Top Level Results from the
2019 SDL Needs Assessment Survey

Statewide Database Licensing (SDL) is the longest-running Library Development project at the Washington State Library (WSL). It has provided online resources to multiple types of libraries since 1998. The project currently delivers a suite of research databases from ProQuest, including aggregated periodicals, K-12 resources, and national and regional newspapers. In addition, WSL now offers access to a large newspaper collection from NewsBank, which has over 140 sources from Washington State including digital "page-view" editions of six prominent in-state papers.

In the fall of 2019 the SDL project conducted a needs assessment survey of library staff throughout the state. This report, focusing on some of the top level results, is the first in a planned series of reports based on the survey data, all of which will assist in guiding the SDL's upcoming formal procurement process.

The survey had 497 responses, which was comparable to previous surveys conducted in 2015 and 2010, which had 407 and 588 responses respectively. The 2019 response rate favored public libraries more heavily with fewer academic responses than previous surveys (*Figure 1*).
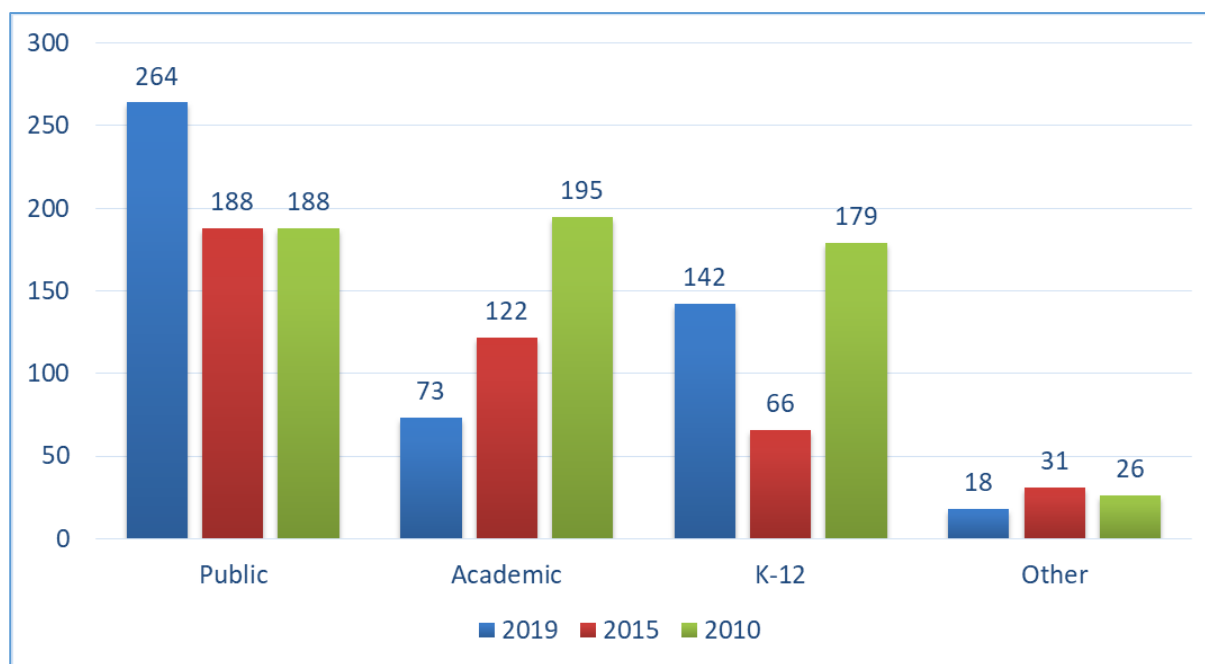

Figure 1: SDL Survey Response Count by Library Type & Year. Note: the "Academic" category includes all post-secondary institutions.

The ProQuest package includes several aggregated periodical databases:
- Research Library (6600+ titles covering all subjects)
- The Trade & Industry portion of ABI/INFORM (3100+ titles)
- Consumer Health Database (350+ titles)
- eLibrary (2090 full-text magazines, newspapers, books, and transcript titles, plus a collection of over 7 million maps, pictures, weblinks, and audio/video files)
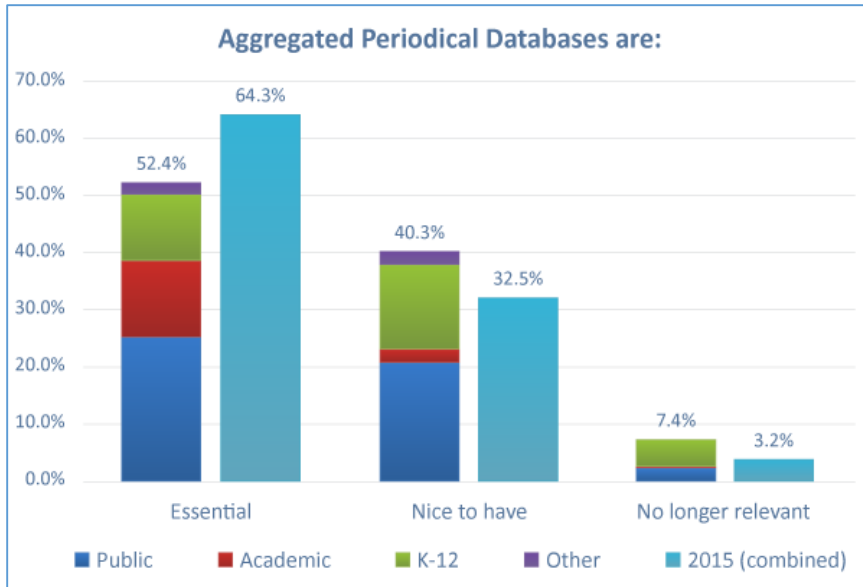
Figure 2: Response % by view of Aggregated Databases and Year

We asked library staff to select the statement that best reflects how they view aggregated periodical databases in general, and specifically in their library (*Figure 2*). We asked the same question in 2015, but unfortunately not in 2010. Also, we don't have the "breakout" data (by type of library) for 2015, only 2019.

While the number of respondents who said that aggregated periodical databases are "no longer relevant" remains low, the percentage **has** increased. At the same time, the percentage of those who think periodical databases are "essential" has decreased to just over 50%. The percentage of those who think these databases are merely "nice to have" has also increased.

We asked how often library staff use the databases (*Figures 3 & 4*). Over time, the number of respondents who say they use the ProQuest databases daily has declined fairly substantially. While the number who report weekly use has remained about the same; the number who report using ProQuest only monthly or less, has tended to increase.
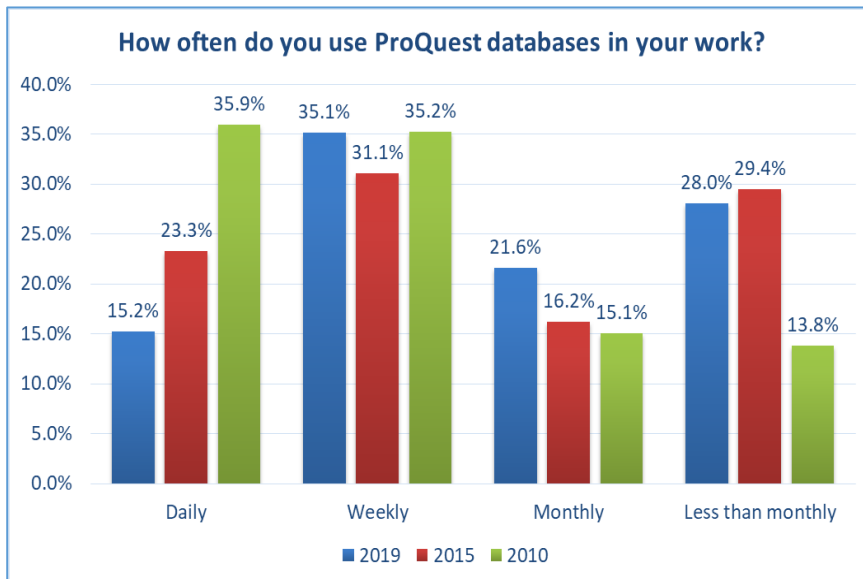

Figure 3: Response % by ProQuest Frequency of Use and Year

The 2019 numbers for News-Bank are relatively comparable (*Figure 4*). Since News-Bank has only been available since September 1, 2018, compared with 20 years for ProQuest, a lower use frequency is only to be expected. Because we don't have multi-year data, we showed the library type breakout instead.

A question we asked each time the survey was conducted was whether the Statewide Database Licensing project should continue forward and keep doing what it has been; change direction and do something different; or be discontinued, freeing federal LSTA funds to be used elsewhere. By a large margin,
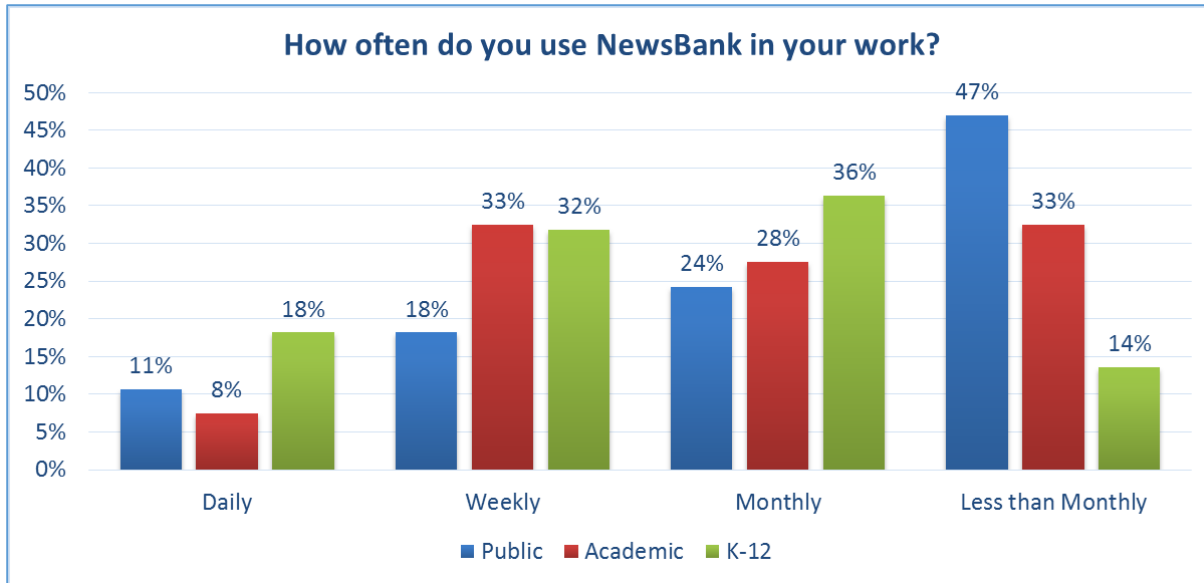
Figure 4: Response % by NewsBank Frequency of Use and Library Type

respondents continue to indicate their strong support of continuing the project as is, although this response has declined slightly over the years (*Figure 5*).
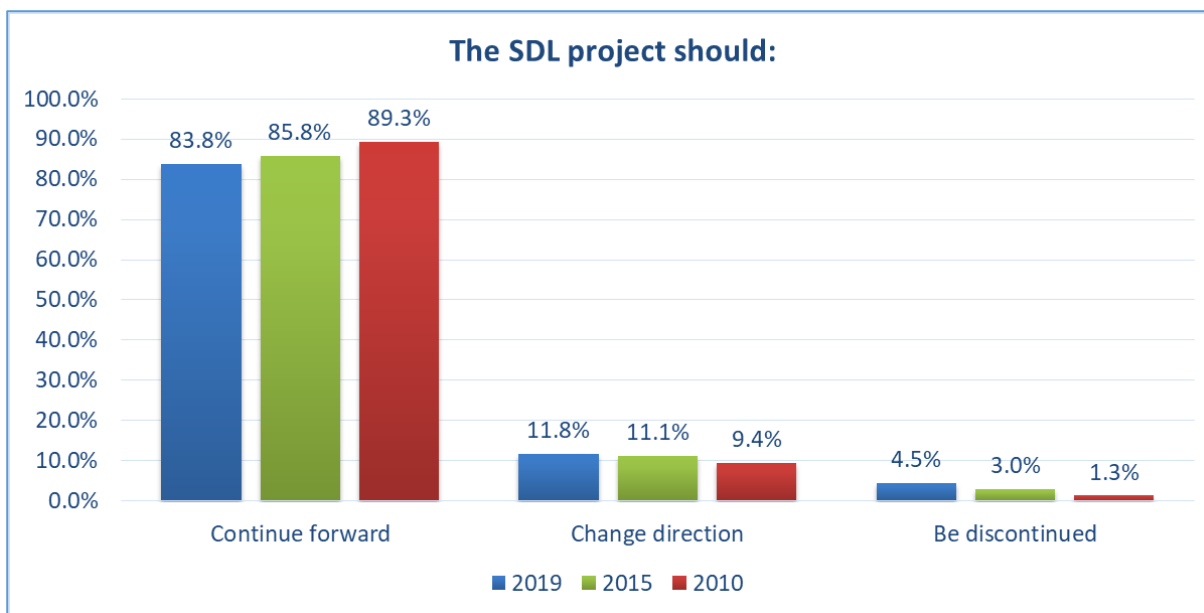

Figure 4: Response % by Direction and Year

Ironically, after indicating a strong preference for having the SDL project "keep doing what it has been" as opposed to changing direction, and doing something different, respondents turned right around and chose the opposite course of action in the next question. Respondents were given a choice between having the SDL project offer:

1. The option for libraries to select (and pay for) only the specific products that they want;
2. Different products based on the type of library;
3. The same products to every library regardless of type.

Libraries strongly favored the first and second options over the third option, which represents the status quo (*Figure 6*). The responses were essentially the same, regardless of the type of library.

The SDL project should offer:

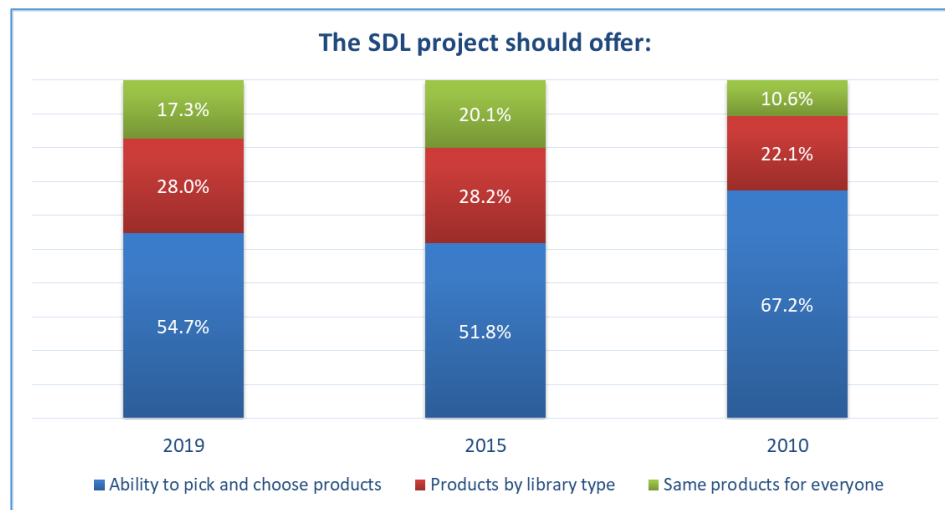|	2019	2015	2010
Same products for everyone	17.3%	20.1%	10.6%
Products by library type	28.0%	28.2%	22.1%
Ability to pick and choose products	54.7%	51.8%	67.2%

Figure 5: Response % by Option and Year

Making either of the first two choices a reality would be a major change of direction for SDL. Given the statewide scope of the project, and the nature of the marketplace, it could be difficult to accomplish. The current system rewards a "one size fits all" approach. That means there are significant savings through leveraging the combined purchasing power of the state's many different libraries buying as a single entity.

One can't help but wonder if responses to the previous question might have been different, had the questions had been presented in the opposite order. It's obvious that respondents weren't thinking about specific changes they might like when responding to the first of these two questions, but perhaps instead, were simply expressing their strong support for the continuation of the SDL project.

There is much additional data that was collected from the survey results. We also asked respondents to rate individual products within each vendor package as to their importance and to rate each component (aggregated periodicals, newspapers, K-12 resources) as to its value for cost (low, acceptable, high). We also asked about cost subsidies, and whether libraries would continue to subscribe if subsidies were reduced or eliminated. Responses to these questions, and more besides, will be made available in additional reports, currently in preparation, which will be posted as they are completed.

The current contract with ProQuest expires June 30, 2021. Results from the survey will be used to guide the upcoming procurement process and while drafting a Request for Proposals (RFP). This provides an opportunity for trying for new approaches, while attempting to meet the ever-evolving needs of Washington libraries.

We can always use more help during in the procurement process for such projects as scoring vendor proposals and reviewing their proposed online resources. Anyone interested in volunteering to assist in the procurement process should contact SDL project manager, Will Stuivenga, the SDL project manager. Contact him at will.stuivenga@sos.wa.gov.

Note: A big thank-you to Jeremy Stroud, WSL Senior Graphic Designer, for creating the charts and tables used in this and succeeding reports.