

SCLS PC support and network services: A new vision for service

The Cost Formula Workgroup was charged with creating a new fee structure and formula for SCLS technology and ILS services. As stated in the complete proposal, the group has decided to wait until 2011 to create a new formula because there are a number of uncertainties that make it difficult to determine a fair division of costs.

One uncertainty is the change in cost the migration to Koha may bring. We are in the middle of the migration process, and costs will become clearer once we have migrated and been active on the system for a few months.

Another uncertainty is related to PC Support and network services. The changes in the SCLS organizational structure and governance provide an opportunity for a new vision for service. However, planning for the new vision will take time, and costs for PC support and network services cannot be determined until a more developed plan is in place.

This document provides some background on the issues related to PC support and network services, a description of the new vision for service, and a brief list of what the new vision will mean for libraries.

Background

In the past, the SCLS integrated library system (ILS) service, access to the wide area network, and support for devices attached to the network were rolled together into a package of services purchased by being a part of LINK.

There were some limitations to the network services provided through LINK:

- The software that could be added to patron computers was limited.
- There was a large cost to add workstations after the budget was passed.
- Wireless for the public was not accommodated.

As a result of these limitations, libraries that participated in LINK began to use secondary internet service providers (ISP) (Charter, TDS, etc.) to accommodate needs that could not be met. Libraries that did not participate in LINK could not be part of the network, so they also used these secondary ISPs to get internet access for patron and staff machines.

Over time, this division has created a split in PC support around the system. At SCLS, there are two groups of people providing purchasing, staging, and support of computers, which has resulted in redundant work among the SCLS staff. It has also created a support system that is difficult for library staff to navigate, requiring them to have specific knowledge about the SCLS structure before they can receive support. In addition, some libraries developed in-house technical support to deal with computers on secondary networks. This additional layer of support created more redundant work at the library level, particularly in the areas of purchasing and staging computers, and the research necessary to complete this work.

In 2008, when libraries were surveyed about technology issues, this division of support and the associated complications to service were identified as significant problems.

The new vision for service

The new organizational and governance structure at SCLS allows us to begin a paradigm shift for how we provide these services. Our intention is to separate the ILS services from network and PC support services, and to maintain existing services while improving how service is provided. Libraries will be able to choose to use the ILS and network/PC support services, or just the network/PC support services. Libraries will also have the option to maintain computers with in-house technical support, but to include those computers on the SCLS network, with more flexibility and control than the standard patron and staff computer model. The separation of computer support will go away, which means libraries will be able to call one number for help with all of their technology needs. Staff will be cross-trained to provide support for all computers on the network. Libraries that are not ILS participants will be able to use SCLS as their internet service provider, giving them the opportunity to have very high-speed, high-quality access.

Staff will also be able to provide remote support for all computers, which means that travel to the library will not be necessary for many support calls, resulting in better response times and better service for all computers.

To achieve this vision of service, some changes will have to be made. SCLS will no longer be able to support computers that receive internet access through secondary ISPs (Charter, TDS, etc.). Libraries that are already part of the SCLS network (former "LINK" members) will be expected to move all computers to the SCLS network if they want SCLS to continue to support their PCs. Libraries that have been getting internet access only through secondary providers will be expected to pay to participate in the SCLS network to continue to receive support from SCLS staff. For libraries with specific and complicated network needs, SCLS and the library will work together to find a mutually satisfactory solution.

There are many details to work out, and this shift will take time. However, it is our hope that we will be able to begin moving computers away from secondary ISPs to the SCLS network in 2011, with the intention to have all computers supported by SCLS on the SCLS network by the end of 2012.

As a new cost formula is developed in 2011 (for 2012), these changes will be reflected in the new fees.

What this means for libraries

To summarize what this change will mean for libraries:

- Libraries will be expected to move all computers supported by SCLS to the SCLS network by the end of 2012.

- Libraries that are currently not part of the SCLS network will be expected to pay for network and PC support service beginning in 2012 if they wish to continue to have SCLS support.
- After 2012, SCLS will no longer support computers that are not part of the SCLS network.

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