

Background

In 2005 the Office of Commonwealth Libraries (OCL) commissioned Himmel & Wilson Library Consultants to conduct a study of the present district structure, with an emphasis on examining the impact of the development of county library systems. Among other findings, the study noted a distinction between “library support” functions and “library development” functions. The study recommended that where strong county library systems are in place, the system is best positioned to be responsible for library development (i.e., continuing education, advisory and consulting services, public relations, technology support, etc.) and the district library center for library support (i.e., interlibrary loan (ILL), reference, special collections, etc.) It is the purpose of this project to study this recommendation by implementing and assessing the results of a pilot project in Lancaster County.

In June of 2008, District Consultant Librarian Joyce Sands was promoted to Assistant Director at the Lancaster Public Library. Hollinger and Urling met with the Lancaster County Directors to discuss the possibility of doing a pilot project in which library development services, including consulting services, would be moved to the system headquarters. Michael Kumer was hired as a facilitator to help a steering committee develop a memorandum of understanding to guide the project.

Because of some of the past and ongoing communication issues that have been and continue to be a part of Lancaster District’s history, an outside evaluator, Claudia Horn of Performance-Results, Inc., was hired to conduct an independent evaluation. Her report concluded the following:

Every indicator seems to point to the fact that the process is working; library directors are getting the support they need, the process seems to be efficient and effective in delivering high quality services. Interim reports on the Pilot Project from the System administrator appear to show they are delivering on all of their responsibilities as assigned in the project MOU.

Recommendation

It is the recommendation by the Bureau of Library Development that the current division of responsibilities for library development and consulting services, as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding, be approved for a period of three years, and evaluated annually as part of the district services negotiation process. This recommendation advises that there be a single person of contact at the library system for consultant services.