movement of many schools to embrace technology and limit student access to online resources was also a concern. Librarians feel they need to know more about common core and reading level schemes such as Lexile Reading Level books, used in many schools. They felt that many students were not able to get the assistance they needed to gain information literacy skills. They asked for help from RCLS to get cooperation from schools.

They also suggested the following activities:

- Visit each library in the system to learn local needs

- Increase staff for outreach
- Facilitate discussions between youth services librarians and library directors – "try to encourage support of youth services and do this in a systematic way with every library so as not to single out any one in particular"
- Facilitate discussions between local libraries and school superintendents
- Help in learning new skills to teach kids – "teaching, sewing, coding"
- Connection to school children's Google account
- Include a photo of the image in AccuCut "so can tell the difference between dog 1, dog 2, dog 3"
- Plan continuing education workshops for youth services librarians further in advance since "children's librarians plan six months ahead"
- Ask library directors to invite their youth/teen librarians to director's meetings

Continuing Education

For this report continuing education (CE) is organized, directed to more than one library staff member, and can be provided by system staff or organized by system staff. CE can be done online, as a webinar, but is organized by the system.

Twelve groups believed continuing education is one of the best services that RCLS provides. There was much discussion on place and time for trainings and there is a genuine desire for online training to address travel issues (six groups: one director, one trustee, one youth, three staff). "Please don't ask people to drive one hour each way for one-hour training." There is a desire for regional county-based training. If in-person workshops are video recorded and then posted online, others who cannot attend could watch at a later time. This would be particularly useful since in-person workshops are offered when small library staff cannot get time off. There was a suggestion to repeat good workshops regularly. Librarians appreciate access to Lynda.com and WebJunction and support the need for online training. There was also a call for staff to do more "house calls", especially for new directors who can't get out to trainings.

When there is in-person training, groups asked that RCLS publish complete information – day, date, time begin, time end. Libraries want longer lead-time on notifications of events. For example, children's librarians plan six months ahead so notifications of workshops within two months generally present scheduling conflicts. Members were thankful for the van that provides group transportation to meetings. The regular survey conducted by Assistant Director Grace Riario can help determine which topic should get priority attention.

Topics of suggested workshops consolidated from other sections:
- Makerspaces and 3D printing – requested by four groups
- Technology to stay current
- Social media use
- Wider range of youth services topics

- How to deal with patrons with mental health issues
- CPR
- How to serve early career people
- Serving immigrants
- Dealing with difficult populations
- Serving people experiencing homelessness
- How to deal with the poor
- Customer service
- Effective advertising
- Grant writing workshop
- Copy Cataloging
- Disaster planning
- Turning problems into opportunities
- What does it mean to be a community center
- HR – hiring, policies, training
- Long range planning
- Train board members on value of libraries
- New trustee training
- Trustee Boot Camp

Consulting

For this report consulting is defined as a one-on-one interaction without necessarily a planned agenda.

Librarians could not live without their consultants. Ten groups praised the consultants and some staff were mentioned by name. Comments were made such as the following: "Randy is the glue that keeps us together." "Sue & Jerry are indispensable." "Jerry is almost too brilliant – his emails are so technical." "RCLS staff are the librarians to the librarians."

The consultants make librarians aware of information they might not find on their own or have time to find. They also keep librarians from reinventing the wheel. A few mentioned the professional collection resource. Professional interest groups are very useful but members want to get the minutes and action items from meetings soon after the meeting and not just before the next one. This would not waste intervening months when decisions were made about changes.

There is a sentiment that RCLS staff has been decreased too much and that an increase in staff is needed.   Eight groups felt that RLCS was understaffed and should hire more.   Participants in four groups specifically asked for more technical support.   Participants in three groups said staff should have more time to learn and develop new programs for the system. Comments included:
- RCLS staff should have more time to learn and play to develop new things

- Provide time for staff creative thinking
- RCLS should have more people to help
- There used to be more consultants. Too many were let go
- Give staff more freedom and authority to go out to libraries
- Used to have more staff. Need some of them back

These are some of the suggestions for new staff:
- Tech support (four groups)
- Outreach librarian (two groups)
- Graphic designer with marketing background to help create good-looking material (two groups)
- Web designer (one group, although more felt the website should be revised)
- Grant writing and fund raising (one group)
- Traveling technology trainer to train library patrons (one group)
- Emerging staff person that could help bring in new technology to libraries (one group)
- Cataloger (one group)

The following is a list of ideas on how RCLS could help member libraries:
- Develop an online tool to track CE for recertification
- Help with recertification
- Overview of RCLS to new hires
- Create a "Board Book for Dummies"
- Create best practice manual for members
- Have county-based trustee groups
- Provide Spanish language collection sources
- Train Randy on Family Space

Awareness/Advocacy/Public Relations

All groups believed that RCLS does a great job on the Legislative Breakfast and Advocacy Day in Albany and seven groups spontaneously mentioned it when asked what they liked about RCLS services that helped them serve the public better.   Many focus group participants attended the breakfast this year and Albany Day. RCLS keeps librarians informed on when to write to legislators and provides the template letters. "It couldn't be easier." "The tri-folds at Legislative Breakfast were great."

But some librarians wished to have more time to meet and greet their particular legislators at the breakfast (three groups: one each director, trustee and staff). They would like more mingling and more stories. They thought that library displays could be spread out and photos of member library programs could be projected on-screen. They also proposed that there could be regional breakfasts in each county and invite the local legislators (four groups: two directors, one trustee and one staff).

On the topic on messaging, participants suggested that RCLS be more positive and not always talk about lack of money. They should understand the local communities and remember to address the "what's in it for me?" question when developing messaging for the legislators and public. Lofty philosophical messages work for some but miss the mark for many. Some suggested that the balance between RCLS and local library should shift. The local library is the "sell" and should be followed by how RCLS supported the local library, not the other way around (two groups; one director and one trustee). The summer reading newspaper is a great example of this balance.

Some thought the Annual Report is fantastic and it is good for sharing and sending out to officials, and Friends groups. Some librarians, however, don't read it.

The following is a list of ideas on how RCLS could help member libraries:
- Create a strategic marketing and PR plan
- More marketing on the value of libraries
- Help local libraries stay relevant
- Tell stories about libraries along with the days
- Create talking points that librarians and board members can use
- Write press releases that all members can use and adapt
- Create templates that can be customized locally
- Create promotional materials in Spanish
- Create promotional materials about the general services libraries offer
- Help getting materials into local newspapers
- Bigger exposure on TV – prime time news spots – PSA's
- Robert should write a newspaper column on what RCLS is doing and send to all local newspapers
- Hire a lobbyist group
- Advocate at county and local level
- Bring local legislators to the local library for meetings with librarians
- Trustee training and roles – teach advocacy and fundraising
- Train board presidents on how to run a meeting
- Teach advocacy to staff
- Facilitate communication between libraries and community groups
- Urge local libraries to hire outreach coordinators – convince directors this is important
- Patrons don't understand system services, do more than just National Library Week
- Do unique programs during national library week
- System library card
- Small bookmobile that local libraries could borrow
- Do research to correlate summer reading to test scores
- Do a "1 Book" for the System
- Create a System-wide Friends group
- Business expo countywide opportunities

Activities local libraries are currently doing, in descending order of practice:
- Legislative Breakfast
- Advocacy Day in Albany
- Social media
- Newsletters
- Site visits to sign up first graders for library cards, promote summer reading
- Member of local service clubs: Rotary, Lions, Chamber of Commerce etc.
- Community events, festivals and participate in planning, have a booth
- Invite local politicians to events
- Community networking
- Local newspaper articles
- Promote library programs
- Friends group book sale, craft fair, Christmas tea
- Provide quarterly children's flyer to the schools for teachers
- Reach out to local day care centers
- Link in schools email newsletter
- Join and attend local PTA
- Town community calendar
- Encouraging use of library meeting space
- Write politicians letters
- Doing programs at the high school
- Attend back to school nights
- Story times for women for literacy
- Work with family resource centers immigrants can learn library card is free
- Teens write and produce a town monthly newspaper and include the library
- SUPLA – county library association that contacts legislators in county, has luncheons and does publicity for summer reading

Communication

This was a huge topic among focus group participants and included communication between RCLS and member libraries as well as communication among the library members themselves. While all groups liked much about RCLS services and many said explicitly that they could not exist or serve their users successfully without the help of RCLS; communication problems exist.

Participants in eight groups specifically mentioned problems in communication. To begin with the RCLS and member libraries communication issue, there seems to be an "us against them" feeling. Member libraries feel that "NO" has been the first automatic response to any suggestion and is a complete shutdown to any conversation. RCLS should be serving members but it feels like it's the other way around. Member libraries would like to see a shift in style from RCLS that was described in many ways but gets at the same essence:
- Collaborative leadership

- Servant leadership
- Problem solving approach
- Less condescending conversation
- Neutral facilitator on new issues
- Facilitative behavior and not the passionate advocate
- Listen before saying no

Local libraries believe that they do know things and want RCLS to know they are not the enemies. They would like a less defensive approach to questions and not have suggestions immediately shut down or be lectured to. Participants feel that RCLS is not discussing concerns when members bring them up. One participant said, "Saying that no one else has complained about a problem is not acceptable especially since they know this is not true." RCLS should listen to what patrons want rather than tell members to change the mindset of patrons.

Members would like RCLS to create conversations about common problems members are having so they can learn from each other. They would like RCLS to facilitate communication among members to solve problems. Above all, they want members to drive change by bringing ideas to table. Let the members decide what they want, not RCLS.

With regard to inter- and intra- library communication, libraries would appreciate RCLS promoting collaboration within the system and facilitate communication across counties. Perhaps they could find common ground among members and consider ways for larger libraries to help smaller, poorer libraries. One person asked for more discussion about the role of the central library. Suggestions were made for RCLS to facilitate discussions in a systematic way with youth services staff and directors to encourage support of youth services.

Four groups (two directors, one youth and two staff) would like RCLS to do annual site visits and help with community analysis and long-range planning.

These specific communication issues were brought up:
- Sometimes libraries find out about opportunities too close to deadlines to take advantage of them
- Sometimes responses are delayed up to two weeks or do not come at all
- When changes in process happens, there is miscommunication or no communication
- Information is incomplete when getting collection management reports from web reporter. RCLS won't give access to staff so they end up sharing logins to get what they need
- When Jerry runs reports the whole system slows

A very specific problem that generated much discussion is SmarterMail, "which does not live up to its name." Eight groups (two directors, one trustee, one youth, four staff) complained about it. It is problematic and clunky. Librarians are not confidant emails actually arrive when they send them; they have to check junk mail every day for normal email; and they get too much

spam. They feel they get too many emails; too many people are on route lists. They don't have time to go through all of them and they "sure don't need to know about toilet paper issues in other libraries." People are bombarded with email and believe that some need more training on email etiquette; using spam blocking; generally how to use the system more efficiently and effectively. Many use their inbox to archive and want more memory so RCLS won't delete email without notification. They suggested more training on how to use their inbox and make it more efficient. Upgrades are also a problem with this system. There is sensitivity around private communication since Robert can opt into all email lists.

Members were happy with the networking opportunities available at many levels. One area of improvement that was suggested: directors need to show up to meetings. There should be a bylaw about how many meetings one could miss. Trustees should be encouraged to let directors show up at these meetings.

The following is a list of ideas on how RCLS could help member libraries:
- Host an RCLS-wide staff day
- Orientation for new trustees, address what is the oversight of the director? What is in the trustee's control?
- Trustees need more support with what is going on
- Create a trustee only section on the website
- Create county-based conversations for trustees
- Don't drop old communication methods since people like postcards of events
- Continue weekly bulletin
- Would like reports via email on conference and training – post reports and minutes from CLAUS online
- Post handouts and PowerPoint's online so all can access them
- Could use blogs or web forums instead of emails
- Take Robert off of email lists
- List snow closings on RCLS website – don't need 53 emails about this
- RCLS should have more exciting Facebook page
- RCLS should have better acronym
- RCLS should have an updated logo
- Communicate best practices
- Publish results of surveys and actions taken before doing more surveys

Collaborative Efforts

This is defined as collaboration with other library systems, school libraries, and other libraries. This was one of the least discussed topics in the focus groups and was mainly focused on schools. As mentioned before, youth services librarians feel that schools are moving quickly in new directions with new technology and that public librarians are not informed of the changes. They are concerned that some youth will not have access to the resources they need once they

leave the school building and if the public library is not able to arrange a partnership with the school to support these children, the children's learning will be impacted. They would like RCLS to facilitate cooperation with school systems to show the value of libraries to student learning and success.

Other than working with the schools, suggestions included:

- Form partnerships with community agencies to develop programs to serve special populations
- Facilitate communication/cooperation between libraries and community groups
- Invite community agencies to use local libraries for a meeting
- Keep informed on what other systems are doing to see if successful programs will work in RCLS
- Do research to collaborate summer reading program with student achievement and share with the school systems

Construction

RCLS receives funds to assist local libraries in construction projects. RCLS also assists local libraries in developing and preparing their plans. As mentioned in the introduction, this was only mentioned by four focus groups (two trustee groups and two library director groups) and always with praise for the program, for the RCLS staff assistance and workshops, and for the successful building projects. "Stephen is fabulous." In one group, when asked what RCLS did that helped them serve users better, construction grants was the very first service mentioned. Librarians depended on the grant writing help they received from Stephen. As mentioned in the trends section, libraries are experiencing changing space needs. They envision needing help with space planning and this may well involve construction.

Technology

This topic generated so much conversation it merited a section on its own. All groups thought technical support is great but they feel that technical support does not have enough staff. They are pleased with remote computing troubleshooting.

There was broad discussion and consensus wishing that RCLS could be in the forefront of technology. "Wouldn't it be great if RCLS was part of 21st century?" Technology is one way to indicate to the public that libraries are in the lead and is a way to stay relevant. Members believe they are falling behind. Staying up with technology also helps to engage the youth. They want RCLs to exercise innovation in technology.

To support leading with technology members would like:

- Faster Wi-Fi (six groups: one director, two trustee, one youth, two staff)
- Secure app for library cards on smartphones (five groups: one director, four staff)
- Want more mobile circulation units
- Credit card payment system for fines
- Printing
- Symphony on tablets
- Wireless printing from laptops in libraries
- Cooperative purchasing agreements for computers, laptops, tablets, iPads, with more mid-costs options
- Update computers more than every four years
- Cooperative purchasing of technology that can be shared
- RFID: want more information on RFID, is an example of moving forward with technology
- 3-D printers for all libraries and teach them how to use them
- Put e-readers and tablets in all libraries

Some felt RCLS staff have not served the public so they don't understand how urgent some of the technical problems are to be solved quickly.

There needs to be a broadband analysis to check relevance of the system. Are we still deriving value from dedicated fiber optic cable? Problems with the procurement of PC's were pointed out and the process is not efficient due to calendar restrictions. Some would like to change funding model for ANSER to reduce local libraries financial burden.

Six groups (two directors, four staff) thought the updated RCLS website is clunky and not user friendly; the online calendar is hard to use; and it is hard to find things on the site. Apparently, Boopsie worked before the new ILS system but now there are issues that need to be fixed.

The following is a list of ideas on how RCLS could help member libraries in addition to the list above:
- Training on IT and security issues, especially for small libraries that don't have staff – erg problem with ransom ware
- Keep technology affordable for all libraries
- Increase budget for technology
- Create a wiki for local resources
- Ability to customize standard RCLS terminals to add logo for local library services
- Provide a trustees only part of the RCLS website
- Create a better training book for ANSER – current one is too complicated

Administration

Throughout the focus groups, the consultants identified several issues that related to overall System administration. This section will report on those issues, shown below in the order of the number of focus groups that mentioned this issue:

- Relations with member libraries
- Finances
- Need for data and evaluation

Relations with Member Libraries

The general impression in all focus groups was appreciation for RCLS services and that the level of cooperation among libraries and service to users could not be done without RCLS. There was high praise for staff and library support staff particularly expressed appreciation for RCLS support.

In many focus groups, participants expressed frustration with the different policies that libraries had that made overall System service confusing for library users. There was also concern that there was tension between large and small libraries. Many wanted RCLS to play a facilitative role, helping libraries work together and go in the same direction; help when there is tension between small and large libraries; find ways for larger libraries to help smaller libraries; and facilitate standardization among libraries on policies (although they acknowledged that getting libraries to agree on standards -- consistent loan periods, where to put barcodes on books – was extremely difficult.) One said that RCLS should be a "facilitator, peacemaker, and leader." Participants felt that RCLS should and could play this role.

They also saw RCLS as bringing diverse libraries together to move the whole System into the future. This extended to involving members in planning. They suggested creating task forces on different topics and letting them work to solve system issues, with limited participation by staff. One said that RCLS "should use experts and ingenuity already in existence to be an R&D lab to create solutions to problems in the system." One group mentioned that the recent process to pool dollars for e-content was good. The committee proposed and staff agreed. Comments included:

- "Exercise innovation in researching technology and making recommendations"
- "Satisfied with excellent and good consultants."

On the other hand there is a significant call (eight groups: two director, one youth and five staff) for more participation by members in decision-making about the RCLS services. Only one group had a comment that they felt included in decision-making. Many participants felt that decisions about RCLS services were made by a small group without enough input, particularly from front line staff who actually implement services. Some felt that RCLS staff either made or overly influenced decisions about services and that input from members was not always appreciated or considered. Comments included:

- Don't make decisions that are not based on input from staff

- Should not be RCLS driving things – let members drive changes – bring ideas to the table and let members decide
- When evaluating a new service, get the library staff that actually work in it day to day to evaluate it, not just library directors
- Local staff do know things… please less "man-splaining"
- Review committees should include front line staff that use the tools under review
- RCLS staff should "spend a day on the circulation desk to see what it's really like"

Finances

There was general acknowledgement that libraries would not have the services they have if RCLS had not negotiated cooperative agreements to obtain resources that lowered the cost for all members. One participant commented that RCLS "keeps costs down and efficiently runs RCLS." There also acknowledgement that RCLS is hampered by a reduced budget to deliver service.

However, there was also confusion over the budget. Two groups (one director, one trustee) felt they did not have input into the budget and wanted more transparency in how the budget was developed. They felt the budget presented to them was too confusing. One commented "I'm surprised at the budget approval process – seems like an empty process. We need the whole budget with explanations. We don't know the consequences of not approving the budget." Some commented that they do not attend the budget hearings because they consider them a waste of time. Another suggested that the ANSER funding model be reconsidered.

Data and evaluation

Three groups (one director, one trustee, one staff) wanted more data about the use of System services in their individual libraries, particularly the use of databases and e-books. They would also like data for their library about how many of their users access the online databases and e-books. They wanted data reports customized for their own library. They also reported that collection management reports were not available to all staff that needed it. Staff who had logins for the data frequently shared these with other staff. They do not understand why data about the local library's collection is limited.

Conclusion

The consultants would like to thank all of the participants and RCLS staff that helped make the project a success. We appreciate the honesty of those in the focus groups. We feel sure that the member appreciation of RCLS services overall, will contribute to moving RCLS forward in its planning. And we would like to repeat this final comment from a participant: "RCLS does way more good than our negative comments imply."

Appendices
Questions Asked of Participants

Ramapo Catskill Library System
Focus Group Instructions and Questions
Led by Nancy Bolt and Debbi MacLeod

We are pleased that you are participating in a focus group for the Ramapo Catskill Library System.

Purpose of the Focus Groups: To determine needs and opinions of RCLS members to facilitate planning for the System's future.

Groups invited to the focus groups: Library directors and assistant directors; youth service (children and teens); adult service (reference and programming); circulation and tech staff; and library trustees.

All focus groups will start on time and will last approximately 2 hours. There will be light refreshments. We will explore the following questions with all groups.

1. What does RCLS do best that helps you provide better service for your users?

2. What would you like to see changed in current RCLS services and programs?

3. What future trends <u>within the community</u> do you see that will impact your library?
   a. What could RCLS do to support you in addressing these trends?

4. What future trends do you see <u>within the library environment</u> that will impact your library?
   a. What could RCLS do to support you in addressing these trends?

5. It is 2020 – five years from now – and RCLS has won an award as the Best Cooperative Library System in the country.
   a. What did RCLS accomplish to win the award?
   b. What steps must RCLS take now to achieve that success?

6. What does your library do now to advocate for your library?
   a. What can RCLS do to help you with this effort?

7. Finish this sentence: Wouldn't it be great if RCLS……

Focus Group Summary of Participation October 2015

Participating Libraries

13 focus groups total
41 participating libraries

Number of libraries sending number of staff

Sending 8 staff – 2
Sending 7 staff - 0
Sending 6 staff - 6
Sending 5staff - 6
Sending 4 staff - 9
Sending 3 staff - 5
Sending 2 staff - 5
Sending 1 staff – 9

Participation by County

Rockland 100% library participation with 69 individuals
Orange – 66% library participation with 49 individuals
Sullivan – 50% library participation with 18 individuals
Ulster – 80% library participation with 13 individuals

Participation by Category

Adult services - 28
Youth services – 30
Circulation/technical – 29
Combined – 10
Directors – 30
Trustees – 25

Summary Attendance at RCLS Focus Groups

#	Date and Time	Group	Number attending
1	Sept. 30,10am	Youth Service	12
2	Sept. 30, 2pm	Adult Service	14
3	Oct. 1, 10am	Directors and Assistant Directors	13
4	Oct. 1, 2pm	Circulation/Tech Service	14
5	Oct. 1, 6pm	Trustees	6
6	Oct. 2, 10am	Youth Service	18
7	Oct. 2, 2pm	Adult Service	14
8	Oct. 5, 10am	Directors and Assistant Directors	11
9	Oct. 5, 2pm	Circulation/Tech Service	15
10	Oct. 5, 6pm	Trustees	12
11	Oct. 6, 10am	Directors and Assistant Directors	6
12	Oct. 6, 2pm	Combined group	10
13	Oct. 6, 6pm	Trustees	7
		TOTAL	**152**