

NMRLS 2005 Strategic Planning Survey: Library Staff Survey Summary of Results (Greg Pronevitz)

We announced the library staff survey via email on December 7, 2004 to all members in our database. The survey was promoted on our Web site, in our newsletter, and on the NMRLS email list. The survey was open through January 7, 2005. We received 158 responses. We appreciate the efforts made by all members who were able to participate.

Most responses to the survey reflect trends of opinion that we hear in our daily contact with members. This summary is intended to present the results and trends indicated by member responses. The results will be interpreted by the Strategic Planning Committee for discussion and recommendations on directions to prioritize NMRLS responses, goals, and objectives.

Following are a series of tables sorted by rank of response. Survey questions were posed in alphabetical order. The tables are followed by a brief analysis of related comments. Respondants were not required to complete each question so you may find that not all numbers and percentages match up.

We welcome your comments. Please feel free to contact greg@nmrls.org, any NMRLS staff member, or Executive Board member with your thoughts.

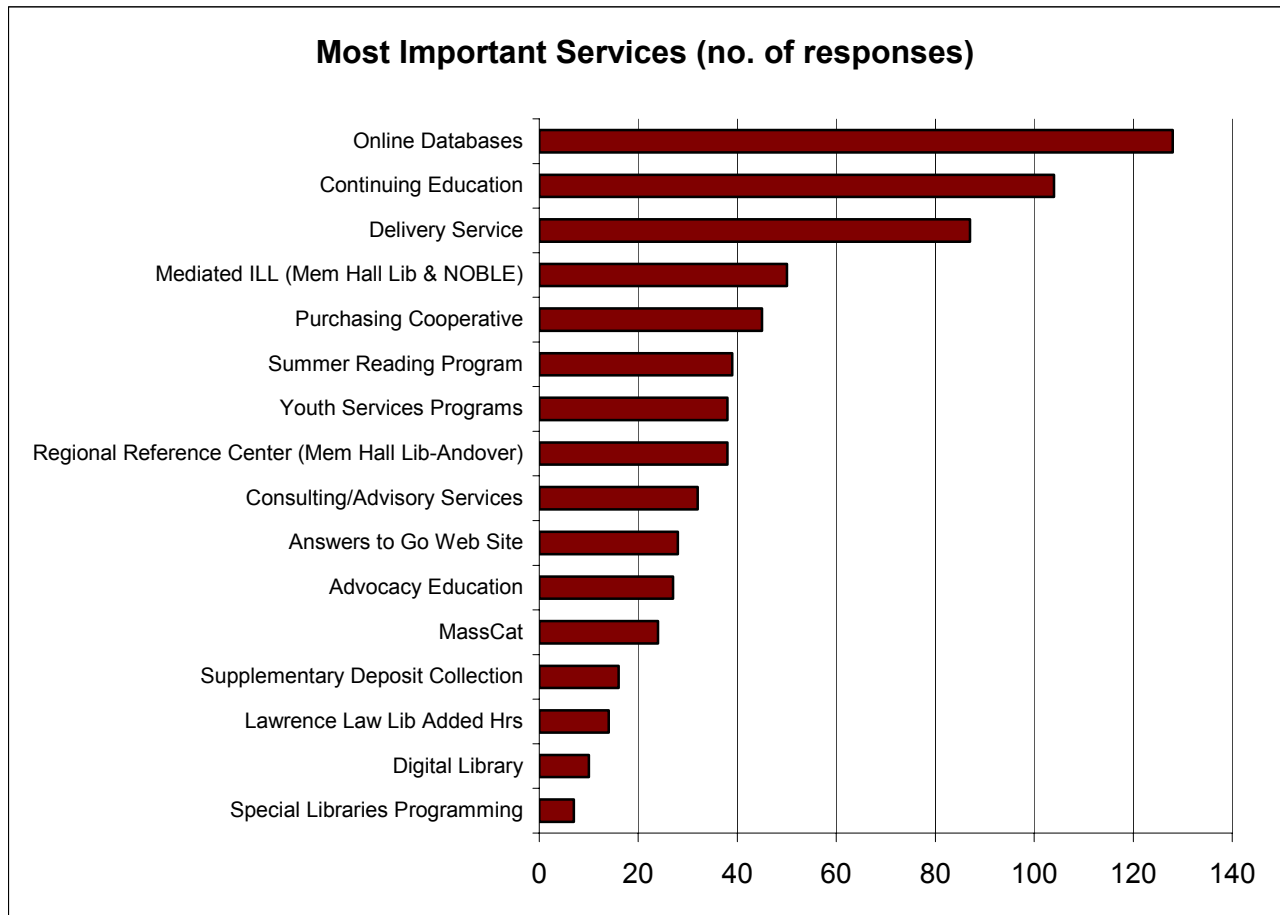
Responses by Library Type (please check one)

Choice	Count	Percentage
Public	86	54.4%
School	40	25.3%
Academic	22	13.9%
Other (special, hospital, museum, law, etc.)	10	6.3%

What is your primary area of responsibility?

Choice	Count	Percentage
Administration	44	28.0%
Reference	37	23.6%
Other	25	15.9%
Circulation	22	14.0%
Youth Services	21	13.4%
Technical Services	8	5.1%

What are NMRLS' most important services to your library? Please check up to five important services.



Please specify other important services or provide your comments on this topic.

Members listed the following services that were not included in the listed choices:

- Answers to Go Web site
- Document delivery of periodicals from Boston Public Library
- Exploration and presentation of new areas of librarianship
- Grant information and training
- Networking opportunities
- NMRLS Electronic Mailing List
- NMRLS Web site
- Online Policy collection
- Professional collection
- Support for advocacy activities

What are NMRLS' strengths? Please check up to three important strengths.

Choice	Count
Knowledgeable and responsive staff	109
Access to collections of diverse member libraries (ILL)	103
Forum for communications among libraries	73
State funding from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners	73
Nmrls.org Web site	51
Diverse multitype membership	25
Partnerships with other organizations	17
Publications & mailings	13

Please specify other important strengths or add your comments on this topic.

Members listed the following strengths that were not included in the listed choices:

- Advocacy activities
- Guidance with historical records
- Independent status
- Knowledge of statewide issues and their impact on library services and planning
- Networking opportunities, i.e., “NMRLS keeps everyone connected and feeling like part of a team.” and “It’s wonderful to be able to communicate with such a diverse group of librarians on issues we all share.”
- Staff is open to exploring innovative concepts.
- Support for new programs. Readily accept ideas for programming.
- Support of professional school librarians, i.e. certified and/or licensed professionals.

What are future opportunities that NMRLS should anticipate for developing new programs and services? Please check up to three important opportunities.

Choice	Count
Provide leadership, information, and support to libraries as they transition to new technologies	107
Provide members with leadership, information, and support for library management, including best practices	75
Enhance community awareness and assist in public relations for member libraries	64
Help libraries solicit increased political support	58
Expand library relationships both by creating new and strengthening existing ties to enhance multitype library cooperation	53
Standardize services, procedures, and communications to facilitate access and use by all library patrons across the region in all types of libraries	47
Strengthen the library profession by enhancing access to master's degree education for librarians and library media specialists	38

Please specify other important opportunities or provide your comments on this topic

Members listed the following opportunities that were not included in the listed choices:

- Advocacy (political or other) for all libraries, school libraries too
- Best practices for all aspects of library work, not just management.
- Certification -- Be of help to libraries in danger of losing their certification due to lack of funding
- Community awareness should be of libraries not NMRLS, MBLC
- Online services that would help in the daily library operations of the library and help the staff make their jobs a little easier. Provide a uniform online calendar service (i.e., Event Keeper/Library Insight)for all libraries-staff and patrons would have access to complete list of events at all libraries in one location. There is also a reading program and a scheduling module that would be extremely helpful.
- Marketing resources assistance to libraries. Provide marketing materials that libraries can add their branding information (logo, lib name and contact info).
- PastPerfect Users Group (Support of)
- Purchasing -- Stronger purchasing cooperation with better negotiated prices for online databases.
- Strengthen ties between public and school libraries
- Technology - Help with understanding and setting up new technologies. In a small library I am the tech. staff but am not trained in computers and technology. Understanding how technologies work and how they should be set up and implemented, such as wireless, would be of great use and interest to me.
- Working with other consortium toward one single state library system would be helpful for users and library staff.

What are the threats to NMRLS in upcoming years? Check all that apply.

Choice	Count
Loss of funding	149
Keeping pace with changing technologies	91
Lack of cooperation among members	49

Please specify other threats or provide your comments on this topic

Members listed the following threats that were not included in the listed choices:

- Loss of special libraries due to limited programs/services offered
- Finding people to work on committees and boards as libraries get busier.
- Scheduling meetings - those of us in school libraries are often unable to be gone during the school day for the hours that the NMRLS meetings take place - what about Saturday or late afternoon meetings?
- Overlap with other agencies, consortiums, associations.
- The basic threats to the public library also apply to NMRLS. The average user expects the public library to be a haven for children and adults, and the ease to access violence and pornography online, rightly or wrongly disturb most Americans and threaten the safe atmosphere that a public library should encourage. We ourselves are always the greatest danger to our own rights!
- Publicity may become a problem. With staff turnover in libraries, NMRLS may need to be more proactive in promoting services to libraries.
- Lack of use and interest from member libraries. If possible, visit libraries and inform all the staff members about NMRLS services. Many part time staff are unaware of the benefits offered by NMRLS or what NMRLS is.
- As libraries may become unaccredited, they will lose their access to NMRLS.
- The public does not see the "cost" of free service, especially ILL delivery, training of librarians, supplemental collections.

What are NMRLS' weaknesses?

Members commented that services seem most focused on public libraries and that services to academic, school, and special libraries might be expanded or improved. Public relations was identified by several members as an area that could use improvement. Other members pointed out issues and suggestions in the areas of continuing education, delivery, and funding. Some respondents indicated that NMRLS location was not convenient for them to attend events.

What challenge in your library keeps you awake at night?

We received many responses to this question. Following are the comments sorted by type. The most often repeated comments were staffing and personnel issues, funding issues, and technology challenges.

If NMRLS could restore one service that was cut in the past due to budget reductions, which service would you suggest?

Of the 60 responses to this question, 42 suggested restoring databases that were provided in the past. ReferenceUSA was suggested by 10 respondents and several members suggested SIRS and Dialog@CARL.

Other suggestions for restoration followed by the number of respondents:

- Advocacy for the profession – 1
- All the great "summer reading" stuff we used to get – 1
- Daily delivery to our branch library – 1
- Faster more efficient delivery – 2
- ILL net lender reimbursement – 4
- Mediated ILL services, e.g., covering return postage – 2
- Reference on Call – 1

If NMRLS could add one new service that we have not provided in the past, which service would you suggest?

Responses to this question included a wide range of ideas:

Databases

- Several respondents suggested databases with five specifying their preference as follows.

ILL

- Interlibrary loan service directly to schools.
- Online ILL services
- An easier link to the library collections in NOBLE and MVLC. Many of the communities are so close together that to have easy access to the extensive collection of all of these libraries would be phenomenal.

Advocacy

- Additional advocacy training such as the recent "Value of Libraries" workshop.
- Consultant to assist member libraries with advocacy and educational efforts in their individual communities, regionally and state-wide.
- Possibly meet with area principals to advocate for school libraries. Show specific examples of the best.
- A lobbyist for school and public libraries to our state government

Continuing Education & Advisory Services

- Hands on management techniques.
- Provide online workshops and professional development opportunities.
- Technology planning, i.e., how to create a five-year plan just for technology.
- Centralized (or coordinated) public relations help.
- In-house (at the library) workshops for library staff, i.e., difficult patrons, displays, better PR.
- Forums on how to deal with difficult staff, not just difficult patrons
- How about a roundtable for urban librarians?

- Improved technology training, more in depth, hands on, cool stuff like networking, applications, web development; also research training.
- A forum for nextgen librarians, new to the region, not necessarily in leadership positions who currently who operate under NMRLS' radar as they try to get their grounding in the profession and their new positions. We've got to work hard to keep everyone of these *in* the profession, passionate and invested.
- A NOBS type group with monthly or bi-monthly meetings after school with guest speakers for some meetings and sharing meeting for others.
- Librarian retreats, trips or outings (for the purposes of R&R, getting to know one another, and professional development, e.g., field trips to visit other libraries of interest?)

Temporary Service

- Explore the library temp agency idea?
- Build-up a database for qualified librarians and support staff who would be interested to work as a substitute or temps. This information shared by all libraries (which are members of NMRLS) would save money by not advertising for short time/temporary librarians and support staff. It would also accelerate the hiring process.
- Oversee a substitute librarian service to eliminate the obstacle of each town paying its employees.

Technology

- Try out new technologies and loan us the equipment and/or software (license problem?) for us to experiment with them.
- Link resolvers to enable linking between databases from different vendors
- Large flat-bed scanners.

Cooperative Purchasing

- Add computer parts and accessories to the coop purchasing plan.
- Perhaps we could have NMRLS organize a co-operative purchase of newspapers to cut down the cost.
- Purchase the Summer Reading module from Library Insight for us all to use!

Other

- Assist in establishment of library degree programs some where other than Simmons
- Consumer health reference
- Helping to identify regional institutions' services that are redundant, thus reducing costs, and demonstrating to the town and city finance departments the desire for fiscal prudence wutg adequate funding. I guess this service could entail (and maybe this has been or is being done) working with member libraries to identify the regional service organizations and see how services can be aligned. Most libraries have info about their own town or city's organizations, but it would be interesting to look at regional services in a similar fashion.
- Add delivery drivers for ILL routes, and provide their equipment, which should be state-of-the-art to minimize breakdowns. No driver should have to use small 2-wheeled dollies for the number of book crates they move. There is a deluxe model which can adjust to be a 4-wheeler with a platform to hold heavier loads.
- Continued outreach to underserved members of our patron community - I think the diversity training this year is terrific! Also reaching out to elderly patrons, the disabled, etc.

Please list any additional comments or concerns the Strategic Planning Committee should consider.

Responses from members are summarized below:

Advocacy

- I realize that it is very expensive but I would like to see TV spots advocating for libraries. I have heard doctors proclaim that Google does it all. If highly educated people feel this then libraries are doomed
- Many people believe that libraries are on the way out, that there will be no need for 'hand held' books. Politicians and the public alike need to be educated as to the continuing necessity of libraries and the services libraries provide. They need to be made aware of the importance of research and historical data.
- More emphasis on library advocacy. Offer workshops to show librarians how they can make a difference.
- PR and advocacy efforts to school administrators and school committees

Continuing Education

- More professional development courses for PDPs so librarians can get resertified
- Offer more professional development courses for PDPs so librarians can get recertified.
- I think the annual meeting is great. I think that having a NMRLS social on an annual timeframe would further enhance the community atmosphere we as librarians would like to have with our colleagues.

Other

- What will libraries look like in the next 10 years and how does NMRLS fit in? (Of course, we couldn't have answered this question accurately 10 years ago!)
- As you see, my concerns are very parochial. This entire town needs to advance to the 20th Century, so that we are only 100 years behind the times and technology. In truth, we must enter the 21st Century.
- More electronic databases are always very welcome.
- NMRLS is doing a fabulous job meeting our needs. With more money they could do even more.
- Restoring the TIC funding would be helpful. More technical support, consulting, etc. would also be helpful.