



Washington State Library SDL Project Report 2015

Findings and Recommendations

MC² Consulting

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Executive Summary

The Statewide Database Licensing (SDL) Project was established as a project of the Library Development Program of the Washington State Library over 15 years ago to facilitate acquisition of databases for libraries throughout the state of Washington. It was begun as a pilot project with 50% of the cost subsidized by Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funding administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (a federal agency) as part of the Museum and Library Services Act. This subsidy was expected to be phased out over time.

Because of the complex needs of the various libraries, the SDL Project decided early on to select generalized aggregated periodical database products and a collection of Washington newspapers that would be useful to a wide variety of library types and age groups. The idea was to maximize the benefits of the SDL Project while providing equitable access to libraries throughout the state, all at a reasonable cost.

Funding for Library Development Program projects is limited, and reductions in funding are a current and expected reality. Periodic review of the various projects is necessary to determine where funding should be continued, reduced, or eliminated. The Washington State Library therefore determined that it was important to assess SDL's utility by gathering multiple perspectives from library staff and library users. WSL contracted with MC² consulting to analyze usage data and conduct a survey and interviews to follow up the most recent previous survey, conducted in 2010.

Library staff from across the state representing the diversity of libraries participating in the SDL were surveyed. Those survey participants who indicated an interest in being interviewed were recruited via email to answer follow-up interview questions by phone. Library users were also recruited to participate in a separate survey to gauge their needs and levels of satisfaction with service offerings.

Results

With regard to SDL usage, the data shows an overall trend in decreased usage; however, there are some outliers and there are also differences in how much the usage decreased (or in some cases increased) depending on library type.

The eLibrary usage report shows the steadiest decline overall. From 2013 to 2014, Academic sessions decreased from 49,600 to 29,236; K-12 sessions decreased from 250,262 to 232,916; and Public & Special library sessions decreased from 42,142 to 29,170. Full-text access has also decreased, with "Any FT Format" access decreasing from 2013-2014. Academic libraries saw a decrease of 22.7% from 79,194 to 61,221 full-text documents accessed; K-12 libraries saw a decrease of 38.7%

from 851,060 to 521,612 full-text documents accessed; and Public & Special libraries saw a decrease of 17.1% from 59,352 to 49,219 full-text documents accessed.

The main ProQuest databases saw smaller decreases than eLibrary, overall, and even saw a large increase for one library type. Tribal libraries saw a very large increase in usage between 2013 and 2014. Session totals show an increase from 959 in 2013 to 6,153 in 2014, and full-text document access increased by 192% from 259 in 2013 to 758 in 2014.

In response to the survey, 407 library staff, representing all ten regions of the state and a variety of library types, participated. Based on this survey and consistent with usage statistics, overall SDL usage rates seem to be going down gradually since the 2010 survey, with some exceptions. A lower percentage of library staff reported using the ProQuest package of databases daily or weekly: down from 35.9% to 23.3% for daily and down from 35.2% to 31.1% for weekly. The percentage using the package less than monthly more than doubled from 13.8% to 29.4%. Significantly, over 28% of respondents said they did not know whether their library participated in SDL; there is a communication gap.

However, the responses regarding whether SDL should continue as-is did not change significantly from 2010. Over 85% of respondents thought SDL should continue with what it is doing, similar to the 89.3% that selected this option in 2010. Support for the status quo remains strong.

When given choices about how to deliver the SDL package, about 20% ranked SDL offering the same product to every library regardless of type as their top choice, nearly double the 10.2% choosing that option in 2010. In 2010, 21.2% said SDL should offer different products based on the type of library; in 2015, about 28% of respondents ranked that option as their top choice. The percentage saying SDL should offer the opportunity to pick and choose (and pay for) only the specific products they want was 64.4% in 2010; however, in 2015 only approximately 52% of respondents ranked that option as their top choice.

Clearly money is somewhat of a concern. 58.1% of respondents said they would choose less content for the same amount of money rather than the same content for more money. But in answering a follow-up question, an overwhelming percentage said they would prefer the same or similar content for the same amount of money (83.9%) rather than less content for less money (16.1%). Again, there is a strong preference for the status quo.

1016 library users also participated in a survey, many of them teachers. While usage rates of on-line library resources are declining somewhat since the 2010 survey, about 11% of teachers and non-teachers alike use on-line resources daily. In fact, while about 33% of non-teachers use the on-

line library tools for research, more than 83% of teachers say they have their students use the library on-line to do research and find articles.

Recommendations

Based on the usage and survey data and interview responses, we have several recommendations for the SDL project.

First and foremost, keep the dialogue open with libraries. Your most vocal supporters may keep you from hearing how many people out there do not know what SDL is or how to get the most out of it.

Regularly provide libraries with information about SDL. You can send out how-to emails, product or feature spotlights, links to training materials, and anything else library staff may need to be reminded about.

Keep in close contact with library decision-makers if any funding changes seem imminent. There were a high percentage of “I don’t know” responses from participants regarding finances and whether or not libraries would be able to continue to participate if the subsidy was reduced or eliminated. If SDL funding is truly in jeopardy at any point, we recommend you follow-up with library decision-makers to keep them informed and in the conversation as those decisions are made.

Continue providing Statewide Database Licensing. Most library staff appreciate SDL and see value in its continued existence. Most libraries would find it difficult, if not impossible, to provide these database and newspaper products to their customers without the consortia-style buying power of the SDL.

Continue the LSTA subsidy for SDL, at least for the time being, and provide information on other funding sources if SDL will transition to being unsubsidized. If SDL funding from LSTA is indeed at risk, libraries may benefit from a compilation of resources they can investigate in order to get funding for SDL so they can remain participants.

Provide training and other resources to help libraries get the most out of SDL. Libraries requested training in several areas to help them get the most out of SDL, from training on how to pull statistics for each of the products to training on how to use specific products in the package. We recommend putting out a short survey to find out which trainings are most needed, which formats are preferred, and where the biggest need is.

Put out an RFI (request for information) on pricing and options for a “cafeteria style” package to be compared alongside the regular pricing of the “one size fits all” package. That way

you have actual information on costs and parameters that can be shared with libraries next time you do a survey to ask them about their preference.

Repeat this (or a similar) Staff Survey every 2-3 years. It would especially be of benefit to do the staff survey more frequently, even if it is just a matter of sending out the same survey every other year to get a quick snapshot of where things sit and how they compare to prior survey years.

Finally, as many of the library staff said in the surveys and interviews: **keep up the good work.**

Background

The Statewide Database Licensing (SDL) Project was established as a project of the Library Development Program of the Washington State Library over 15 years ago to facilitate acquisition of databases for libraries throughout the state of Washington. It was begun as a pilot project with 50% of the cost subsidized by Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funding administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (a federal agency) as part of the Museum and Library Services Act. This subsidy was expected to be phased out over time.

However, phasing the subsidy out has proven challenging. In surveys over the years, the majority of library staff have repeatedly responded saying they use and appreciate SDL. Many have also said their respective libraries could not continue participating in the SDL Project without a subsidy.

One of the initial, and current, challenges for the SDL Project was to provide products that meet everyone's needs. Not only is there a diverse array of library types: public, K-12, academic, special (medical, law, and government), tribal libraries, and combinations thereof; Washington is also a diverse state with a wide variety of community types, some sparsely populated and rural, others densely populated and urban. The complex interplay between library type, location, and size of community means each of the libraries has its own specific constituency with idiosyncratic information needs.

Because of the complex needs of the various libraries, the SDL Project decided early on to select generalized aggregated periodical database products and a collection of Washington newspapers that would be useful to a wide variety of library types and age groups. The idea was to maximize the benefits of the SDL Project while providing equitable access to libraries throughout the state, all at a reasonable cost.

Over the years, the approach of the SDL Project has remained largely unchanged. The goals of providing cost-effective, generalized (as opposed to specialized) aggregated database products and newspaper content have remained the same. Some products have been added to the package based on input from libraries and some have been lost because the chosen vendor no longer carries those products, but the overall project has remained fairly stable.

Problem Statement

Funding for Library Development Program projects is limited, and reductions in funding are a current and expected reality. Review of the various projects is necessary to determine where funding should be continued, reduced, or eliminated. One such project is Statewide Database Licensing.

Because of these financial constraints and competing demands, the Washington State Library determined that it was important to assess SDL's utility by gathering multiple perspectives from library staff and library users. Careful attention to any shifting patterns in responses from library staff and library users is warranted because SDL has remained largely unchanged since its inception; previous surveys have had mixed findings; and technology and access to information is changing rapidly.

The following questions, adapted from the SDL Needs Assessment RFP, are particularly relevant:

- What is the current perceived value of SDL to library staff and library users?
- What is valuable about SDL and how is that value realized?
- Is the value and impact of the current SDL package sufficient to justify the cost?
- How does it compare to other database products libraries provide?
- Is the current SDL package meeting the needs of library staff and users?
- Is the one-size-fits-all package composition still working for libraries? Would they prefer a package based on library type or the freedom to pick-and-choose specific products to create personalized packages?
- How can the package be improved to be more useful (additions or alternative resources)?
- If LSTA funding were reduced or eliminated, would libraries still participate in the SDL Project?

Approach and Methodology

The MC² approach to this project followed our standard methodology for business analysis and reporting: plan, prepare, execute, analyze, and report.

I. Plan

We worked with Will Stuiivenga, the WSL Project Coordinator, to ensure that we shared a clear, practical set of expectations regarding deliverables, time frames, roles and responsibilities, and processes (including the approval process for work products).

II. Prepare

We researched, analyzed, and synthesized a background understanding of the recent history of electronic databases in libraries: usage, perceived value, assessments, cancellations or renewals, and other relevant information. This included a review of published studies and existing data from the Washington State Library and vendors, such as prior SDL needs assessments, and usage data for Washington State.

Then we developed surveys and interview questions with consultation from the Project Coordinator. Surveys and interview questions covered the three main objectives: perceived value vs. price among staff and constituents, library needs and package configuration, and funding scenarios. The survey and interview questions took into account prior assessments and findings of the literature review. The Project Coordinator and the SDL Advisory Committee reviewed the surveys and interview questions. Their suggestions for changes were incorporated as appropriate.

Data collection was strategized to be as inclusive as possible across different geographic locations (North, South, East, West,) populations (rural and urban,) and types of library (public, academic, public and private K-12, and special libraries.) This was particularly important with the interviews because we wanted to obtain as representative a sample as possible with the small number of interviewees. Because a couple of regions were not well-represented in the self-selected survey respondents willing to participate in an interview, we requested contact information for library staff that would fill the gaps. The WSL Project Coordinator was able to provide several contacts and we successfully filled the gap with two non-survey respondents.

III. Execute

The Project Coordinator utilized WSL's identified avenues of recruiting participants to get the word out, including WSL Updates; the WSL social media and blog accounts; the Washington Statewide Database Licensing mailing list; and a number of specialized email lists for each of the library types participating in the SDL Project. For the User Survey, links to the survey were also embedded in the various database product account interfaces by ProQuest staff.

As per the data collection strategy, library staff from across the state representing the diversity of libraries participating in the SDL were surveyed via the MC² survey tool. We used skip logic to ask follow-up questions of non-SDL participants while separating their responses from those of SDL participants. This enabled us to explore why some libraries are not current participants.

After three weeks into the survey, those survey participants who indicated an interest in being interviewed were recruited via email to answer follow-up interview questions by phone. As previously mentioned, to be sure of full regional representation, we had to recruit two non-survey respondents for the follow-up interview. The questions stood alone well enough that the interview did not have to be modified much to accommodate non-survey respondent interviewees. In total, we had 22 interviewees from across all 10 regions of Washington State (see Appendix A for map of Washington broken into 10 regions.)

Simultaneous with the library staff survey, we surveyed library users (aka constituents) across the state, also representative of the diversity of libraries participating in SDL. Because many constituents may not be familiar with electronic database resources such as ProQuest, we used a set of qualifying questions to be sure we were gaining an informed assessment of the value of these resources. We asked teachers additional questions regarding student usage as an alternative to surveying elementary and middle school students who may have difficulty answering the questions. This suggestion came from the Advisory Committee representatives who work in or with K-12 school libraries.

IV. Analyze and Report

Before full analysis was performed, the WSL Project Coordinator was provided with the formatted survey results, including a set of comparison documents showing similarities and differences in responses between related questions from the 2010 Needs Assessment and this 2015 Needs Assessment. As we analyzed the survey and interview data, we were able to interpret the results and make a number of recommendations for moving forward, focusing on the three main objectives: perceived value vs. price, library needs and package configuration, and funding scenarios.

Results

I. SDL Usage Data

Although there is an overall trend in decreased usage, there are some outliers and there are also differences in how much the usage decreased (or in some cases increased) depending on library type.

The eLibrary usage report is divided by the accounts: Academic (all), K-12, and Public & Special Libraries (combined). eLibrary shows the steadiest decline of the reports, overall. For searches, there are clear spikes in usage around certain times of year for all library types, so it is easiest to see the decline looking at the charts in Appendix K. This is especially true because for 2012, the data only covers May-Dec, which does not allow for a comparison of totals. The spikes and troughs remain the same over the years, but the overall usage is lower. Sessions also show a decrease. From 2013 to 2014, Academic sessions decreased from 49,600 to 29,236; K-12 sessions decreased from 250,262 to 232,916; and Public & Special library sessions decreased from 42,142 to 29,170. Full-text access has also decreased, with “Any FT Format” access decreasing from 2013-2014. Academic libraries saw a decrease of 22.7% from 79,194 to 61,221 full-text documents accessed; K-12 libraries saw a decrease of 38.7% from 851,060 to 521,612 full-text documents accessed; and Public & Special libraries saw a decrease of 17.1% from 59,352 to 49,219 full-text documents accessed.

The main ProQuest databases saw smaller decreases than eLibrary, overall, and even saw a large increase for one library type. The main ProQuest database accounts by “library type” are broken out a little more granularly than in eLibrary, which allows for us to look at Community & Technical Colleges separately from the 4-year Private Academic libraries, and breaks out the Tribal and Special & Health libraries separately so they are not lumped in with Public Libraries.

Community & Technical Colleges saw a small increase in searches from 2012-2013 and then a decrease in 2014. Session totals decreased from 5,700,116 in 2013 to 5,191,118 in 2014, and full-text access decreased by 11.7% from 1,221,766 in 2013 to 1,078,579 in 2014. Private Academic (4-year colleges) saw a smaller decrease of 2.8% in full-text access from 205,509 in 2013 to 199,743 in 2014. Interestingly, Private Academics saw an increase in sessions (from 888,707 in 2013 to 909,657 in 2014) but a decrease in searches and full-text documents accessed.

K-12 libraries have a known anomaly from March-April 2013, where ProQuest’s data for searches is inaccurate, so the searches data is difficult to compare and totals for the year are skewed. However, if we look at the chart for searches showing a month-by-month comparison, we see a slight decrease in usage in 2014. The session totals also show us a decrease from 2013 to 2014, with 3,302,757 sessions in 2013 and 3,125,863 sessions in 2014. Full-text access decreased 4.5% from 649,333 in 2013 to 620,064 in 2014.

Tribal libraries saw a very large increase in usage between 2013 and 2014. Session totals show an increase from 959 in 2013 to 6,153 in 2014, and full-text document access increased by 192% from 259 in 2013 to 758 in 2014. However, Special & Health libraries show the same pattern as other library

types, with a full-text document access decrease of 4.3% from 17,985 in 2013 to 17,211 in 2014. The searches and total sessions data confirms this decrease, with 125,817 total sessions in 2013 and 106,275 total sessions in 2014.

ProQuest has some products purchased from other vendors that are still on legacy systems, so the usage statistics are not formatted the same and do not have the same options. However, there are more years of data available for those systems, so that allows us to take a bigger picture view of those statistics.

CultureGrams usage was at its highest in 2010. A relatively steep drop occurred in page views in 2011, but it has held fairly steady since the summer trough of 2011 through today. The declines in usage are much small from 2012-2014. From 2012 to 2013, there was a decrease of 6.5% from 382,867 visitors in 2012 to 357,700 visitors in 2013. Then there was a 0.2% decrease to 357,114 visitors in 2014. Views follow a similar decrease, going from 5,535,635 in 2012 to 5,417,862 in 2013 (a 2.1% decrease) to 5,092,444 in 2014 (a further 0.6% decrease).

SIRS products, on the other hand, are getting much more use in 2012-2014 than they did in 2011. Furthermore, SIRS Discoverer and Decades saw higher access in 2014 than any other year. SIRS Knowledge Source has seen a slight but steady decline from 2012-2014 but is still getting much higher use than in 2011: access is 143% higher in 2014 than it was in 2011, with 262,239 accesses in 2011 and 638,408 in 2014.

History Study and ProQuest Learning: Literature has seen sporadic increases every year—some relatively small and some rather large. Sessions have gone from 1,791 in 2010 to 81,958 in 2014. The increase from 2010 to 2011 was 709%, the increase from 2011 to 2012 was 227%, the increase from 2012 to 2013 was 18.3%, and the increase from 2013 to 2014 was another 46%. The same applies to Searches and Full Records Accessed, with increases in Searches from 2,814 in 2010 to 130,753 in 2014 and increases in Full Records Accessed increasing from 3,014 in 2010 to 229,033 in 2014.

See Appendix K for the complete tables and charts of SDL Usage Data.

II. Surveys

1. Staff Surveys

a. Comparison to 2010 survey:

407 respondents participated in this year's Staff Survey. In 2010, there were 588 respondents. The decline in participation may be because of survey fatigue, the fact that the 2010 survey was open for a week longer than the 2015 survey, or the timing of the survey (the 2010 survey was done in the

fall and the 2015 survey was done right after the major winter holidays.) Despite the lower numbers, we actually had better turnout from tribal and “other” libraries than the 2010 survey: 7 and 5 versus 1 and 2, respectively. The addition of a new category, “K-12 (elementary through high school)” was selected by 4 respondents. However, numbers (and percentages) for K-12 selections were lower in 2015 than in 2010 (See Appendix B.)

We also had a larger percentage of “I don’t know” responses to the question asking staff whether their library participates in SDL. The “I don’t know” response jumped from just under 12% to over 27%, not counting the greater number of respondents that skipped the question altogether: 28 in 2015 versus 19 in 2010. This may indicate less familiarity with SDL, in general. It is interesting to note that some respondents who answered that question with “I don’t know” were able to answer more specific questions about the SDL package of products.

It is difficult to compare the 2010 and 2015 surveys for the question about library staff’s position because the options were radically simplified in this recent survey. However, the simplification of the question may have made it less intimidating because fewer people skipped it in this year’s survey. The percentage of Directors and Deans was down slightly (11.2%, down from 14.2%,) but that may be because we removed Managers from that category. They may have put themselves as Librarian (all others) instead. More than half the respondents fit in that category: 58%.

The responses regarding usage seem to coincide with the most recent usage statistics (see Appendix I, J, and K for more detailed information about SDL usage and accounts.) Based on the statistics data from vendors and the self-report responses in the survey, usage rates seem to be going down gradually. A lower percentage of library staff reported using the ProQuest package of databases daily or weekly: down from 35.9% to 23.3% for daily and down from 35.2% to 31.1% for weekly. The percentage using the package less than monthly more than doubled from 13.8% to 29.4%. “Less than monthly” would also include people who do not use the package at all; we did not have an option for them to select that they do not use the package.

On the other hand, the responses regarding whether or not SDL should continue as-is did not change significantly. Over 85% of respondents thought SDL should continue with what it is doing, similar to the 89.3% that selected this option in 2010. Responses to discontinue SDL and put the funding towards other projects doubled from 1.3% to 3%. That is a small change when looking at raw numbers (9 people this year and 7 people in 2010,) but it is something to watch as a possible early indicator of discontent. The interview responses (see Appendix B) provide more information as to why some of the staff that are not satisfied with the SDL package or project.

The format for the question regarding package configuration was modified to the extent that it is difficult to compare directly with the 2010 survey. However, it is of interest to see that the percentages shifted a little when ranking was allowed (as opposed to having to select only one option.) In 2010, 10.2% said that SDL should offer the same products to every library regardless of type; in 2015, about 20% ranked SDL offering the same product to every library regardless of type as their top choice, nearly double. In 2010, 21.2% said SDL should offer different products based on the type of library, which went up slightly in 2015, with about 28% of respondents ranked that option as their top choice. The percentage saying SDL should offer the opportunity to pick and choose (and pay for) only the specific products they want was 64.4% in 2010; however, in 2015 only approximately 52% of respondents ranked that option as their top choice. This may be, in part, because in 2015 we noted a set of assumptions on cost with the “pick-and-choose” option and in 2010 that information was not provided.

One interesting shift from 2010 to 2015 was in people’s response to the question about whether they would prefer to have less content for the same amount of money or the same amount of content for more money. The responses reversed: in 2010, 58.2% of respondents said they would choose the same or similar content for more money, but in 2015, 58.1% of respondents said they would choose less content for the same amount of money. It seems libraries do not want the price to change; in responding to the next survey question an overwhelming percentage said they would prefer the same or similar content for the same amount of money (83.9%) rather than less content for less money (16.1%). There is no direct comparison to the 2010 survey for this question because one of the response options was different; however, in the 2010 survey only 79.6% said they would choose more content for the same amount of money (not an option in 2015) as opposed to 20.4% who would choose less content for less money.

It is difficult to compare the top three choices for electronic resources between 2010 and 2015 because there were less than half the number of responses to that question in 2015 (183 responses in 2015 versus 459 in 2010.) However, many of the same resources were listed, including: Ebsco, auto repair databases, ABC-CLIO, ProQuest, Academic Search Complete, Ancestry.com, eLibrary, CultureGrams, JSTOR, Gale, and InfoTrac.

When comparing the importance of the products in the package between 2010 and 2015, there are a few challenges. First, products have been added (SIRS Discoverer; ProQuest Western Newsstand, etc.) and subtracted (Ethnic Newswatch, Alt-Press Watch, World Conflicts Today, etc.) or repackaged. Second, some of the popular products, such as the Washington Newsstand, now have less of what

people found valuable (fewer local newspapers are in Washington Newsstand now.) And finally, because “No opinion” was the middle option in 2010, it may have inflated ratings for items people did not care about or did not know anything about. Because “No opinion” was the final (N/A) option in 2015, it did not affect ratings, which means we cannot compare average ratings between the two years.

b. New questions for 2015 staff survey:

There were many new or radically updated questions and response options in the 2015 survey. The following section includes some of the questions in common with the 2010 survey but focuses more on new questions and/or response options.

First, it is of interest that there were more responses from public library staff this year. Although the timing of the survey (after the holidays, rather than during) was meant to make it possible for school and academic library staff to have a chance to respond, it seems public library staff were more inclined to respond. Nearly half the responses, 46.2%, were from public library staff, about 30% of responses were from academic library staff, 16.1% were from K-12 libraries, and 7.5% were from special, tribal, and other libraries.

Not unexpectedly, more than half the respondents selected “Librarian (all others)” as their role in the library. Nearly 25% selected “Paralibrarian / Support Staff” as their role and 11.2% selected “Library Director / Dean.” Of all the respondents, 38.1% said they have no influence on selection and/or purchase of databases, 39.4% said they influence selection and/or purchase, but only 22.5% said they are responsible for selection and/or purchase of databases.

That said, the majority of each category of respondents said that aggregated periodical databases are essential. Broken down by role, 73.8% of Directors and Deans said aggregated periodical databases are essential; 67.9% of Librarians (all others) said they are essential; and 53.9% of Paralibrarians/Support Staff said aggregated periodical databases are essential (see Appendix F.)

In spite of this expressed importance, it seems SDL is a mystery to many of the respondents. The non-SDL participants seemed unaware of SDL, its availability, and/or its package contents. In addition, more than one quarter of survey respondents said they did not know if their library was a participant in SDL (including 9.3% of Directors/Deans.)

However, once they got to the questions about the specific package contents, they seemed to be in more familiar territory. Of all the products offered in the current configuration of the SDL, the following were rated most highly:

- ProQuest Research Library (3.45 out of 4.0)

- ProQuest National Newspaper Core (3.14 out of 4.0)
- ProQuest Western Newsstand (3.01 out of 4.0)
 - When asked directly in an interview about why the Western Newsstand was rated higher than the Washington Newsstand, one librarian said that the Washington Newsstand was better in the past but it had lost value when it lost several titles to Newsbank.
- All other products were rated below 3.0 out of 4.0

The components, divided into three categories-- Periodicals, Newspapers, and K-12 components-- were rated as Low Value, Acceptable Value, High Value, or “I don’t know” by respondents. Overall, a higher number of respondents rated Periodicals as a High Value (137) and Newspapers as an Acceptable Value (102) than any other rating category. However, the K-12 component did not have a clear majority in any of the value ratings categories. In fact, slightly more people selected “I don’t know” as their rating for the K-12 component than any other rating category: 94 respondents said “I don’t know,” 92 said it had a High Value, 80 said it had an Acceptable Value, and 40 said it had a Low Value. Respondents seemed more split on the K-12 component than any other.

When broken out by library type, there are more distinctions. For instance, 35 out of 50 K-12 respondents rated the K-12 component as High Value, and only one K-12 respondent rated the K-12 component as a Low Value. The other library types did not have a clear rating trend for the K-12 component, and they have a higher number of “I don’t know” responses. However, 88 out of 110 Higher Ed and Special libraries rated the Periodicals component as a High Value, with only one respondent in Higher Ed or Special libraries rating Periodicals as a Low Value. Public Libraries, on the other hand, seemed most diverse in their responses regarding every component (see Appendix G.)

Many respondents chose “I don’t know” responses on financial questions, product and component opinion questions, and the question about whether their library would continue to participate if the subsidy was reduced or eliminated. The “I don’t know” response was also common for many Directors/Deans.

However, about 39.4% of Directors/Deans said their libraries would continue to participate if the subsidy was reduced to 25%, and nearly 10% of Directors/Deans said their libraries would continue to participate if the subsidy was eliminated. Other staff seemed less optimistic (or less sure) about participation in the face of subsidy reductions. Only 2.3% of Librarians thought their libraries would continue to participate if the subsidy was eliminated and 11.4% thought their libraries would continue

to participate if the subsidy was reduced to 25%. No Paralibrarians thought their libraries would continue to participate if the subsidy was eliminated and only 1.6% thought their libraries would continue to participate if the subsidy was reduced to 25%.

On the other hand, when asked whether SDL should be continued, modified, or discontinued, most respondents said SDL should be continued. More specifically, over 85% of respondents said to continue it: this includes

- 72.9% of Directors/Deans;
- 88.9% of Librarians (all others); and
- 81.7% of Paralibrarians/Support Staff.

About 11% said SDL should change direction and do something different: this includes

- 18.9% of Directors/Deans;
- 8.8% of Librarians (all others); and
- 15% of Paralibrarians/Support Staff.

Only 3% said to discontinue SDL and put the funds towards other projects: this includes

- 8.1% of Directors/Deans;
- 2.2% of Librarians (all others); and
- 3.3% of Paralibrarians/Support Staff.

When asked about package configuration, about 20% of respondents rated the same package for all libraries (the current package configuration) as their top choice, about 28% said they wanted a package based on library type as their top choice, and about 52% said they wanted to pick-and-choose (and pay for) only the products they want as their top choice.

Another way of looking at the data is to say approximately 50% of people rated “pick and choose” as #1 (their top choice,) a package based on library type as #2, and a package that gives the same products to all libraries (the current setup) as #3 (their last choice.) The interview data sheds some light on the respondents’ rationale for their selections.

When asked if they would find it useful if the SDL added more local WA newspapers to the package 71% said it would be useful or very useful. However, only 17.2% said they could pay more (in any amount.) Most said they did not know if they could pay more for the additional newspapers. Even many Directors/Deans were unsure: 36.4% said they did not know. No Directors/Deans said they could pay 100% more.

See Appendix D for a complete set of library staff survey questions and results.

2. *User Surveys*

a. Comparison to 2010 survey:

We received input from 1016 respondents to the 2015 User Survey, compared to 1209 respondents in 2010. In 2010, the survey was open for just over 16 weeks, whereas in 2015 it was open for about 4 weeks. The short duration of the survey may have impacted how many respondents participated in 2015.

Because we expected even fewer Library Users would be familiar with SDL than Library Staff, we asked them some preliminary questions about online resources in their library to lead into questions about databases (in general) and then the ProQuest package of databases provided by SDL specifically. Respondents unfamiliar with databases (in general) were not asked the questions pertaining to SDL to be sure we were getting the most informed responses possible. In order to ask these additional questions about databases without making the survey too long, we did not replicate the less directly relevant questions from the 2010 survey.

Even the comparable questions between the 2010 and the current year's survey were still tricky to compare because in 2015 teachers were broken out separately for some of the questions, and they were asked to respond about themselves and about their students. Teachers self-selected via the question, "I use my library as (select one):" with response options of "A teacher," "A student," "A member of the community," and "Other." It is possible some teachers chose to respond to the survey as a member of the community, student, or other and were not served the teacher-targeted questions.

In addition, the 2015 survey had more options (based in part on comments in the 2010 survey.) This seems to have cut down on how many things people needed to add in the comments, particularly for the question about the importance of resources the library provides. In 2010, there were 171 written comments in response to that question and in 2015 there were only 46 comments.

Again, usage rates appear to be in a slight decline. In 2010, only 10% of respondents said they use the library's electronic resources less than once per month. In 2015, 15.7% of non-teachers said they use the library's online resources a few times per year or not at all; 17.7% of teachers said they use the library's online resources a few times per year or not at all; and 26.6% of teachers said they have their students use the library's online resources a few times per year or not at all. Daily use went from an aggregated 18.5% in 2010 to 10.2% for non-teachers, 19% for teachers, and 15.2% for teachers encouraging students to use the resources daily in 2015. When averaged together (with a weighted average), about 10.9% of teachers and non-teachers use the electronic/online resources daily per the 2015 survey (for more details, see Appendix C).

However, “doing research, finding articles and information” is well-utilized when they do use their library’s online resources. In 2010, 51.5% of respondents said they used the library’s website most often to do research and find articles and information. In 2015, 32.8% of non-teachers said they use the library online to do research and find articles and information, and 83.3% of teachers said they have their students use the library online to do research and find articles and information.

b. New questions for 2015 survey:

The 2015 User Survey had additional database-related questions that did not appear in the 2010 survey. It also had the added data set of asking teachers about student usage, which was not included in the 2010 survey.

Overall, there were more responses from public library users than all other categories combined. A full 81% of respondents consider themselves primarily public library users. Most respondents identified themselves as community members (75%) rather than teachers (7.9%) or students (12.2%).

Primary library usage differed slightly between teachers and non-teachers. For non-teachers, the library has more uses: the highest use of online resources at the library was to find books, place holds, etc (85.1% of respondents), then check account status, due dates, fines, hold status, or renewals (53.8%), download ebooks, audiobooks, or music (51.3%), check library hours/location (35%), and do research (32.8%). Teachers have a slightly more focused usage for their students. They encourage them to use the online resources at the library primarily to do research (83.3%), and secondarily to find books, place holds, etc (57.6%). No other responses from either teachers or non-teachers rose above 30%.

On the other hand, when asked to rate the importance of various library resources, non-teachers gave lower ratings overall. They only rated one item above a 3.0 out of 4.0: **Find new books to read was rated 3.49** (out of 4.0).

However, teachers rated items more highly than non-teachers and had several items over 3.0 (out of 4.0): **Access scholarly journal articles was rated highest at 3.56**; Do homework was rated 3.46; Learn about current events was rated 3.3; Learn a new skill was rated 3.25; Learn about controversial issues was rated 3.2; Find new books to read was rated 3.18; Learn about new technology was rated 3.11; and Read newspapers was rated 3.08.

For all respondents, when asked about their familiarity with databases (and allowed to select as many databases as they wanted), 38% said they were not familiar with any of the databases listed,

37.4% said they were familiar with ProQuest, 26.5% said they were familiar with EBSCO, and all other items had a familiarity response rate of less than 25%.

When asked about usage of products in the ProQuest package (again, they were allowed to select as many as they wanted), 37.1% of respondents said they use ProQuest Research Library, 30.4% said they use ProQuest (in general), 28.2% said they use eLibrary, and 21.8% said they don't use any of the listed databases, even if they are familiar with them. When given the chance to list other databases, 72 respondents took the opportunity to provide an answer. There were a variety of "Other" responses, which included EBSCO, JSTOR, ERIC, Consumer Reports, and more.

Although many respondents were familiar with a variety of databases, only about 39.8% of those familiar with databases said they use them at least once a week. The remainder, over 60%, said they use the databases monthly or even less often.

See Appendix E for a complete set of user survey questions and results.

III. Interviews

Interview participants were library staff from a cross-section of regions, types, and staff functions. Many of those interviewed were involved in multiple areas related to databases (both frontline help and behind-the-scenes work). For the matrix of regions and library types, see Appendix A.

When asked about the benefits of SDL to their libraries, staff, and users, interviewees had a variety of answers. First and foremost, there were several mentions of the financial benefit to their libraries. Most did not mention a benefit for staff, necessarily, but many did say access to resources for patron research was a big benefit. Specifically, they said it was nice to have a general database product. In the case of libraries with other databases, the SDL package allows them to fill out their offerings in conjunction with their specialized databases.

As for which they value more, there was a mix of responses for whether periodicals or newspapers provide more benefit. Based on their constituents, some get a great deal of value from newspapers, others rarely if ever use the newspapers but get a lot of benefit from the periodicals component, and still others see benefit from both components.

Interestingly, some public libraries in areas with multiple colleges seem to be doing double-duty as a backup academic library for many of the students. These public libraries report seeing more value in the package, overall. On the other hand, some small community libraries seem to be getting no benefit from SDL because there's little to no usage by staff or patrons. Their constituents are

uninterested in databases and the efforts of library staff to introduce users to databases have been unsuccessful.

In the assessment of the benefit/value for the cost, libraries were somewhat split. The overall vote was “yes,” but there were a few “no” or hesitant answers as well. Public libraries were a bit more split than any other library type: three said no; six said yes; and one did not directly answer the question (which we interpret as a “maybe.”) In K-12, most were unsure of the cost because it is paid through their ESDs. That said, several said they were still very aware that it was a good deal. There were three yes answers, one “I think so;” and one “I don’t know.” All of the Academic library staff said yes, the benefit is sufficient for the cost. For all Other libraries, two said yes and one said “I don’t know.”

When asked if SDL meets their library’s needs, and how it could be improved, some interviewees jumped right to how it could be improved. Others had difficulty answering that question because they did not want to give the impression they were not appreciative of what they already have.

For the Public libraries, this question seemed to open them up to looking at SDL more closely. They seemed unsure, in general. Their “Wants” list included Ancestry.com, local newspapers, Consumer Reports, NoveList, genealogy resources (in general), Mango, Learning Express, and auto repair databases.

K-12 libraries seemed satisfied overall. Some did mention that it could be improved with databases that allow for searching by reading level. (We were told that although ProQuest allows for this; that the results ProQuest produces for certain reading levels is still too high a reading level.) Their “Wants” list included science coverage and Gale databases (several mentioned, including Opposing Viewpoints.)

Academic libraries expressed a sense that no database could meet all their needs. However, given that the ProQuest package fills gaps as a general resource, and they understand it needs to fit the needs of as many types of libraries as possible, they said it is about as good as it can get. They did have a few “Wants” list items nonetheless: ProQuest Research Companion, NY Times (historical collection,) and health databases (AMed, Alt Health Watch, etc.)

The three Other libraries are well aware they are unique, which puts them in the minority and makes them unlikely to get specialized content they need. However, they seemed happy with many parts of SDL. They did have a “Wants” list, including health/medical items, Up-to-date (which was mentioned as something they did not expect WSL to get, but was pointed out as an expensive item they purchase,) Consumer Reports, Science Direct, and more Native titles.

Unfortunately, there was clearly quite a bit of confusion with the rating of the package configuration question. I have doubts about the validity of responses for that question because of the trouble people had in interpreting it (per interview reports and comments on the survey about difficulty getting the ratings to work.)

However, per the interview responses, which allowed for more explanation of their choices, many are content with the package as-is. If they are unable to get a different configuration (pick-and-choose or one based on library type,) most will still continue to participate in SDL:

- From an Academic Library: “The benefits definitely help outweigh the costs. It is much more beneficial for us to have everyone have access to the same package than it would be to pick and choose databases.”
- From a K-12 Library: “If I am not able to pick and choose the products I want, I don’t want someone else to do the thinking for me.” (i.e. does not want packages by library type)
- From a Public Library: “Whatever costs less overall would be best.”

Others specifically suggested that a change would be better:

- From a Public Library: “We are trying to customize our selections to what the public wants or needs and not carry all the excess. We’re not interested in a whole package for everybody. You might as well have the option to pick and choose based on their particular situation if you’re going to go to the trouble of making packages for library type.”
- From another Public Library: “Every library should have the ability to pick and choose from a menu of products that they think benefits their patrons, and our patrons are all so very different. On the other hand, it’s probably not a good situation to provide some products for some libraries and not for others.”
- From yet another Public Library: “Pick and choose would be easier. I could do a survey prior and I could see who would utilize what.”

Aside from the products in the package, training and marketing resources seemed to be widely desired, and several format ideas were suggested (videos, in-person trainings, info sheets for teachers, etc) They wanted training and resources for everything from marketing to getting stats, and from tech help to providing how-tos for patrons. Of course, not all libraries need extra training or resources in all the categories, but there was definitely widespread interest in one or more training types.

There was also one request for reminders of the helpful services and products WSL provides (e.g. specific products in the SDL could be featured). It was suggested these reminders go out to the email lists on occasion:

- From a Public Library: “I really like short educational emails, once a month getting “hey did you know about ____ (certain databases.) Here’s some bullet points.” I’m on the lists for the state library already, so just incorporate info about ‘this is what we do for you.’”

Responses to what they would do if SDL or the subsidy were discontinued were all over the board. Most said they would have to be more discerning in their purchases (losing other items or moving money towards other items) and others talked about creative financing to try to keep at least some of the SDL products.

As for advice to WSL, there were a variety of different topics, including: licensing issues and information sharing, staying on top of taxation issues with electronic media, sending trials of new products out if WSL is considering switching products/vendors for SDL, requests for more outreach to individual libraries (on their own turf,) and several said the library is doing a great job and to keep at it. There were several mentions that the surveys and interviews were a good idea and helped to raise awareness about SDL and databases in general. In addition, there were several suggestions for other items to be considered for consortia-style purchasing: Link Resolver, Discovery Layer, and other database products (Gale, Ebsco, etc.)

For a complete set of interview questions and results, see Appendix H.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Based on the usage and survey data and interview responses, we have several recommendations for the SDL project.

First and foremost, keep the dialogue open with libraries. There are library staff who are unfamiliar with SDL and what it encompasses, both participants and potential participants alike. Your most vocal supporters may keep you from hearing how many people out there do not know what SDL is or how to get the most out of it.

Regularly provide libraries with information about SDL. The suggestion of the interview participant for short, monthly informational emails should be vigorously pursued. You can send out how-to emails, product or feature spotlights, links to training materials, and anything else library staff may need to be reminded about. The more engaging the emails, the better.

Keep in close contact with library decision-makers if any funding changes seem imminent. There were a high percentage of “I don’t know” responses from participants regarding finances and whether or not libraries would be able to continue to participate if the subsidy was reduced or eliminated. If SDL funding is truly in jeopardy at any point, we recommend you follow-up with library decision-makers to keep them informed and in the conversation as those decisions are made. Check in with them to see if SDL can be sustained without the subsidy and find out if it would be sufficient for WSL to broker the deal.

Continue providing Statewide Database Licensing. Most library staff appreciate SDL and see value in its continued existence. Most libraries would find it difficult, if not impossible, to provide these database and newspaper products to their customers without the consortia-style buying power of the SDL.

Continue the LSTA subsidy for SDL, at least for the time being, and provide information on other funding sources if SDL will transition to being unsubsidized. If SDL funding from LSTA is indeed at risk, libraries may benefit from a compilation of resources they can investigate in order to get funding for SDL so they can remain participants. Although some libraries would have no trouble funding SDL fully (without the subsidy), or would buy their own databases outside of SDL, many libraries would struggle to fill the resource gap. WSL and/or the SDL Advisory Committee should create a list of funding resources (e.g. grants and other opportunities) libraries can apply for if the LSTA subsidy is reduced or eliminated. This would help SDL to maintain a large enough participation base to continue to receive substantial discounts on database products.

Provide training and other resources to help libraries get the most out of SDL. Libraries requested training in several areas to help them get the most out of SDL, from training on how to pull statistics for each of the products to training on how to use specific products in the package. We recommend putting out a short survey to find out which trainings are most needed, which formats are preferred, and where the biggest need is. WSL could also act as hub for libraries to share resources for marketing or product trainings. This would take some of the burden off WSL for finding or putting together all the resources, might help build community between libraries, and would allow libraries to share their best practices. They could share marketing templates, tips and tricks, video tutorials, and engagement strategies.

Put out an RFI (request for information) on pricing and options for a “cafeteria style” package to be compared alongside the regular pricing of the “one size fits all” package. That way you have actual information on costs and parameters that can be shared with libraries next time you do

a survey to ask them about their preference. It would also be useful to have the data and to know what the options are if libraries start leaning more heavily in that direction. At least one library said that if the price went up substantially, they would not be able to continue to justify the current package filled with things they do not use. Having an idea of what the other options cost may provide an easier argument for or against the cafeteria style package many library staff would prefer. More is not always better, but it is important to be able to have enough information to make informed decisions whenever possible, especially given the uncertainties libraries (and WSL itself) face.

Repeat this (or a similar) Staff Survey every 2-3 years. It would likely be of benefit to do the staff survey more frequently, even if it is just a matter of sending out the same survey every other year to get a quick snapshot of where things sit and how they compare to prior survey years. We have noted some changes since the last survey and it would be good to watch to see if they become full-fledged trends or if they dissipate. For instance, the declining usage of databases may be a trend or it may be a temporary situation. The tiny shift of participants saying SDL should be discontinued could be an anomaly or it could be the beginnings of a pattern to watch.

The surveys might also be another tactic to keep SDL in the forefront of library staff's minds. Several of the people we interviewed mentioned that doing the survey and interview brought SDL to their attention and reminded them to look at the various products for which they have less familiarity. It seems these surveys and interviews are valuable to the libraries as a reminder about SDL products, a way to provide input and feel heard, and a way to promote interest in the services and products WSL offers to libraries throughout the state. People seem to review information more thoroughly if they are asked to interact with it, even to a limited degree, and the surveys did just that.

Finally, as many of the library staff said in the surveys and interviews: **keep up the good work.**

Appendices

Appendix A: Ten Regions of Washington State and Matrix of Regions & Library Types

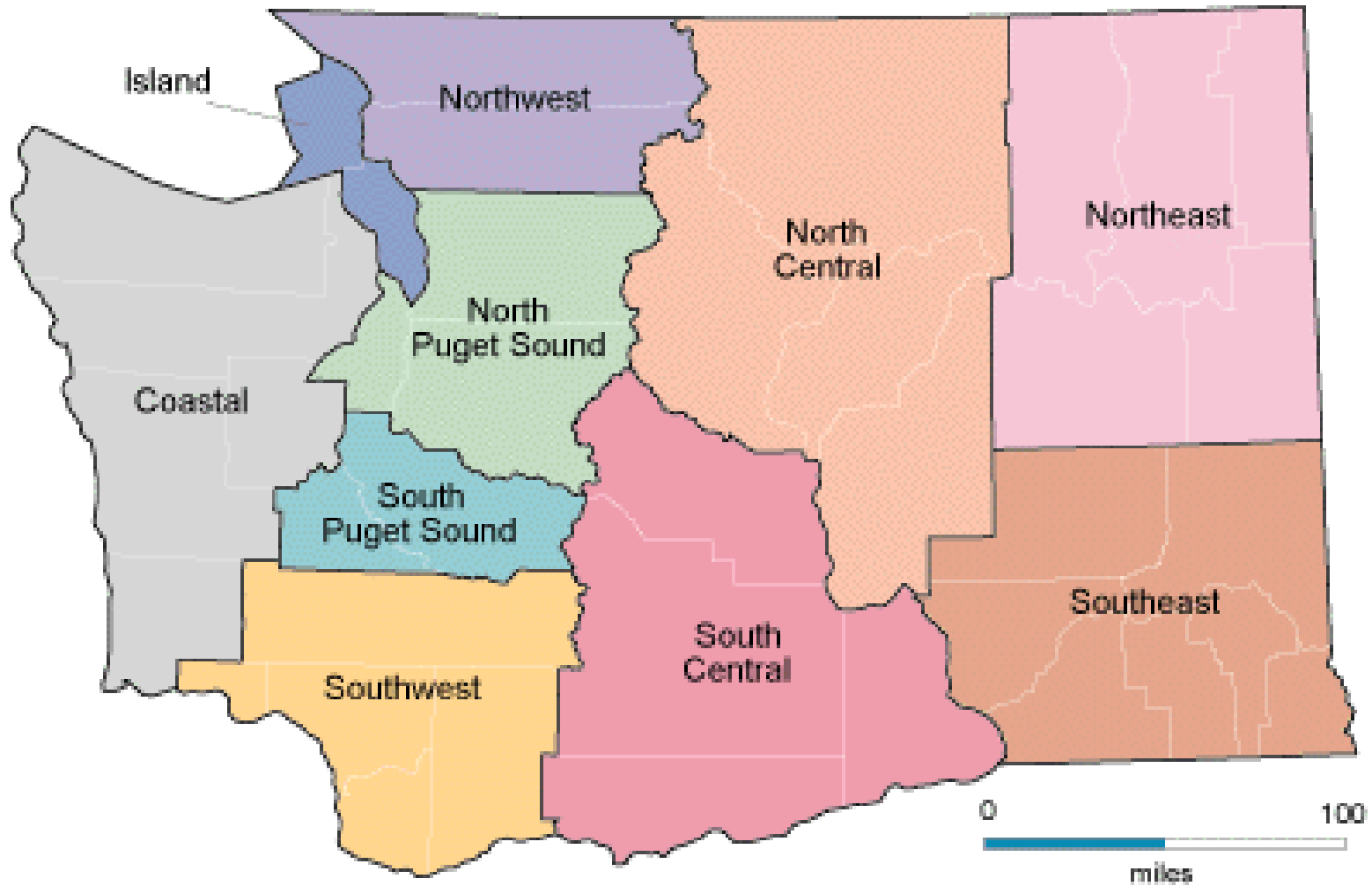


Figure 1. Ten Regions of Washington State. Map of Washington State found at <http://access.wa.gov/topics/visiting/maps/images>.

Table 1. Matrix of Regions & Library Types. The table shows the intersection of region and library type for each interview participant.

Type	Region									
	Coastal	Island	North Central	North Puget Sound	North-east	North-west	South Central	South Puget Sound	South-east	South-west
K-12 (elementary / primary school)								x		
K-12 (middle / junior high school)				x						
K-12 (high school)		x	x							
K-12 (elementary thru high school)										
K-12 (private or other)						x				
Public (under 5k)					x					x
Public (between 5k - 25k)						x			x	
Public (between 25k - 100k)						x	x			x
Public (over 100k)			x	x						
Higher Ed (community / technical college)									x	x
Higher Ed (4-year public)										
Higher Ed (4-year private)				x	x			x		
Higher Ed (other)										
Special (medical / hospital)							x			
Special (business / law)										
Special (government)										
Tribal	x									
Other (please specify)						x				

Appendix B: Library Staff Survey Responses



Appendix B Library
Staff Survey Responses

Appendix C: Library Users Survey Responses



Appendix C Library
Users Survey Responses

Appendix D: 2015 Staff Survey Compared to 2010



Appendix D 2015
Staff Survey Comparison

Appendix E: 2015 Users Survey Compared to 2010



Appendix E 2015
User Survey Comparison

Appendix F: Library Staff Survey Broken Down by Library Role



Appendix F Library
Staff Survey Broken Down

Appendix G: Library Staff Survey Broken Down by Library Type



Appendix G Library
Staff Survey Broken Down

Appendix H: Interview Results by Library Type



Appendix H
Interview Results By

Appendix I: Initial Background Synthesis Report



Appendix I Initial
Background Synthe:

Appendix J: School Participation



Appendix J School
Participation.xlsx

Appendix K: SDL Usage Data



Appendix K SDL
Usage Data.xlsx