
Information Use Management and Policy Institute

College of Information, Florida State University

**E-Government and Public Libraries: Current Status,
Meeting Report, Findings, and Next Steps**

By

Charles R. McClure cmcclure@lis.fsu.edu, Director,
Information Institute, and Francis Eppes Professor

Jessica McGilvray, Research Associate, Information Institute

Kristin M. Barton, Research Associate, Information Institute

John Carlo Bertot, Associate Director,
Information Institute

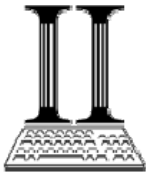
With the Assistance of

Amy L. Johnson and **Loretta Flowers**
Florida State Library, Division of Library and Information Services

Carrie Russell
American Library Association, Washington Office

February 12, 2007

PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION DRAFT



College of Information
Information Use Management and Policy Institute
Florida State University
Tallahassee, Florida 32306
<http://www.ii.fsu.edu>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Evolution of New Public Library Roles in E-Government	4
Understanding the Term E-Government	5
Evolution and Purpose of the Report	5
E-Government in Florida Public Libraries: Survey Findings	6
Library Demographics	9
Survey Responses	9
Themes from Survey Respondents	17
Review of Selected Sources Related to E-Government and Public Libraries	19
Key Issues	19
Summary	23
Overview of the December 2006 Meeting on E-Government and Public Libraries	23
Context	24
Why Public Libraries?	24
Public Library Infrastructure	26
Importance of Partnerships	27
Other Themes and Issues	27
Policy Implications	29
Recommendation	30
Additional Research	31
Next Steps	32
Government Agencies	32
Programs in LIS	32
Libraries	33
Expanding Federal, State, Local E-Government Laws	33
Improving E-Government Services	33
References	34
Appendices	
A. Representative References to Public Libraries in Selected Florida and Federal Documents	36
B. Public Libraries and E-Government: Identifying Issues, Making Connections, and Developing Strategies	39
C. Citizen Access to E-Government Information Act of 2007 [Developed by Information Institute Staff]	49

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the current role of public libraries in the access to and dissemination of E-government services. Public libraries function as a first choice, first refuge, and last resort in a range of E-government and emergency and circumstances, allowing individuals to engage successfully in essential E-government services such as registering for Medicare or other benefits and filing tax information. With their key centrality as agents of government services, public librarians increasingly play significant roles in times of emergencies, like the aftermath of a hurricane, in which communities rely on the public library Internet access to request aid, try to find missing family and friends, file Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) insurance claims and other forms, and begin rebuilding their lives.

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive overview of activities and research to date by the Information Institute, the Florida State Library, and the ALA Washington Office on the general topic of E-government and the role of public libraries. The report provides an overview of the general topic, results of the survey administered in Florida, a brief literature review, and results/findings from the December 2006 meeting that identified key issues and offered a number of recommendations for next steps. More specifically, the goals of this report are to:

- Increase government officials, the public's, and public librarians' awareness of the importance of public libraries in providing access to and dissemination of E-government services and resources;
- Identify and discuss a number of key issues related to the role of public libraries in E-government;
- Identify research topics that require additional investigation; and
- Offer recommendations for improving the effectiveness by which public libraries can participate in the provision of E-government services.

Ultimately, the authors hope that this report will be a springboard from which additional initiatives and strategies can be developed to improve the delivery of E-government services to all individuals in the United States.

The report offers a number of strategies by which public libraries can play a more effective role in the access to and dissemination of E-government services including better planning and cooperation with government agencies, obtaining better training and information about E-government services, developing and/or expanding their organizational structure and planning to provide E-government services and emergency preparedness, and improved communication with federal, state, and local government agencies regarding the nature and type of E-government services currently being offered from those agencies. In addition, the report recommends beginning a process to develop legislation to amend the *E-government Act of 2002* to better coordinate E-government services with public libraries and other public/volunteer agencies for the benefit of the American people.

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the twenty-first century has seen a rapid and distinct evolution in the role public libraries play in contemporary society. While their traditional roles for providing books and other materials and as information centers still serve as an important role within their communities, advancements in technology have also allowed libraries to become resources for those who need access to or help with the Internet as well. Thus, librarians have taken up new service roles within the electronic and networked environment they have not previously been expected to fulfill.

Increasingly, public libraries are helping their users access and use information provided by federal, state, and local governments. As government agencies continue to digitize government forms and services, public libraries—as centers for public access computing in their communities—are often the only organizations that can help citizens interact with government agencies and access E-government resources. This user assistance can range from the simple provision of government forms like tax forms, to teaching a user how to find government information and navigate web sites, assisting them obtain direct services such as various benefit programs, to providing emergency response services after a disaster.

Evolution of Public Library New Roles in E-Government

One such role emerged during the 2004-2005 hurricane season, which was relief worker, emergency information center, and disaster counselor. Within communities along the Gulf Coast, many libraries remained as the only access points for information and communication with friends and loved ones. As Jaeger, Langa, McClure, and Bertot (2006) noted, “In a number of communities, the public library was the only place where Internet access was available after the storms passed.” Between helping patrons complete and file FEMA forms, maintaining extended library hours, and in many cases providing shelter for people who needed it, libraries proved to be “ambassadors for their communities” (Leboeuf, 2006, p. 62) and “de facto first responders” (Perlman, 2006, p. 2).

Another role that libraries and librarians played in recent years is as a resource for patrons completing, filing, or getting help with online forms distributed by various government agencies. Some of the most noteworthy E-government initiatives disseminated in recent years include electronically filing taxes and Medicare form D, for which librarians have become unintended experts. And while agencies promote the use of public libraries for Internet access and assistance, there typically is no additional funding or training provided to library employees to offset the costs associated with such a large-scale initiative. As Bertot, Jaeger, Langa, and McClure (2006b) stated, “While it may be convenient for local, state, and federal government agencies to take advantage of the library’s investments in technology and expertise, the library’s infrastructure is not built to meet the increased demand of E-government services” (p. 18).

One solution to assist public libraries in this evolving role is new legislation to help libraries meet the demands of the public. Bertot and McClure (2007) noted, “Nearly half of public libraries indicate that their connection speeds are insufficient to meet patron demands

some or all of the time” (p. 6) and that, “only 14.6% of public libraries report that they have sufficient numbers of workstations to meet patron demands at all times” (p. 8). With the overwhelming demands of E-government and emergency support being placed on libraries’ resources and the lack of monetary assistance in providing these new services, it will not be long before libraries are put in a situation where they are forced to choose which they can no longer support.

Understanding the Term E-government

A key issue is the role public libraries play in the dissemination of, and access to, E-government services and resources. But what exactly constitutes “E-government” or what it is meant to involve may be unclear. Congress defines E-government as follows:

Electronic government means the use by the Government of web-based Internet applications and other information technologies, combined with processes that implement these technologies, to enhance the access to and delivery of Government information and services to the public, other agencies, and other Government entities; or bring about improvements in Government operations that may include effectiveness, efficiency, service quality, or transformation (PL 107-347).

Since E-government has the potential to reduce burdens placed on government agencies and help the public gain greater accessibility to all levels of government, legislation was enacted to advance its use. As such, the *E-government Act of 2002* (PL 107-347) was established in an effort to, “promote use of the Internet and other information technologies to provide increased opportunities for citizen participation in Government.” As this report illustrates, public libraries are at the forefront of citizens’ ability to access public library provided E-government services. This is particularly true in cases where people may not have technology available in their homes, including low-income families and the elderly.

Evolution and Purpose of this Report

As part of the *2006 Public Libraries and the Internet* report (Information Institute, 2006) a number of findings related to the role of public libraries in E-government and emergency/disaster preparedness. Those findings encouraged the researchers at the Institute to further pursue the topic with additional investigation. Members of the research team at the Information Institute shared the preliminary findings from this work with staff at the American Library Association (ALA) Washington Office which generated a great deal of interest – especially in terms of a number of the policy implications from the research.

Beginning in August 2006 staff at the ALA Washington Office and the Information Institute discussed strategies to increase awareness and knowledge regarding the role of public libraries in E-government and emergency/disaster preparedness. Because the State Library of Florida also had considerable experience with these topics, Institute staff also contacted them about their potential interest in expanding knowledge and better understanding issues related to E-government and public libraries.

As a result of conversations among these individuals, staff organized a meeting comprised of a small number of leaders, experts, and those knowledgeable about E-government to meet in early December 2006. The Appendix describes the goals and objectives of that meeting. While planning for that meeting, the State Library of Florida conducted a short survey to Florida Public Libraries asking them about their experiences and views of E-government.

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive overview of activities and research to date by the Information Institute, the Florida State Library, and the ALA Washington Office on the general topic of E-government and the role of public libraries. The report provides an overview of the general topic, results of the survey administered in Florida, a brief literature review, and results/findings from the December 2006 meeting that identified key issues and offered a number of recommendations for next steps. More specifically, the goals of this report are to:

- Increase government officials,' the public's, and public librarians' awareness of the importance of public libraries in providing access to and dissemination of E-government services and resources;
- Identify and discuss a number of key issues related to the role of public libraries in E-government;
- Identify research topics that require additional investigation; and
- Offer recommendations for improving the effectiveness by which public libraries can participate in the provision of E-government services.

Ultimately, the authors hope that this report will be a springboard from which additional initiatives and strategies can be developed to improve the delivery of E-government services to all individuals in the United States.

E-GOVERNMENT IN FLORIDA PUBLIC LIBRARIES: SURVEY FINDINGS

The Florida State Library and the Information Institute developed a public libraries and E-government Survey. Developers noted the availability of the survey on a number of library lists in the state of Florida for a period of two weeks during November 2006 on www.surveymonkey.com. The findings are not comprehensive of all public libraries in Florida, but they are indicative of the experiences of some public libraries regarding E-government in Florida. There were 84 respondents to the survey.

Library Demographics

Not all of the participating libraries chose to provide their library demographic information. Based on the information provided by the libraries who responded to the survey, Table 1 is a description of the library demographics that could be located.

Table 1. Survey Participant Demographics

Library	Total Operating Expenses	Population served	Total FTE Paid Staff
Alachua County Library District	\$ 10,920,647.00	236,174	185.55
Bartow Public Library	\$ 592,981.00	14,740	11.95
Boca Raton Public Library	\$ 2,171,000.00	79,838	41
Brevard County	\$ 14,697,162.00	521,422	278.88
Broward County Public Library	\$ 55,387,733.00	1,723,131	846
Charlotte-Glades Library System	\$ 3,030,785.00	167,718	43.5
Citrus Ridge County Library	\$ 2,381,173.00	129,110	41.5
City of Tavares Public Library	\$ 429,330.00	220,000	10.25
Clearwater Public Library System	\$ 5,946,062.00	110,000	91.5
Collier County Public Library	\$ 7,343,542.00		108.25
Columbia County Public Library	\$ 1,067,608.00	60,453	28.54
East Lake Community Library	\$ 348,506.00		6
East Lake County Library	\$ 348,506.00		6
Emily Taber Public Library	\$ 175,059.00	23,000	4.5
Eustis Memorial Library	\$ 736,944.00	16,884	14
Fort Meade Public Library	\$ 165,610.00	5,457	3.5
Fort Walton Beach	\$ 501,321.00		11.1
Franklin County Public Library	\$ 173,551.00		3
Fruitland Park Library	\$ 162,005.00		4
Gulf Beaches	\$ 420,865.00		8.27
Haines City Public Library	\$ 358,711.00	489,000	8
Hendry County Library Cooperative	\$ 572,235.00	37,394	11.8
Hialeah Public Libraries	\$ 1,986,947.00	233,566	50
Indian River County Main Library	\$ 4,023,986.00	126,829	60
Lady Lake Public Library	\$ 299,009.00	15,000	5.5
Lake Park Public Library	\$ 314,877.00	11,452	6
Lake Wales Public Library	\$ 518,710.00	10,000	10.5
Lakeland Public Library	\$ 2,245,326.00		57
Lee County Library System	\$ 23,214,313.00	521,253	252.5
Lighthouse Point Library	\$ 115,781.00	10,857	5.85
Lynn Haven Public Library	\$ 169,082.00	14,776	4.1
Maitland Public Library	\$ 605,795.00	16,476	12
Martin County Library System	\$ 4,253,080.00	137,637	75
Monroe County	\$ 2,173,397.00	81,236	35.63

Nassau County Public Library System	\$ 985,030.00	65,016	19
New Port Richey Public Library	\$ 715,470.00	16,334	14
New River Public Library Cooperative	\$ 1,035,432.00	66,323	22.35
North Miami Public Library	\$ 897,713.00	60,101	13.88
Northwest Regional (Bay County)	\$ 2,476,461.00	181,962	49.65
Okeechobee County Library	\$ 423,269.00	40,900	7
Osceola Library System	\$ 5,750,263.00	225,816	97.5
Palm Beach County Library System	\$ 28,328,196.00	772,548	409.88
Parkland Library	\$ 453,000.00	19,374	6.4
Pasco County Library System	\$ 5,734,746.00	389,776	113.5
Pinellas Park Public Library	\$ 1,793,572.00	47,572	30.97
Safety Harbor Public Library	\$ 751,723.00	306,186	14.15
Sanibel Public Library	\$ 1,326,078.00	6,335	10
Seminole Community Library	\$ 792,216.00	403,361	17.5
Seminole County Public Library System	\$ 5,353,842.00	403,361	118
St. Johns County Public Library System	\$ 3,888,773.00	149,336	71.5
St. Lucie County Library	\$ 3,810,552.00	226,216	77
St. Pete Beach	\$ 618,166.00	9,200	8.5
Sumter County Library System	\$ 749,954.00	66,416	24.5
Suwannee River Regional Library	\$ 1,631,402.00	71,514	42.7
Tampa Hillsborough Co. Public Library System	\$ 27,561,414.00	1,108,435	326.5
Tarpon Springs Library	\$ 994,683.00		18.3
Taylor County Public Library	\$ 300,027.00	20,941	6
Umatilla Public Library	\$ 308,078.00		18.25
Union County Public Library	\$ 175,347.00		5.1
W T Bland Public Library	\$ 471,408.00		10.5
Wakulla County Public Library	\$ 245,663.00		5
Walton County Public Library System	\$ 764,020.00	50,543	16.5
Washington County Public Library	\$ 194,771.00	22,000	5
Winter Park Public Library	\$ 2,288,501.00	26,860	35.3

In terms of annual budget, 56% of participants had budgets of \$100,000 to \$1 million; 25% had budgets of more than \$1 million to \$5 million; and 17% had budgets greater than \$5 million. In short there was limited participation from smaller libraries with small budgets. The FTE staff for participating libraries was 54% with 20 or less; 28% with 21-100; 29% with 101-300; and 5% with greater than 300 FTE.

Survey Responses

This section provides an overview of the findings from the survey, presented by each question asked.

E-Government Services

1. Please indicate the E-Government Services and assistance which the public uses or that is at your library.

Table 2. E-Government Public Library Services










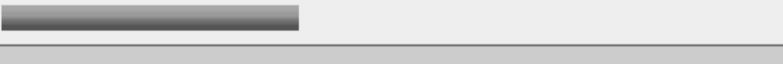

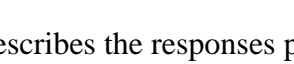
		Response Percent	Response Total
Locating information about local government (e.g., schools, city or county government)		95.2%	80
Locating information about state or federal government agencies		96.4%	81
Locating or completing Internal Revenue Service (IRS) forms		96.4%	81
Completing job applications, online training, or filing unemployment claims		88.1%	74
Locating or completing Medicaid registration or prescription drug forms		78.6%	66
Contacting Immigration and Naturalization Service		67.9%	57
Motor vehicle registration renewal		64.3%	54
Locating or completing social service forms (e.g., DCF ACCESS Florida forms)		86.9%	73
Registering citizen complaints regarding local government		26.2%	22
Access to government information in electronic databases		84.5%	71
Voter registration or candidate information		81%	68
<input type="button" value="View"/> Other (please describe)		32.1%	27
Total Respondents			84
(skipped this question)			0

Table 2 describes the responses pertaining to what E-government services patrons are utilizing at the public library. Library patrons most often use the E-government services for locating information about state or federal government agencies and completing their IRS forms (96.4%). The next service that the patrons use regularly is locating information about local government (95.2%). Seventy-four of the respondents said that patrons utilize the service for employment related issues.

Resource Intensive E-Government Services

2. Which E-Government Services used by the public are the most resource-intensive in terms of money and staff?

Table 3. Resource Intensive E-Government Services

	First most resource-intensive	Second most resource-intensive
Locating information about local government (e.g. schools city or county government)	17%	83%
Locating information about state or federal government agencies	17%	83%
Locating or completing Internal Revenue Service (IRS) forms	53%	47%
Completing job applications online training or filing unemployment claims	29%	71%
Locating or completing Medicaid registration or prescription drug forms	50%	50%
Contacting Immigration and Naturalization Service	42%	58%
Motor vehicle registration renewal	0%	0%
Locating or completing social service forms (e.g. DCF ACCESS Florida forms)	78%	22%
Registering citizen complaints regarding local government	0%	0%
Access to government information in electronic databases	50%	50%
Voter registration or candidate information	20%	80%
Other (from question above)	50%	50%

This question asked the respondents to decide the top two most resource intensive E-government services that they provide. As Table 3 suggests, 78% of the respondents to this question felt that locating or completing social service forms was the most resource intensive. The second most resource intensive service was a tie with 83%, locating information about local government and locating information about state or federal government agencies. The least resource intensive service provided was motor vehicle registration renewal and registering citizen complaints regarding local government. None of the respondents felt that these were resource intensive.

Disaster/Emergency Services and Assistance

3. Please indicate Disaster/Emergency Services and Assistance.

Table 4. Disaster/Emergency Services and Assistance








		Response Percent	Response Total
The library building(s) serve(s) as emergency shelters during storms, hurricanes, or other disasters		7.6%	6
Library staff provide emergency responder services during times of need (e.g., manage emergency call centers, assist first responders, provide relief services)		49.4%	39
Library's equipment (e.g., bookmobiles with wireless Internet access, public access workstations, laptops) is used by first responders during times of disaster		19%	15
Library's public access computing and Internet access services are used by the public to access emergency relief services and benefits (i.e., FEMA) during times of disaster		86.1%	68
Library provides disaster (e.g., hurricanes) information regarding evacuation and shelters		92.4%	73
The library is involved in disaster and emergency planning activities at the local (e.g., town, city, county) level		57%	45
<input type="button" value="View"/> Other (please describe)		16.5%	13
Total Respondents			79
(skipped this question)			5

Table 4 summarizes this question showing that 73 of the 79 respondents on this question marked that their library provides disaster information regarding evacuation and shelters. Only six of the respondents have a library that is used as an emergency shelter during a storm or hurricane.

Resource Intensive Nature of Disaster/Emergency Services

4. Which Disaster/Emergency Services used by the Public are the most resource-intensive in terms of money and staff? (79 respondents)

Table 5. Resource Intensiveness of Disaster/Emergency Services

	First most resource-intensive	Second most resource-intensive
The library building(s) serve(s) as emergency shelters during storms hurricanes or other disasters	50%	50%
Library staff provide emergency responder services during times of need (e.g. manage emergency call centers assist first responders provide relief services)	68%	32%
Library's equipment (e.g. bookmobiles with wireless Internet access public access workstations laptops) is used by first responders during times of disaster	60%	40%
Library's public access computing and Internet access services are used by the public to access emergency relief services and benefits (i.e. FEMA) during times of disaster	68%	32%
Library provides disaster (e.g. hurricanes) information regarding evacuation and shelters	25%	75%
Other (from question above)	25%	75%

Table 5 shows that 68% of the respondents believed that the most resources-intensive Disaster/Emergency Services used by the Public are that the library staff provides emergency responder services during times of need and that the library's public access computing and Internet access services are used by the public to access emergency relief services and benefits. The second most resource-intensive Disaster/Emergency Services (75%) that the library provides is information regarding evacuation and shelters during a disaster.

Disaster Preparedness Plan

5. The library has a written disaster preparedness plan that provides instruction and guidance for library staff in the event of an emergency/disaster situation.

Table 6. Disaster Preparedness Plan

	Response Percent	Response Total
that is current and was reviewed	51.4%	36
that is more than one year old.	32.9%	23
that was developed in conjunction with local or other emergency services organizations (e.g. fire, police, disaster relief).	45.7%	32
	Total Respondents:	70

Table 6 finds that 51% of the respondents have a current written disaster preparedness plan that was written during the last year, while almost 33% have one that is more than a year old. It is important to note that the study team did not actually examine the disaster plans to determine their overall content and quality.

No Disaster Preparedness Plan

6. The library has no current written emergency/disaster preparedness plan

Table 7. No Disaster Preparedness Plan

	Response Percent	Response Total
and is not in the process of developing such a plan.	22.2%	2
but is in the process of developing an emergency/disaster plan.	77.8%	7
	Total Respondents:	9
	Skipped this question:	75

The response to this question must be taken with some qualification since 75 of the respondents did not answer the question. It is likely that a number of those who did not answer the question do not have a disaster preparedness plan. Nonetheless, 77.8% of the respondents that answered the question have no current written emergency/disaster preparedness plan or are in the process of developing one. Only 22.2% of the respondents answering the question do not have a written emergency/disaster preparedness plan and are not in the process of writing one.

Support for E-Government

7. Have you received funding, staffing, or other support from outside agencies to support E-Government services?

Table 8. Support for E-Government

	Response Percent	Response Total
No	98.7%	75
Yes	1.3%	1
	Total Respondents:	76
	Skipped this question:	8

Table 8 shows that an overwhelming amount of respondents (98.7%) do not receive any kind of support from an outside agency to support E-Government services that their library provides.

Impact of Providing E-Government Services

8. Indicate the effect of providing E-Government services through your public library.

Table 9. Impact of Providing E-Government Services
















		Response Percent	Response Total
Increased visibility of library services		78.2%	61
Increased use of library services		83.3%	65
Opportunities for new partnerships		47.4%	37
Issues regarding confidentiality		64.1%	50
Issues regarding liability		48.7%	38
Changes in staff workloads or scheduling		70.5%	55
Changes in technology related to public access computing		55.1%	43
Changes in library's role relative to other local agencies		69.2%	54
Increased advocacy for role of public library by others		42.3%	33
<input type="button" value="View"/> Other or Comments (please specify)		11.5%	9
		Total Respondents	78
		(skipped this question)	6

Table 9 shows that the greatest effect that E-government services had on the respondents was an increase in the use of library services by patrons. The second greatest effect that it had was an increase in the visibility of library services, followed closely by the third greatest effect, changes in staff workloads or scheduling.

Documents Available

9. As a result of your library's increasing role in E-Government, which of the following documents have been developed?

Table 10. Documents Available

		Response Percent	Response Total
Policy or procedures related to provision of E-Government services		3%	1
Policy or procedures related to disaster preparedness and response		54.5%	18
Agreements with local, state, or federal agencies to support E-Government		27.3%	9
Reports or other information describing public library support for E-Government		6.1%	2
<input type="button" value="View"/> Other (please specify)		27.3%	9
Total Respondents			33
(skipped this question)			51

Staffing for E-Government

10. Are you able to provide an estimate of the average staff hours per month that your library dedicates to supporting various types of E-Government?

Table 11. Staffing for E-Government

	Response Percent	Response Total
No	67.9%	53
Yes	32.1%	25
	Total Respondents:	78
	Skipped this question:	6

The majority of the respondents (67.9%) can not estimate the number of hours staff support types of E-government services in their libraries suggesting that additional investigation into this topic is necessary.

Total Resources Supporting E-Government

11. Are you able to provide an estimate of the average monthly dollar amount of resources your library committed during the last year in support of delivery of E-Government services?

Table 12. Total Resources Supporting E-Government

	Response Percent	Response Total
No	91%	71
Yes	9%	7
	Total Respondents:	78
	Skipped this question:	6

Only nine percent of the respondents were able to provide an estimate of the average monthly dollar amount of resources that their library committed during the last year in support of the delivery of E-government services. This finding indicates, once again, that additional investigation into this topic is necessary.

Especially Important E-Government Services

12. Describe one or two instances when you think that the services or support that your library provided were especially important in assisting your community and/or its residents.

Many of the respondents noted E-government support as being especially important when assisting their patrons. The government agencies they mentioned most often were the IRS, FEMA, ACCESS FL, INS, Medicare and DCF. One librarian responded, "We have had numerous times where we assisted people filling out for government assistance that were only told to visit the library. No other information was given by that agency." Respondents also replied that their libraries typically received power before the rest of their community after a hurricane and as a result provided help as staging areas for FEMA and internet locations for their patrons.

Key Issues

13. In your view, what are the most important issues affecting the success with which public libraries can provide support for E-government services?

Time, money, and training are the three most important issues affecting the success with which public libraries provide support for E-government services. The librarians assist the patrons in accessing and filling out government forms which is time consuming. They also feel that although government agencies are sending the public to the library, the librarians receive no training on the topic of government sites. The librarians feel that they would benefit from training so that they are better able to serve the public. Libraries would also benefit from additional funding to aid in supplying more computers and staff in order to better aid their patrons.

Many respondents noted that there should be much better communication between the government agencies and the libraries. Librarians need this ongoing communication to be aware of various E-government activities at government agencies and the changes as they are made. Respondents also added that some government agency web sites are not user friendly. Many of the patrons that come in to access the sites are not computer literate and have great difficulty with the sites. The librarians try to assist the users as best they can; however the librarians are also concerned with the issues of privacy and liability.

Additional Comments

14. Please provide any additional comments related to provision of E-government services.

Many of the respondents feel frustrated with the current situation. One respondent said, “We are absorbing the task of other government agencies without adequate funding and training to do so.” Librarians increasingly are being asked to help patrons with government forms, services, and access to government websites and yet many libraries are not equipped to do this. Many library computers have a timing system, so the patrons can only use the computer for a limited amount of time. The government forms tend to take longer to fill out than the allotted amount of time the patron has and the patron is unable to save the work already completed.

Themes from the Survey Respondents

There are a number of themes that appear throughout the survey responses. These themes represent the comments and answers from the survey participants. Only those topics mentioned frequently are listed here.

E-Government Takes Time and Resources

This survey shows that providing support for E-government services is time-consuming, and it is time taken away from the traditional tasks of a librarian. When given the choice to choose the top two most resource intensive E-government services that the librarians provide, 78% of the respondents chose locating or completing social service forms as the most resource intensive service. The second most resource intensive service was a tie with 83%, locating information about local government and locating information about state or federal government agencies. Providing help with the government websites is time consuming and takes the librarian from their traditional duties.

Improve E-Government Forms

Librarians do wish to assist their patrons with E-government services. In fact, when given the opportunity to describe an instance when the service provided was especially important to their community; one respondent wrote, “Helping a woman file her ACCESS food stamp application online so that she could feed herself and her children.” However, that same respondent noted that the service she felt was so important that it had taken her two hours to perform. One solution to this problem would be to make the forms (oftentimes available on

government websites) more user-friendly. One respondent's suggestion was to, "make instructions very simple—applicants often are totally unfamiliar with or inexperienced in PC use."

Coordinate E-Government Services with Public Libraries

If government agencies and the public libraries could work together, the E-government process would require much less librarian time. Librarians are working on an everyday basis with the government's forms. While doing this they have the opportunity to see what is working well and what needs to be improved. The current situation of agencies informing the public that they can receive help at their public library, with no dialogue between the agency and the public library, is not helping the situation.

Limited Knowledge of Costs

The responses to the survey indicate that librarians have limited knowledge of the costs that are required to provide various E-government and emergency services. Being able to itemize the costs for particular E-government services, the resources that the library uses to support these services, and to better understand the nature of these costs as one-time or recurring would be especially helpful in planning and assessment of the E-government and emergency services. Moreover, knowing these costs may better assist the library advocate for support to cover these costs from local, state, and federal governments.

Disaster/ Emergency Services

About half of the survey respondents state that they have a disaster preparedness plan in their libraries but it is unclear if those plans are integrated/coordinated with local/state/federal plans. Public libraries should be included as full partners in a disaster preparedness plan with federal or local governments. That inclusion would benefit both the government as well as the library. Such would enable the library to rapidly assess the damages sustained and correct them, so that the library could re-open its doors to the public. An inclusive plan would also ensure that library personnel would know what type of additional services they would be expected to provide to the public in a time of disaster.

If the local or state government is not amendable to a shared disaster preparedness plan, libraries can utilize www.dplan.org. This is a site developed by the Massachusetts State Library, that can help libraries to:

- Prevent or mitigate disasters;
- Prepare for the most likely emergencies;
- Respond quickly to minimize damage if disaster strikes; and
- Recover effectively from disaster while continuing to provide services to your community.

As shown in the literature review below, the public tends to utilize their public library at a high rate after an emergency. With a proper disaster preparedness plan the libraries will be better able to serve their patrons.

REVIEW OF SELECTED SOURCES RELATED TO E-GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The authors compiled this overview through a search of literature on library services and functions related to E-government using such online databases as Lexis-Nexis, various library and information science databases, and Google. An overview of pertinent policy instruments such as the *E-government Act of 2002* (PL 107-347) also were considered. Additionally, the study team consulted library experts and professionals for their input. This brief review does not review E-government reports, legislation, initiatives, etc. at the federal or state levels. Those interested in additional information regarding the federal E-government effort may wish to review the government's E-government website at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/egov/>. The material reviewed in this paper is not comprehensive, rather it offers a brief overview.

Key Issues

As a result of this review, several key issues emerged that were frequently mentioned across various sources. The issues discussed below are not intended to be a comprehensive review of the topic. They do provide, however, an excellent introduction to the topics and issues that are included within the general topic of public libraries and E-government.

Not Enough Computers/Technology for Everyone

One problem facing libraries is the insufficient level of technology available to meet patron needs. As Bertot and McClure (2007) observed, 85% of libraries reported having an insufficient number of work stations to meet the public demand some or all of the time. Some libraries have also been forced to institute time limits on computer usage, in some cases as short as 30 minutes, in order to assure that everyone can have access. Other methods, such as waiting lists, can have as many as eight names on it at a given time (Troxler, 2006).

This problem is exacerbated in the face of new strains being put on libraries such as their roles during natural disasters and E-government. In the case of the 2005 hurricane season, there was a severe shortage of workstations in communities affected by the storms for people looking to communicate with friends and family and get information on their homes. These issues will be covered in more depth below.

In short, "libraries are supporting more and more customers with the same amount of technology" (Bertot, Jaeger, Langa, & McClure, 2006b, p. 16). In addition to a lack of workstations, many users report that connection speed is much slower than they require. As the *2006 Public Libraries and the Internet* study showed, "nearly half of respondents said their connection speeds are inadequate to meet user demands" (Bertot, Jaeger, Langa, & McClure, 2006a, p. 35). In an attempt to provide sufficient access to everyone, many libraries have incorporated wireless access into their technology services. The study by Bertot and McClure

(2007) found that “61.0% of public library outlets in the U.S. will have it [wireless access] by 2007” (p. 12). A common solution to these issues is that libraries and the public would be better served if connectivity issues were based on meeting the needs of the library, not some arbitrary connection speed that may or may not be sufficient (Bertot and McClure, 2007).

Funding

According to Bertot et al. (2006a), approximately 90% of funding for public library computing and Internet access comes from local government. Additionally, funding for public libraries has been supplemented through private sources such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which donated over \$250 million in computers and training in its first round of gifts to libraries located in all 50 states (<http://www.gatesfoundation.org>). The problem with relying on sources of private funding is that, “private organizations generally provide one-time support rather than annual funding” (Bertot, Jaeger, Langa, & McClure, 2006b, p. 15). But the largest expense, which Hanway (2006) argued is usually taken for granted, is that of technical support and expertise.

But if technology funding for public libraries was stretched thin previously, new service roles such as E-government have put extra stress on libraries’ ability to provide computing services. For example, as a result of the 2004-2005 hurricane seasons, many public libraries along the Gulf Coast have noticed an increase in library use (Jaeger, Langa, McClure, & Bertot, 2006). According to an emergency preparedness memo released by the Pasco County Public Library (Florida), during the 2004 hurricane season library personnel staffed the RIC (Resident Information Center) for over 1,800 hours, which equated to a cost of \$42,681.04 (Emergency Preparedness, n.d.). And in the case of libraries damaged or destroyed in hurricanes, where do funds for rebuilding come from? Leboeuf (2006) suggested that in communities devastated by natural disaster, where there is “minimal tax base for generation revenue,” libraries may be hard-pressed to find additional funding (p. 60).

There is also a lack of government funds to support librarian training. The librarians are attempting to help their patrons with E-government services but they have received no training on how properly to do this. Though the librarians provide aid in good faith, it is possible that they are giving the wrong answers to questions asked of them. The libraries are in need of government funds to provide additional staff and training to adequately fill the needs that the E-government services are creating. With these funds, there would be sufficient number of trained staff to give the proper support to both E-government services and traditional library duties.

Similarly, the ability to fund computing and technology services has been strained by the recent influx of E-government issues libraries now face. As Bertot, Jaeger, Langa, and McClure (2006a) note, “Libraries need more funding to serve as the first refuge and last resort for E-government support, public computing, and Internet access” (p. 34). A recent study conducted by the Information Institute at Florida State University found that references to accessing the Internet via public libraries is becoming a more common occurrence within federal, state, and local government documents (Representative References to Public Libraries in Selected Florida and Federal Documents, 2006).

But despite these suggestions to use public libraries for completing and filing E-government forms, “the federal government actually offers little to no direct support for public library Internet connectivity and public access computing” (Bertot, Jaeger, Langa, & McClure, 2006b, p. 15). Bertot et al. (2006b) continue by suggesting that one way public libraries might be able to supplement their funding is through revenue provided by government agencies that direct people to libraries for assistance.

The Role of Libraries during Natural Disasters

As discussed above, one of the key issues leading to recent funding issues for public libraries are new roles that branches have taken as a result of the devastating hurricane seasons in recent years. But in order to better understand how funding issues have arisen from this, it would be useful to discuss the scope of services public libraries provided.

Some of the ways that public libraries served their communities before, during, and after the hurricanes include helping communities prepare for the disasters, providing emergency information, giving shelter, providing physical aid such as food and water distribution, caring for community members in need, working with relief organizations, and cleaning up the damage after the storms (Jaeger, Langa, McClure, & Bertot, 2006).

Additionally, since library buildings are oftentimes constructed out of concrete block in order to hold the weight of shelved collections of books, these locations are commonly the least affected buildings in many communities during a natural disaster (Perlman, 2006). This made libraries a natural choice for victims looking for shelter and the most likely place to find working computers and Internet access.

The review revealed numerous roles libraries played after a hurricane, Bertot, Jaeger, Langa, and McClure (2006b) identified four major roles also noted in other sources:

1. Communicating with family and friends
2. Completing FEMA forms (only available online)
3. Searching for news about their cities/towns/counties
4. Searching for news about the conditions of homes and places of work

But beyond these major roles, libraries served a host of other functions ranging from assisting emergency response personnel and supporting critical communications operations (Bertot, Jaeger, Langa, & McClure, 2006a) to providing activities and help with homework to local children and teens (Leboeuf, 2006).

In the aftermath of the hurricanes that hit the Gulf Coast, The American Red Cross distributed disaster preparedness videos to public libraries throughout north Florida and listed the branches where the videos can be checked out free of charge (American Red Cross, 2005). This is another example of how agencies are turning to public libraries as a source for disseminating information to the public without benefit of funding or sponsorship. And while the hurricanes of 2004 and 2005 may be the most recent and vivid example of libraries reaching out and serving their communities in times of need, libraries in other parts of the country should also have access

to disaster preparedness plans and resources in case of earthquakes, tsunamis, etc... (Jaeger, Langa, McClure, & Bertot, 2006).

Government Promotion of Public Library Internet Usage

A continuing trend among government agencies, policymakers, and official documents is to suggest that people use public libraries as a means to access, complete, and submit government documents and forms online. Indeed, a number of federal and state agencies specifically refer E-government users to public libraries (see Appendix A).

Recently, as Bertot, Jaeger, Langa, and McClure (2006a) noted, "Many people relied on the public library to sign up for the mandatory federal Medicare prescription drug coverage plans" (pp. 35-36). In addition to Medicare, some E-government forms and official interactions being completed on a regular basis at public libraries include FEMA forms (after natural disasters), filing taxes, immigration forms, claiming water rights, registering children for school, and student loan forms, just to name a few. Librarians have come to recognize that for many patrons, such as the elderly and those without computing access, Internet access through their local library is the only means they have to gain access to online E-government content.

Training Library Personnel/Coordinating Government Services

Library personnel are increasingly being called upon to serve as de facto E-government experts and disaster relief workers. As Bertot and McClure (2007) stated, "Increasingly, public access computing support will require additional public librarian knowledge, resources, and services." A Congressional hearing before the Committee on Government Reform (U.S. Congress, 2006) also observed, the 9/11 Commission report and the Select Katrina Committee report both noted a lack of information sharing among relevant public sector entities. This included coordinating with libraries in the case of E-government as well as disaster preparedness.

Despite this acknowledgment of the need for information and resource sharing, however, little has been done to assist public libraries in this matter. A 2006 news release on the new roles facing public libraries in this regard quoted Bertot as saying, "Libraries are clearly not receiving additional support for E-government and disaster services" (Public Libraries Burdened with E-government Services, Says Florida Study, 2006, p. 1). For example, as Perlman (2006) suggested, in light of the burdens placed on public librarians following hurricanes Katrina and Rita, federal, state, and/or local governments may want to provide library employees with training in the basics of counseling and emergency management.

In another example, a report distributed by the Pasco County Public Library (FL) after Tropical Storm Ernesto noted that the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) website had not updated the "Current Emergency Information" or "Current Press Releases" pages to inform the public of emergency supplies and services available. This, despite the fact that, "Libraries staff was verbally informed that sandbags were available at an East side location" (Tropical Storm Ernesto: After action report, 2006, p. 2). This further emphasizes the role libraries play as conduits of information to the community even as other agencies mismanage information in times of crisis.

Awareness of Public Library E-government and Disaster Preparedness Services

Once training and coordination has occurred between government agencies and public libraries, the libraries would be better able to promote the services available, including assistance with E-government and help in times of natural disasters. All of this, though, would be contingent on supplemental funding and training provided to public libraries through the various government agencies that are currently directing people to libraries.

However, as awareness and use of these services becomes more widespread, there is a danger that financial and logistical issues may require many public library branches to reevaluate their ability to meet the needs of the public. Without adequate funding, training, and equipment, these services may not be available much longer in libraries that pay for these services out of their already-stretched budgets. If that happens, there may be a backlash of resentment against the libraries that can no longer provide the services and the government agencies that promoted their use in the first place.

Summary

The literature and related sources describing public libraries and E-government and emergency services is extremely limited. Despite the flurry of interest in E-government that began largely in the Clinton administration, there has only been minimal trickle down of activities and services into public libraries. Nonetheless, there clearly are pockets of interest, activity, and involvement. Since there is no comprehensive research on this topic, generalizations are difficult to make.

To some degree there is a “love-hate” affair with E-government services and public libraries. On the one hand, many public librarians see involvement in the provision of E-government as an opportunity to provide better services to their community and demonstrate better visibility of the library. On the other hand, the provision of E-government services typically comes with no additional funding and, some would say, simply constitutes another unfunded mandate for the public library. But the extent of hurricanes in 2004-2005 in the gulf states have drawn increased attention to the role of public libraries in E-government.

OVERVIEW OF THE DECEMBER 2006 MEETING ON E-GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

In December 2006, the ALA’s Office for Information Technology Policy, the Information Institute at the Florida State University, and the Florida State Library, Florida Department of State convened a meeting to better understand what E-government services libraries are providing, what challenges they face as they provide these new services and why are some libraries more successful than others. Appendix B is the meeting description, schedule, and list of participants.

If libraries continue to play this role, what policy options might be pursued to improve E-government services? Are Government agencies and libraries willing to collaborate better on solutions even though significant barriers stand in the way including the lack of additional funds, navigating multi-jurisdictional state, county and local agencies as well as federal government agencies, the availability of training, staffing concerns, and the evolving role of the public librarian as community outreach and E-government service provider?

This section of the report provides a brief overview of the discussions, presentations, and ideas offered at this meeting. Overall, the participants (see Appendix B) came from a broad range of backgrounds and had varying viewpoints regarding E-government and the role of public libraries. All, however, contributed to the meeting's findings and recommendations.

Context

Participants recognized that Federal government initiatives to better disseminate government information and to use technology to transform and streamline government operations span the last 40 years. Most recently, the *E-government Act of 2002* established a Federal Chief Information Officer within the Office of Management and Budget to manage and promote the use of Internet-based information technology to enhance citizen access to Government information and services. Among other things, the Act established standards for government agencies that would promote access and ease of use by redesigning web sites and making government forms and other materials available on the Web.

Each federal agency in implementing the E-government Act, did so independently from one another so users find a mishmash of various Web sites and resources, some more complete and usable than others. Given no additional funds to accomplish the transition to E-government, federal agencies did what they could with varying success. Frequently, E-government applications and Web resources were not created with the user in mind because agencies primarily focused on the more immediate task of making the transition to E-government, streamlining work, and saving costs. Some federal agencies encouraged citizens who needed help using E-government materials to seek assistance at their public libraries.

One of the outcomes of the E-government Act was the creation of a Web portal, www.firstgov.gov. Through FirstGov, citizens have one Web site that connects them to the maze of federal agencies. This has been effective in helping citizens find the agency or topic of interest, but once at the appropriate federal agency Web site, some people often need help understanding and using what they have found. Many turn to the public library and talk with a librarian for assistance. The public librarian is the "human connection" to E-government information.

Why Public Libraries?

Participants agreed that it is no surprise that citizens seek access to government information and ask for help at the public library. The public library is uniquely positioned to

provide E-government services. Librarians are trusted in their communities, know the needs of their users, and are trained professionals committed to public service. There is a public library in nearly every community across the country – some 17,000 outlets. Nearly all public libraries have public access computers and some have the information infrastructure necessary to meet user needs that require broadband connections.

Nonetheless, for public libraries, E-government service provision has become yet another service libraries supply without additional funding or an increase in staffing, and frequently not enough training to adequately manage the queries they receive. E-government service reference transactions tend to take more time to address with long sessions at public terminals, hit or miss attempts to access the required information and lengthy forms to complete online. Community users ask librarians to provide a depth of knowledge regarding government programs not expected previously. Some reference transactions require a user to reveal personal information that causes some librarians concern about privacy and other legal implications. Others seek help on major life decisions making librarians naturally fearful about providing the wrong information.

Yet, many public librarians have been invaluable when dealing with all kinds of events and social upheavals, including providing senior citizens and their families help understanding and completing Medicare Subpart D forms and providing emergency response assistance during and after catastrophes like the hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Libraries and other non-profit organizations in many ways have become the mediators between the citizens and the government.

In the 2006 *Public Libraries and the Internet* study conducted by the Florida State University, Information Institute, researchers discovered the increasingly significant role that libraries play in E-government. Three key themes dominate the study findings:

- Public libraries fulfill a community need by providing access to and assistance with E-government services and resources for both typical matters like tax forms to assistance during emergencies;
- Government policies should be reconsidered to characterize the actual roles public libraries play in E-government; and
- Libraries need support to maintain and develop the technological infrastructure necessary to meet citizen needs, financial support, and training and education to better provide E-government services.

While assistance with government information is not a new phenomenon, the changes in the nature and format of government information, the misconception that all citizens are self-sufficient and information literate, and the role libraries have played as first responders during emergencies is different and noteworthy. User expectations are higher and meeting those expectations involves a considerable amount of time, resources and librarian expertise.

Participants agreed that providing these important services is complicated by the status of the library within state and local government structures that seem to vary from state to state. If the state library is on par with other state agencies, has fewer bureaucratic levels to negotiate or

has equal access to the state governor and the legislature, the range of state and local E-government services that public libraries can provide if given the necessary information and training are recognized and addressed.

Public Library Infrastructure

In an ideal world, public libraries would have the necessary technological infrastructure to provide E-government services, librarians would receive adequate training by government agencies to improve user service, federal, state and local government agencies, libraries and other non-profit organizations would establish an ongoing partnership to facilitate E-government services, and state and federal policy would reflect the centrality of E-government services in a community, recognizing and supporting the libraries serving the American public.

Technological infrastructure needs, participants noted, have changed dramatically over the last few years. Initially, getting public libraries wired to the Internet was a worthy goal. Today, nearly all libraries are connected to the Internet but most do not have sufficient bandwidth and physical space in their buildings to meet user demand. The issue is no longer connectivity but quality connectivity. Many E-government activities online – downloading large documents or completing lengthy application forms – require significant bandwidth. In addition, bandwidth needs to be adequate to deliver E-government services without disrupting other internet-based activities in the library, and ensure that community users are satisfied with the connection speed. Adding wireless service slows down overall response time because it requires additional bandwidth.

In addition, one participant noted that library network performance can vary depending on the number of public access computers that are available and what computer activities library users are engaging in. Libraries providing E-government services also need the more mundane forms of technology including fax machines, telephones, computer printers, photocopiers and necessary software loaded on public access computers.

Having the necessary infrastructure is often not enough because many libraries do not have the necessary computer support service to maintain optimum computer functioning. Technical service support is needed to assess network performance, configure hardware, identify new and necessary software, and solve the myriad of problems that occur daily when dealing with computer tech.

Library facilities should have sufficient space and proper design to provide E-government users with an environment adequate for completing their work. Many libraries have no space to add additional computers to meet user demand. Ideally, an enclosed confidential area could be created within the library for private consultations frequently necessary when providing service.

The need to provide necessary training to serve the public and respond to the myriad of E-government queries is of significant importance. Ideally, government agencies should provide training to library staff on what resources are available—the content of web sites, forms, or other services—and should provide an official contact person for advanced customer service help. Library staff should always be able to identify who to call when they encounter problems. One

attendee thought that training could be accomplished in various ways (train-the-trainer training, via teleconferences, wikis, state library training programs) best matched to the learning styles of the librarians. Training should be targeted to situations that the library deals with most often. Education must be ongoing due to changes in federal agency programs and services.

Participants also thought that government agencies need to contact and work with public libraries through established communication networks when introducing new services. State Library and/or regional consortia are key contacts that public libraries are accustomed to dealing with in the government context. They provide an important comfort level to public librarians when working with external government agencies. If possible, government agencies need to approach each new situation with an intention to ensure that libraries and librarians are sitting at the table when the services are planned and introduced.

Importance of Partnerships

Participants agreed that providing quality E-government services requires that libraries, government agencies, and others become partners in the effort. Many organizations can bring to the table a set of skills and resources, and many have a stake in the success of E-government. Partnerships might be established and coordinated by IMLS with programs developed by ALA divisions like PLA and other library groups. COSLA has an existing outreach capacity to each state as does OCLC. Public librarians with government documents expertise could also be included in the mix. In any case, quality E-government provision requires that a number of organizations and government agencies (federal, state, and local) work together.

Other Themes and Issues

The scope of topics and issues covered by meeting participants was expansive and justice cannot be given to all of them here. Nonetheless, some of those topics and issues are as follows:

- **Delivering services around life style events.** One participant noted the need to change the way in which libraries operate from responding to information needs to organizing information services (especially E-government services) around life style events such as moving to a new community, incorporating a company, hurricanes/disasters, those about to retire, having a new child in the home, etc.
- **Importance of other public and volunteer organizations.** Participants noted that many organizations are in the business of helping and providing information to residents in the local community such as the American Association of Retired People, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and so forth. Coordinating E-government services and resources with these other local and volunteer associations might be a good strategy.
- **Marketing of library E-government services.** Many federal, state, and local governments simply are unaware of the role libraries play in the access to and dissemination of E-government services and resources. Public libraries need to do a much better job of marketing the E-government services they provide, the importance of those services, and the impacts that result from providing the services.

- **Providing the correct information.** A number of the librarians at the meeting noted that oftentimes librarians providing E-government services were concerned about providing correct information for areas in which they had little background or inadequate knowledge, e.g., answering questions about forms and selections for the Medicare D schedule. The complexity of some of the E-government forms and deciphering the correct way to submit those forms with the correct information led some librarians to wonder about the degree to which they might have liability if they provided incorrect information that might, for example, cause a patron loss of income or services.
- **Coordinating E-government services and resources.** There is no easy centralized or coordinated effort among federal, state, or local governments regarding E-government services and resources. Oftentimes, when librarians need assistance with providing E-government services there is no clear agency/person to call or there is no one at the appropriate agency to assist the librarian.
- **Librarians are not trained to be case workers.** When librarians are asked for some types of E-government assistance they typically are unaware of the “big picture” of services, resources, and the current status of the patron in those various governmental services. Nor does the librarian know how federal, state, and local E-government services such as welfare support operate for a particular patron. Government agencies should not expect librarians to serve as a case worker.
- **Better E-government services.** It is to the benefit of federal, state, and local governments to have libraries and other public/volunteer agencies knowledge and informed about E-government services. The better the library and others can provide E-government services the better individuals are able to live a successful life and interact with government.
- **Costing E-government services.** Would public libraries be in a stronger position to obtain assistance in the delivery of E-government services if they could estimate the cost of a typical E-government services transaction? If they know the cost per transaction and the number of transactions provided, they could then inform federal, state, or local governments about the cost and possibly the value of these services to the local community.
- **E-government service delivery models.** Participants noted that the nature in which public libraries provided access to and dissemination of E-government services varied considerably from state to state and local community to local community. These models vary because of state and local government organizational structures, the needs of local residents, and a host of other reasons. Currently, however, there is inadequate knowledge about possible service delivery models and which ones would work best in what situations.
- **Importance of political setting.** Some attendees believed that identifying costs/benefits or E-government services and/or better understanding different E-government service delivery models would have less usefulness than being politically connected and involved in the local community in terms of receiving support for providing E-government services. A number of participants noted that some librarians disliked being “political” but believed it was essential for the librarians to “be able to work the political environment” if they were to be successful in E-government services delivery.
- **Toolkits for library E-government services delivery.** Some participants asked if it might be possible to develop a toolkit of key E-government information, services,

resources, contact agencies, and training that could be made available (online and in print) to assist public libraries that are trying to provide high quality E-government services.

- **Quality and impact of existing E-government services.** There was much discussion about the current quality and impact of federal, state, or local E-government services. There was also some disagreement about what E-government services worked well and for which types of constituencies. Some noted a number of studies that graded federal agencies on the provision of E-government. But there was the general sense, especially at the state and local levels, that a clear picture of the existing quality and impact of E-government services was not available.
- **Levels of E-government service provision.** Participants believed that different public libraries had different capacities to provide quality E-government services. For example a library with very high bandwidth, plenty of workstations, trained and available staff, and good working relations with local government officials would likely have higher capacity to provide quality E-government services than a library that did not have these attributes. Thus it might be useful to think about establishing selected public libraries that are, by law, required and funded to provide a range of high quality E-government services and resources. For example one public library might only have the capacity to hand-out or make available E-government forms whereas another library might have the capacity to advise patrons on how to complete the forms and where to go for additional information.
- **Role of federal libraries.** To what degree are the national libraries and information services such as the Library of Medicine and the National Agriculture Library, Firstgov.gov, and other agency libraries coordinating E-government services with public libraries? Could E-government services be better coordinated between public libraries and federal libraries/information centers?
- **Role of the Federal Depository Library Program.** A number of participants pointed out that government document depository librarians had significant knowledge and expertise with federal, state, and local government information and E-government services. It was also pointed out that most of the depository librarians were not in public libraries – especially not in the small rural public libraries. Others commented that many librarians are not familiar with the depository library program or the Government Documents Round Table (GODORT) of ALA. There was much discussion on how E-government services could be improved with assistance from the depository librarians and what form that assistance might take.

These topics and themes provide a sense of the wide-ranging nature of the discussions from the general meetings and the small group reports.

Policy Implications

Participants suggested that one result of these new public library service roles is the need to update the *E-government Act of 2002* in order to improve access to E-government services through public libraries and other mechanisms. Additionally, we need to better understand the policy framework in the context of Federal, state, and local governments and how it affects the role of libraries and E-government.

Based on the findings from the survey, the review of selected literature, and meeting discussions a number of policy issues regarding the success of E-government and public libraries include the following:

- Need for federal, state, and local governments to recognize the various E-government, roles, services, and activities being provided by public libraries;
- Importance of better coordinating E-government and emergency services among federal, state, local governments and public libraries;
- Developing strategies by which public libraries can be more knowledgeable of E-government services and resources;
- Integrating the role of the state library and other public and volunteer agencies into the E-government process;
- Training public librarians to have a range of E-government skills and knowledge;
- Marketing the ability of public libraries to assist community members in access to and use of E-government services; and
- Better understanding of the nature, extent, and cost for public libraries to successfully provide access to and use of E-government.

These provide a beginning discussion of policy issues that might be addressed in an update of the *E-government Act of 2002* (as well as state and local laws and regulations) to improve E-government to all individuals.

Recommendation

New federal policy would bring attention to the importance of E-government information services critical to citizens. Legislation that addresses the need for improvement in E-government service provision through planning and coordination between public libraries and local, state and federal government agencies, by increasing educational opportunities for librarians and by improving FirstGov and federal Web sites would move this initiative forward. But overall, there is a need for a new national vision of how E-government services and resources could be better provided to the public.

Thus, the primary recommendation resulting from the meeting was to explore various options for amending the *E-government Act of 2002*. Participants outlined a number of ideas to be included in such an update – many of which are discussed above. Some of the participants volunteered to draft possible legislation that might be appropriate to accomplish the goal of improving access to and use of E-government services and resources for the benefit of all individuals in the United States. The development of proposed legislation is in process as of the writing of this report. Appendix C is a preliminary effort to outline possible content for such an amendment.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Based on the results from the survey and the literature review, as well as the various discussions at the December 6-8 meeting, the study team identified topics for additional research related to public libraries and E-government, selected topics include:

- How can the government best provide training for public librarians in the use of E-government websites? Has this been done anywhere? Has it been successful?
- How are people using public libraries specifically for E-government? What percentage of patrons' access E-government websites on a daily basis? How many computer-hours are spent accessing E-government websites, especially during tax time? How do these statistics change in rural versus urban areas?
- What is the role of other organizations professional associations (both library and governmental), state library agencies, and volunteer associations in coordinating E-government and disaster preparedness services with libraries?
- How are current college courses in Library/Information Science programs addressing issues of E-government? Are graduation requirements reflecting the increased need for training in government procedure? Are new classes being developed?
- What are the costs and benefits that accrue from public libraries' involvement as access and dissemination points for E-government? Can researchers develop new measures of service delivery and impact so that public libraries can demonstrate the degree to which they are successfully involved in the provision of E-government?
- There needs to be a policy analysis of existing federal, state and local E-government laws as they affect public libraries.
- What models of public library E-government organizational structure can be identified by which public libraries provide E-government services? How well do these models operate within the local governmental structures?
- What is the most efficient way to publicize/market the work that public libraries do in the area of E-government for local advocacy?

These topics offer a beginning point for additional research related to public libraries and E-government. Other topics are likely to be uncovered as work in this area proceeds.

NEXT STEPS

For many of the stakeholders involved with issues of E-government and emergency services at public libraries, there are steps that can be taken to ensure that progress is made in providing services to the public that are successful and of high quality. These steps should go forward even as efforts proceed to amend the *E-government Act of 2002*.

Government Agencies

As outlined above, government agencies increasingly depend on services provided through public libraries without offering any form of support, either through training or increased funding. In dealing with public libraries destroyed in hurricanes Katrina and Rita, FEMA officials were uninformed about library operations or procedures, or how to properly care for and maintain collections that could have been saved. Officials assigned to deal with libraries should be better trained on library issues ahead of time (Leboeuf, 2006).

Additionally, if government agencies expect people to complete agency forms online, there should be more communication with and funding to local libraries in areas with low income or elderly residents (Troxler, 2006) to support such services. E-government services related to the Medicare D plan forms, FEMA forms, benefit programs such as those from the Veterans Administration are a good example of where such support would be most important. Part of dealing with agency forms is the need for agencies to communicate better with the public library community about such forms, how to assist users in completing them, and providing contact information for assistance on specific forms at a particular agency.

Perlman (2006) summed up another area that government agencies might address when she noted, "If governments are relying on library staffs to be purveyors of E-government and to engage in disaster-relief efforts, they should include library personnel in emergency planning conversations and exercises" (p. 3). Thus, emergency management government agencies at the federal, state, and local levels need to recognize the key roles libraries play in disaster planning and preparedness. And beyond this awareness, they then need to actively involve libraries in planning and response to emergency/disaster situations.

Programs in LIS

Colleges and universities offering degrees in Library/Information Science may want to reevaluate their curriculum to meet the growing demand for librarians to be well versed in E-government policy and procedure, specifically as it relates to accessing government information and completing and submitting government online forms. One such idea put forward suggested that, "Degree programs in Library and Information Science need to make a better effort to educate students in issues of government information and E-government" (Bertot, Jaeger, Langa, & McClure, 2006b, p. 17).

In addition, librarians are increasingly required to have a better understanding of computer technology and Internet connectivity issues to meet the demands of their libraries and community. Degree programs should consider incorporating technology issues and having practical technology skills into the curriculum as well. A better understanding of “what constitutes sufficient and quality connectivity” for both the library and the community would help librarians in evaluating the technology needs of their branch. (Bertot & McClure, 2007, p. 14).

Libraries

Knowing that they are now the first line of preparation and defense in cases of E-government and emergency, public libraries may want to prepare contingency plans in the event of natural disasters in their areas. An excellent guide for such planning is dPlan (2006). Some library systems and organizations have already outlined and enacted a disaster preparedness plan, such as The Tampa Bay Library Consortium (FL) which has distributed a plan for what to do in case of a natural disaster, including who to contact and what kind of information the organization will need in terms of the condition of structures and personnel (TBLC, 2006). Similarly, the Newark Public Library has provided links on its website to help people prepare for and in the aftermath of natural disasters. Some of the links include websites for donating money and supplies to recovery efforts, news sources for updated information, and resources intended to help people prepare for natural disaster (Newark Public Library, 2005).

Expanding Federal, State, and Local E-Government Laws

Participants at the December 6-8, 2006 meeting recommended that draft legislation be developed to amend and expand the *E-government Act of 2002*. Participants from that meeting are developing such a draft. But, in addition, there is a need to review laws and regulations related to the provision of E-government services at the state and local level. To accomplish this goal, it will be necessary to first understand what E-government laws and regulations are currently in place at the state and local governmental levels, their strengths and weaknesses, and how they affect public libraries and other public sector and volunteer organizations. In some cases existing laws and regulations may need to be amended and updated. In other cases it may be necessary to engage in a broader public policy development process to first educate government officials on the need and importance of developing such a policy initiative.

IMPROVING E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES

The sources reviewed suggest that one strategy is to develop new legislation to assist public libraries struggling to meet the demands of the new roles that governments ask libraries to take as we move into the twenty-first century. With ownership of the 700MHz frequency being relinquished by broadcast networks in 2009, “now is an excellent time for libraries to engage in community technology planning for E-government, disaster planning, and relief efforts, and public access computing and Internet services” (Bertot & McClure, 2007, pp. 16-17). But for libraries to be successful in accomplishing these goals, new federal, state, and local legislation

and/or regulations will need to be passed to provide assistance both financially and in terms of training.

Specifically, as more local and regional governments begin moving toward implementing E-governance, libraries will be faced with the added demands of providing access to and help with more forms and services. In Fresno, CA, for example, the Fresno County Library has posted a listing of services provided under the local E-government movement which includes filing online police reports, completing job applications, and making appointments at the local DMV (Examples of E-government Services, n.d.).

There is an ever-growing need for government agencies to take an active role in helping public libraries provide these valuable and, in some cases, vital services to people in their communities. As the federal, state, or local governments may or may not be prepared and able to help a community in the provision of E-government services or in the aftermath of a disaster, the public library needs to be ready to do everything it can independently. Public libraries need to be prepared to work with federal, state, and local governments in E-government services to best meet the needs of local residents. This report offers a number of suggestions for how such E-government can be improved.

REFERENCES

American Red Cross, 2006. *Building Disaster Resistant Neighborhoods: Library Information Center Initiative*, at <http://redcross.tallytown.com/lic.html>.

John Carlo Bertot, Paul T. Jaeger, Lesley, and Charles R. McClure, 2006a. "Drafted: I Want You to Deliver E-government," *Library Journal*, volume 131, number 13, pp. 34-37.

John Carlo Bertot, Paul T. Jaeger, Lesley Langa, and Charles R. McClure, 2006b. "Public Access Computing and Internet Access in Public Libraries: The Role of Public Libraries in E-government and Emergency Situations," *First Monday*, volume 11, issue 9.

John Carlo Bertot and Charles R. McClure, 2007. "Assessing Sufficiency and Quality Bandwidth for Public Libraries," *Information Technology and Libraries* (in press).

Committee on Government Reform, U.S. Congress, House, 2006. *The Need to Know: Information Sharing Lessons for Disaster Response*. Serial No. 109-143.

dPlan, 2006. *The Online Disaster-Planning Tool*, at <http://www.dplan.org/>.

Emergency Preparedness, n.d. Distributed by the Pasco County Public Library, at http://www.ii.fsu.edu/announcements/e-gov2006/ric_emergency_preparedness.pdf.

Examples of E-government Services, n.d. "List of Online Services Requested Through the Fresno County Library, Fresno, California, at http://www.ii.fsu.edu/announcements/e-gov2006/online_services.pdf.

Wayne Hanway, 2006. "Unfunded Technology" [Letter in Response to the paper Drafted: I Want You to Deliver E-government by Bertot et al, 2006], *Library Journal*, at <http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6370234.html>.

Paul T. Jaeger, Lesley A. Langa, Charles R. McClure, and John Carlo Bertot, 2006. "The 2004 and 2005 Gulf Coast Hurricanes: Evolving Roles and Lessons Learned for Public Libraries in Disaster Preparedness and Community Services," *Public Library Quarterly*. Available at http://www.ii.fsu.edu/announcements/e-gov2006/gulf_coast_hurricane.pdf.

Mary Cospers LeBoeuf, 2006. "Ill Winds: Hurricanes and Public Libraries Along the Gulf Coast," *Public Libraries*, volume 45, issue 3, pp. 58-63.

Newark Public Library, 2005. *In the wake of the Gulf Coast hurricanes*, at <http://www.npl.org/pages/InternetResources/SubjectGuides/katrina.html>

Ellen Perlman, 2006. "Critical Connectors: During emergencies, citizens and even some disaster workers depend on libraries for Internet connections to the world," *Governing*, at <http://www.governing.com/articles/12talk.htm>.

Public Libraries Burdened with E-government Services, Says Florida Study, 2006. *Government Technology*, at http://www.govtech.net/magazine/channel_story.php?id=101254.

Representative References to Public Libraries in Selected Florida and Federal Documents, 2006. Tallahassee, Fla: Information Use Management and Policy Institute, at <http://www.ii.fsu.edu/announcements/e-gov2006/references.pdf>.

Tampa Bay Library Consortium, 2006. *TBLC Disaster Recovery Role*, at http://www.ii.fsu.edu/announcements/e-gov2006/disaster_recovery.pdf

Tropical Storm Ernesto: After Action Report, 2006. Distributed by the Pasco County Public Library, Pasco, Florida, at http://www.ii.fsu.edu/announcements/e-gov2006/ric_report2.pdf.

Howard Troxler, 7 December 2006. "At library computer, time waits for no one," *St. Petersburg Times*, p. 1B.

U.S. Congress. House. *E-government Act of 2002*. Washington D.C. Government Printing Office, 2002.

Appendix A

Representative References to Public Libraries in Selected Florida and Federal Documents

Federal

The Federal Code of Regulation from the Department of Labor (Title 20, Volume 3, Part 655, Subpart H, Sec. 655.720) states that in the filing and processing of labor condition applications must be done online, unless documentation can be provided that Internet access is not available through the employer and, “there is no publicly available Internet access, at public libraries or elsewhere, within a reasonable distance of the employer” (April 1, 2006). http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/10apr20061500/edocket.access.gpo.gov/cfr_2006/a/prqtr/pdf/20cfr655.720.pdf

The Food and Drug Administration’s general enforcement regulations for the registration of food facilities (68 FR 58960, October 10, 2003) states that, “This website is available from wherever the Internet is accessible, including libraries, copy centers, schools, and Internet cafes.”

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/fsbtac12.html>

Recovery Times is a publication by FEMA. This link is for Volume 1 from December 6, 2005. The reference to a public library is on page two on the left hand side, “If you do not have access to the Internet, ask a friend or family member or visit a public library to use a computer free of charge”.

www.fema.gov/pdf/rt/rt_1609_120605.pdf

The Department of State compiled tips for travelers visiting the middle east and north Africa. The article states that one method for retrieving information on travel warnings and public announcements is via the Internet. As they state, “If you do not have access to the Internet at home, work or school, your local library may provide access to the Internet.”

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/regional/regional_1175.html

Safe Harbor Design Project was compiled in Seattle by the city of Seattle and the United Way of King County (2/5/01). The reference to a public library is on page ten. “At a public location (i.e. public library, health clinic, etc.) a client conducts his or her search of the on-line directory.”

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/implementation/seattledesign.pdf>

The Department of Energy’s information repository must be at the facility or a nearby “public- off site location (e.g. local public library, town hall, public health office) within a reasonable distance of the facility”. This information brief discusses executive order 12580; Superfund Implementation.

<http://www.eh.doe.gov/oepa/guidance/cercla/inforepo.pdf>

The first step in the *10 Steps to Help You Fill Your Grocery Bag Through the Food Stamp Program* is the “use the internet tool”. Stated under the internet tool is “your local library usually has computers you can use”.

http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/applicant_recipients/10steps.pdf

The Internal Revenue Service put out a publication entitled, “How Do I Adjust My Tax Withholding?,” outlining suggestions and advice for those having difficulty with completing tax forms. As it states, “You can walk in to many post offices, libraries, and IRS offices to pick up certain forms instructions, and publications.” Additionally, it states that some libraries “have a collection of products available to print from a CD-ROM.”

www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p919.pdf

According to the Office of Management Budget, FY 2005 Report to Congress on Implementation of The E-government Act of 2002, the Department of Agriculture encourages anyone who needs to complete The Farm Service Agency’s Electronic Loan Deficiency Payment application, and who does not have access to the Internet, to visit a public library to complete the form. “Those who need the service but are without Internet

access can visit a local FSA office or public library and the system is accessible to the disabled.”

http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/inforeg/reports/2005_e-gov_report.pdf

Florida

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection released a memo on September 3, 2003 regarding new practices involving the use of the People Firsts System for the posting of job vacancies. “Since this system is Internet based, employees can apply for vacancies from any computer, such as a home computer, public library computer, or computers at the Agency for Workforce’s Workforce Centers.”

http://www.dep.state.fl.us/admin/forms/Personnel_Forms/DEP_54-804.doc

APPENDIX B

Public Libraries and E-Government: Identifying Issues, Making Connections, and Developing Strategies December 6 – 8, 2006

Sponsored by:

**The American Library Association
The Information Institute, Florida State University
The Florida State Library, Florida Department of State**

Version November 27, 2006

Background

This meeting will provide a forum to discuss (1) the evolving roles of public libraries as sources of and access to local, state, and federal E-government services, and (2) strategies by which federal, state, and local governments can link their E-government efforts through public libraries. Increasingly local, state, and federal governments rely on public libraries to support a range of E-government services by providing:

- Public access computing and Internet access;
- Print and electronic resources related to a range of government services and programs; and
- Librarian-supported services such as training, bibliographic instruction, technology instruction, information on specific government programs and services, one-on-one explanations of these services, and assistance in completing various web-based forms and documentation.

Example E-government services supported by public libraries include emergency/disaster support such as hurricane relief, social services such as completing Medicaid forms and most recently completing applications for federal prescription drug plans for seniors, and local economic development services such as identifying jobs from job banks and assisting users complete online job applications.

The general topic of public libraries and E-government belies a set of complex and intertwined issues, government agencies, technologies, services, and individuals. The meeting cannot address all the various topics and issues related to public libraries and E-government, thus, it will focus on these key questions:

- What is the extent of E-government services and activities that public libraries provide and at what costs and benefits to the local community and local, state, and federal governments?

- What are the infrastructure needs in terms of technology, bandwidth, knowledge, and community services that are necessary for public libraries to provide high quality E-government services?
- How can the E-government efforts of federal, state, and local governments be better integrated and coordinated with public library E-government efforts to maximize impact from taxpayer dollars?
- What is the federal, state, and local policy and regulatory context in which public libraries currently operate regarding E-government? Does that policy context need to be revised, and if yes, how and to what end?
- What specific strategies and initiatives are needed to increase the effectiveness of public libraries in the delivery of E-government services?

In addressing these, and perhaps related questions, attendees will focus on E-government services related to emergency/disaster preparedness; delivery of government social services especially health- and family- related services; and economic development primarily in terms of employment and job applications.

Meeting Goals

Overall, the purpose of the meeting is to bring together key experts knowledgeable about local, state, and federal E-government; public librarians involved in delivering E-government services; academics who have studied the topic; and others who have specific knowledge and insights regarding E-government. The specific goals of the meeting are to:

- Provide a forum for a small group of experts to share information and knowledge about the evolving roles of public libraries in E-government;
- Identify key issues from both a government and library perspective that affect the success in which public libraries support E-government;
- Develop better connections and communication between local, state, and federal government units and public libraries regarding E-government services; and
- Propose strategies to better coordinate government and public library activities related to the provision of E-government services.

Other goals may evolve as the plans and actual meeting develop.

Meeting Participants

The meeting would comprise about 20 individuals. These individuals are experts and knowledgeable about local, state, and federal E-government services; public library E-government services; policy makers familiar with E-government laws; and others. The Appendix is a list of registrants as of November 27, 2006.

Venue

The meeting will be held at the Grand Hyatt, Buckhead (Atlanta) www.grandatlanta.hyatt.com and will utilize one large conference room with two break-out rooms. The hotel will provide a reception and dinner on December 6, morning coffee and pastries, lunch, afternoon snacks on December 7; and coffee and pastries on December 8. The meeting room will include an Internet connection, a projector and screen for laptop presentations, and either a white board or newsprint stands for note/taking and/or group discussions. Break out rooms will have flip-charts available to summarize discussions. ALA will pay room & tax for all registrants for the nights of December 6 and 7. Additional registration, travel, or logistics information should be directed to: Kathy Mitchell at kmitchell@alawash.org.

Meeting Preparations

A number of recent reports, background information, and other material are available on the Information Institute website for review prior to the meeting, these are located at:

http://www.ii.fsu.edu/upcoming_event.cfm

Please review these items prior to attending the meeting. If meeting participants are aware of additional background sources or have handouts or other material to be posted on this site please contact Chuck McClure, cmcclore@lis.fsu.edu for the material to be included on this website.

In preparing for the meeting, participants should consider and be prepared to discuss their views on the below and possibly other topics:

- Examples of E-government public library services based on specific cases and examples;
- Actual and possible roles for public libraries in local, state, and federal E-government services;
- Federal, state, and local policy issues related to public libraries in E-government services;
- Coordinating public library E-government services across various federal, state, and local government and other public sector units;
- Topics and issues related to public libraries and E-government requiring additional research and investigation; and
- Financial and other support for public libraries in the provision of E-government services.

After the meeting, a summary report of the meeting discussion and an action agenda will be posted on the Institute website.

Schedule [Note: This schedule is tentative and may change as the meeting progresses]**December 6**

- 5:30 – 6:30 Reception (at the hotel)
 6:30 – 7:30 Dinner (at the hotel)
 7:30 – 8:15 Chuck McClure: Welcome and Introduction to E-government and Public Libraries Context/Issues

December 7

- 8:30 Coffee
 9:00 Emily Sheketoff: Welcome
 9:10 – 10:00 Frank Reeder: Keynote, Perspectives on E-government Services
 10:00 – 10:30 John Bertot: Selected Findings from the *2006 Public Library and the Internet National Survey*
 10:30 – 10:45 Break
 10:45 – Noon Prima Plaunche, Rita Maupin, Carrie Ottow, discussion leaders: Public Library Perspectives and discussion
 Noon – 1:00 Lunch and open discussions
 1:00 – 2:00 Judi Ring, Loretta Flowers, Rebecca Mitchell, discussion leaders: State Library Perspective and discussion
 2:00 – 2:30 Gregor Trinkaus-Randall: D-Plan Demonstration and discussion
 2:30 – 2:45 Break
 2:45 – 3:45 Emily Sheketoff, Aimee Quinn, and Richard Huffine, discussion leaders, Policy Perspectives and discussion
 3:45 – 5:00 Break out Discussion Sessions
- Group 1: [Prima Plaunche Discussion Leader]. What are the infrastructure needs in terms of technology, bandwidth, knowledge, and community services that are necessary for public libraries to provide high quality E-government services?
 - Group 2: [John Bertot Discussion Leader]. What is the federal, state, and local policy and regulatory context in which public libraries currently operate regarding E-government? Does that policy context need to be revised, and if yes, how and to what end?
 - Group 3: [Rebecca Mitchell Discussion Leader]. How can the E-government efforts of federal, state, and local governments be better integrated and coordinated with public library E-government efforts to maximize impact from taxpayer dollars?
- 5:00 – 5:15 Chuck McClure: Summary

Dinner: Enjoy a new or favorite restaurant in Atlanta!

December 8

- 8:30 Coffee
9:00 – 9:15 Chuck McClure: Day 2 overview
9:15 – 10:15 Small Group Reports from Previous Day
10:15 – 10:30 Break
10:30 – 11:45 Group Discussion:

- What have we learned from this meeting regarding the role of public libraries and the provision of E-government?
- What additional information and/or research is needed to better understand the role of public libraries and the provision of E-government?
- What specific strategies and initiatives are needed to increase the effectiveness of public libraries in the delivery of E-government services?
- Other?

11:45 – 12:15 Chuck McClure: Summary, Next Steps, and Adjourn

Meeting Products

The organizers of the meeting expect that a summary of the discussions and key issues, an action plan, and related sources of other information will be brought together in a short and concise Meeting Summary. This summary will be posted on the Information Institute website as well as the ALA Washington Office website.

Importance and Impact

The *2006 Public Libraries and the Internet* study found that public access computing and Internet access in public libraries function as a first choice, first refuge, and last resort in a range of emergency and E-government circumstances, allowing individuals to engage successfully in essential E-government services such as registering for Medicare or other benefits and filing tax information. With their key centrality as agents of government services, public librarians increasingly play significant roles in times of emergencies, like the aftermath of a hurricane, in which communities rely on the public library Internet access to request aid, try to find missing family and friends, file Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) insurance claims, and begin rebuilding their lives.

Federal, state, and local governments and the public library community have a broad range of interests and concerns about better coordinating E-government services and activities through public libraries. The current and evolving federal, state, and local context, including information policy issues, suggest that improved E-government services can be provided to

residents with greater understanding and knowledge of the issues and challenges affecting improved delivery of E-government services. These issues and challenges include a range of issues broadly related to the use of and access to networked information coordinating information and services between governments and public libraries, and better supporting public library E-government efforts.

Moreover, the library community, government officials, and local community leaders can benefit from dialogue and information exchange among themselves and with other experts regarding this topic. Given the extent of groups and individuals involved in the delivery of E-government services, and open exchange of views and information can lead to specific strategies to improve E-government. Ultimately, the development of some type of an action plan for federal, state, and local government and the public library community to work together in the provision of E-government will benefit all people in the United States.

PARTICIPANTS

Mark Bard

Information Technology Specialist
ALA Office for Information Technology Policy
1615 New Hampshire Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20009
Phone: (202) 628-8410
Email: mbard@alawash.org

John Bertot

Associate Director
Information Use Management
& Policy Institute
Florida State University
010 Louis Shores Building
Tallahassee, FL 32306
Phone: (850) 644-8118
Email: bertot@lis.fsu.edu

Mamie Bittner

Director
Legislative and Public Affairs
IMLS
1800 M St NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 653-4630
Email: mbittner@imls.gov

Lynne Bradley

Director
Office of Government Relations (OGR)
ALA Washington Office
1615 New Hampshire Avenue NW, First Floor Washington, D.C. 20009
Phone: (202) 628-8410
Email: lbradley@alawash.org

Loretta Flowers

Program Manager
Community Development
Florida Department of State
500 S. Bronough Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Phone: (850) 245-6636
Email: lflowers@dos.state.fl.us

Richard Huffine

Web Analytics Manager
FirstGov Technologies Group, U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)
Phone: 202-219-2354
Email: richard.huffine@gsa.gov

Cathy Kenyon

OMC Manager
Florida Department of Children & Families
1317 Winewood Blvd, Bldg 3 – Rm 462
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Phone: (904) 753-4988
Email: Cathy_Kenyon@dcf.state.fl.us

Rita Maupin

Director
Calhoun County Public Library
17731 N. Pear Street
Blountstown, FL 32424
Phone: (850) 674-1903 or 5200
Email: maupinr@yahoo.com

Charles R. McClure

Director
Information Use Management
& Policy Institute
Florida State University
010 Louis Shores Building
Tallahassee, FL 32306
Phone: (850) 644-8109
Email: cmclure@lis.fsu.edu

Kathy Mitchell

Project Coordinator
ALA Office for Information Technology Policy
1615 New Hampshire Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20009
Phone: (202) 628-8410
Email: KMitchell@alawash.org

Rebecca Mitchell

State Librarian
Alabama Public Library Service
6030 Monticello Drive
Montgomery, AL 36130
Phone: (334) 213-3901
Email: rmitchell@apls.state.al.us

Tonya Moore

Executive Secretary, Alabama Public Library Service
6030 Monticello Drive
Montgomery, AL 36130
Phone: (334) 213-3902
Email: tmoore@apls.state.al.us

Carrie Ottow

Reference Librarian,
Corvallis-Benton Co Public Library
645 NW Monroe Avenue
Corvallis, OR 97330
Phone: (541) 766-6487
Email: carrie.ottow@ci.corvallis.or.us

Prima Plauche

Consultant, Katrina Rebuilding & Recovery
Hancock County Library System
312 Hwy 90, Bay St. Louis, MS 39520
Phone: (228) 467-6836
Email: pplauche@hancock.lib.ms.us

Aimee Quinn

Chair, ALA Government Documents Roundtable
Associate Director, Montoya Campus Library
Central New Mexico Community College
4700 Morris NW, J Building,
Albuquerque, NM 87111
Phone: (505) 224-5721
Email: aimeequinn@yahoo.com

Gregor Trinkaus-Randall

Preservation Specialist
Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners
98 North Washington Street – Suite 401 Boston, MA 02114
Phone: (617) 725-1860 ext. 236
Email: gregor.trinkaus-randall@state.ma.us

Franklin Reeder

Chair, Center for Internet Security
3200 N. Nottingham Street
Arlington, VA 22207
Phone: (703) 536-6635
Email: reeder@bellatlantic.net

Judith Ring

State Librarian of Florida, Department of State
R. A. Gray Building, 500 S. Bronough St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Phone: (850) 245-6600
Email: JRing@dos.state.fl.us

Carrie Russell

Copyright Specialist
ALA Office for Information Technology Policy
1615 New Hampshire Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20009
Phone: (202) 628-8410
Email: CRussell@alawash.org

Emily Sheketoff

Executive Director
ALA Washington Office
1615 New Hampshire Avenue NW, First Floor Washington, DC 20009
Phone: (202) 628-8410
Email: esheketoff@alawash.org

Stephen Smith

Director of Reference Services
Spartanburg County Public Libraries
151 S. Church Street
Spartanburg, SC 29306
Phone: (864) 596-3500 ext. 1217
Email: steves@infodepot.org

Karen Southwell

Administrator
Panhandle Public Library Cooperative System
2925 Optimist Drive – Suite A
Marianna, FL 32448
Phone: (850) 482-9296
Email: pplcs_admin@earthlnk.net

Thomas Susman

Partner
Ropes & Gray, LLP
700 Twelfth St NW #900
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: (202) 508-4620
Email: Thomas.susman@ropesgray.com

Allison Zaleski

Policy Analyst
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20503
Phone: (202) 395-6466
Email: Allison_E._Zaleski@omb.eop.gov

APPENDIX C

Citizen Access to E-Government Information Act of 2007

[NOTE: This is a preliminary discussion draft developed by the Information Institute staff after the December 6-8, 2007 Atlanta meeting only to suggest possible ideas and content for such an amendment.]

Section I: Purpose

The purpose of this bill is to amend the *E-government Act of 2002* (PL 107-347) to improve citizen access to Federal, state, and local E-government information; increase the coordination and planning for the provision of E-government information across federal, state, and local government units; establish E-government Information and Service Centers, and to improve citizen access to and use of E-government information and services in planning for and responding to national disasters and emergencies.

Section II: Findings

The Congress finds that citizens increasingly need access to a broad range of E-government information and services in a timely fashion to carry out normal daily activities as well as in national emergencies. Further, building on initial efforts in the E-government Act of 2002, a number of strategies can be developed that will improve overall national access to and use of E-government information and services to increase the effectiveness of government.

Increasingly local, state, and federal governments rely on a number of public services organizations and most notably, public libraries that support a range of E-government services by providing:

- Public access computing and Internet access;
- Print and electronic resources related to a range of government services and programs; and
- One-on-one assistance such as training; location of E-government services, information, and forms; technology instruction; information on specific government programs and services; explanations of these services; and assistance in completing various web-based forms and documentation.

Example E-government services supported by public libraries, for example, include emergency/disaster support such as hurricane relief, social services such as completing Medicaid forms and most recently completing applications for federal prescription drug plans for seniors, providing a range of federal forms and assistance in completing those forms, and information and advice on how to contact and access services from specific federal, state, and local agencies, and local economic development services such as identifying jobs from job banks and assisting users complete online job applications.

Section III: Goals

The goals of the Enhanced Citizen Access to E-Government Information Act of 2007 are as follows:

1. Assist federal, state, and local governmental agencies better coordinate E-government services with the Nation's public libraries;
2. Assist public libraries to better provide E-government information and services to the Nation's citizens;
3. Improve citizen access to and use of E-government information and services in times of national emergencies; and
4. Establish a nationwide network of public libraries that are specifically designated as national E-government Information and Service Centers (EGISC).

Title IV: Agency Responsibilities

To improve the provision of E-government information and services from the federal government, agencies will:

- Identify and make publicly known a contact office/staff person where citizens, public librarians, and others can obtain information about the E-government services provided by that agency;
- Announce in a timely manner any new or enhanced E-government services that are offered by that agency to EGISCs and other organizations;
- Provide appropriate training sessions and/or manuals (online or in print) explaining how citizens can best use the E-government information and services they provide to EGISCs and other organizations; and
- Regularly review and success and impact of the agency's E-government services and make appropriate changes as needed.

Title VI: Establishment of E-government Information and Service Centers (EGISC)

Public service organizations including public libraries, community centers, state libraries, local and state emergency management offices, and other such organizations may request a designation as an EGISC from the General Services Administration, Office of Citizen Services. This designation will allow the EGISC to receive assistance to:

- Obtain adequate bandwidth and Internet connectivity to provide E-government information and services to local residents;
- Obtain workstations, software, and related technology infrastructure to support citizen access to and use of E-government information and services;
- Obtain training related to the provision of E-government information and services;
- Provide training to citizens on how to access and use E-government information and services;

- Obtain E-government information regarding the specific information and services provided from the various agencies that are engaged in E-government activities;

Section VII: Responsibilities of the General Services Administration

The General Services Administration, Office of Citizen Services will have responsibility for administering the Enhanced Citizen Access to E-government Information Act of 2007.

These responsibilities include:

- Determining the criteria and process by which public service organizations can be designated EGISCs;
- Awarding assistance grants to the EGISCs as outlined in Title VI;
- Establishing and updating on a quarterly basis an online and printed Inventory of E-Government Information and Services provided by federal agencies for the Citizen; and
- Organize an advisory council comprised of EGISC directors and others as appropriate that shall meet at least annually to review and discuss the success of E-government Citizen services and the operation of the EGISC.

Section VIII: Responsibilities of the E-government Information and Service Centers (EGISC)

To be designated as a EGISC, public service organizations must agree to:

- Establish the position of Director of the EGISC who will have overall responsibility for the management of the EGISC and the administration of assistance grants;
- Promote the access to and use of E-government information and services in the organization's service area;
- Provide high quality information infrastructure including sufficient bandwidth, workstations, software, and printers for users to access and use E-government information and services;
- Provide training to other public service organizations and staff and residents in the organization's service area in the access to and use of E-government information and services;
- Develop an emergency/disaster preparedness plan for that organization that also includes how E-government information and services would be provided in such an emergency; and
- Coordinate its access to and use of E-government information and services with other local and state agencies.

Section IX: Funding

[to be developed]