
Program Evaluation: Maintaining the ILS

Operation and maintenance of the ILS (integrated Online Library Management System) is the IT department's single greatest expense. It was also the role for which the department was originally created. The ILS hosts the information vital to each library's operations including:

- Patron registration (465,000 registered patrons)
- Patron fine and checkout accounts (6,959,202 checkouts Oct. '12 – Sep. '13)
- Patron reserves
- Item management (4,182,685 items)
- Online catalog (2,040,326 sessions in 2013)
- Phone, email and SMS notifications
- Acquisitions

The costs of operating this system are funded through member fees:

- \$328,487 vendor products
- \$396,500 (3 full-time employees, with benefits)
- **\$724,987 Total**

The costs can be applied to several metrics to represent per unit costs:

- \$1.56 per card holder
- \$0.10 per checkout
- \$0.17 per item
- \$0.36 per catalog session

The costs of maintaining an ILS are significant, and there are equally significant savings to be realized through group purchase. If all the libraries have to purchase an equivalent function ILS independently and hire one FT employee to manage it:

- purchase cost total: \$8,262,150 (average of \$217,425 per member library)
- ongoing maintenance total: \$5,341,280 (average of \$140,560 per member library)
- WLS saves members: over \$7 million on purchase and \$4.6 million annually
 - Does not include third-party costs such as catalog records and cover art
 - Does not include a cataloging staff

Program Evaluation: Patron Wireless Networks

The Patron Wireless Network is a direct service to patrons. It provides a free, open access WiFi connection to the Internet. This service is also completely separated from the wired Core network used by library staff and the WLS public PCs to prevent the possible spread of viruses from patron-owned equipment.

Vital statistics include:

- 76 Access Points
- Installed in 40 of the 44 library locations
- Also installed in WLS offices and meeting spaces
- Population served: 845,000
- Cost per location, \$136 / month

Examining impact shows that this has been a great investment in public service. In 2013, the wireless network provided:

- 746,331 wireless sessions
- 292 sessions per hour based on 49.1 / week

Value of this service to patrons - \$3,731,655: based on \$5/1 hr. session (i.e. GoGoWifi)

Program Evaluation: Help Desk

As part of our ongoing support of all our programs, including those evaluated here, WLS operates an IT Help Desk. This service is funded through the member fees collected as part of the IT Finance Model.

Measuring success and preventing potential issues is something that is monitored closely in the Help Desk program. This is accomplished through our work order management system which tracks all of our work orders and has integrated communication and reporting tools. It also provides reports that show work order aging by day.

Short term impacts:

5,016 calls

2,265 emails

7,281 Total Contacts in 2013

Each of these represents an occasion where a staff member in a library needed some level of assistance. That assistance could be as simple as help navigating a website or software program up to and including a complete outage of the library.

Long term impacts of the Help Desk are more difficult to measure because the target need and delivery is short term, but the anecdotal impacts include:

- Sustainability of the technology installed at each library
- Sustainability of the technology installed at WLS headquarters
- Staff confidence and continuing education
- Staff access to resources to do their job
- A technology resource on which library staff can rely

In terms of value, the Help Desk provides staff with technology assistance at a rate of \$17.85 per contact. Recently comparisons with a local IT support agency provided per incident pricing. Their baseline cost per contact was \$25. The WLS IT Help Desk provides both a

higher level of support, being familiar with the details of each site and the staff of each library, and does so at a lower cost per contact.

Program Evaluation: Public PC Use

Providing access to PCs has become a key component of public service in libraries. The public uses PCs for many uses including but not limited to:

- Word processing / Office suite software
- Browsing the Internet
- Gaming
- Email / Chat / Social media
- Telecommuting for work and school

The impact of this service is measured in sessions provided, of which there were 1,198,400 (2012 Annual Report).

The cost of this service is paid for directly by the member libraries through their member fees from the Finance Model:

- 638 Public PCs
- Cost to libraries: \$323,601
- On average 48% of PCs are used each hour the library is open
- Public PCs represent 0.5% of total operating costs of libraries
 - Based on 2012 Member Library Statistics, 2014 Member Fees

When the session counts are applied to costs across the 638 public PCs in libraries is:

- \$0.27 per session
- Average 469 sessions per hour
- Average 1,222 sessions per machine, per year

Most patrons get access to three-hour sessions, or more in most libraries. An Internet Café (euphnet.com) charges \$8.00 for 1 three-hour session. Based on that the value of this service can be expressed as:

- \$9,587,200 for all sessions provided
- \$9,263,599 saved by library patrons by investment in libraries
- \$15,026 of value per PC