



# South Central Library System (SCLS) Provides Member Libraries Value

## SCLS Makes Libraries More Effective

SCLS member public libraries are fantastic resources for people of all ages, providing information, education, and recreation at bargain prices.

SCLS serves to make its member libraries even more effective by:

- helping them share materials so expenditures of thousands of dollars locally become worth millions in services to the general public in a shared environment;
- providing them with leadership in the areas of automation and telecommunications; and
- providing them with the training and expertise to cope with new and constantly changing technologies and demands for service.

## SCLS Promotes Resource Sharing

In our world, the ability to obtain and effectively use information is critical to individual and collective success. More than half of Wisconsin's prison inmates cannot read, which in most cases means they cannot hold productive jobs in society. Nearly 80 percent of all small businesses fail within their first five years of operation, frequently from a lack of information concerning markets, products, or sources of capital. If we do not ensure that all citizens have access to good information now, we must pay ruinous costs to pick up the pieces later.

**Shared Databases**—Wisconsin citizens have sophisticated information needs, and member libraries have access to BadgerLink (a state project), which is supplemented by the Overdrive, NovelList, LearningExpress Library, Literature Resource Center, Net Library, Reference USA, What Do I Read Next?, Ancestry Plus, Heritage Quest, and WorldCat. These shared databases ensure that library resources are available to the public through every member library, no matter how small. Literally thousands of resources—far too expensive to ever be purchased in print form by any but the largest libraries—are available online. Residents also have access to the information expertise of professional librarians 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through AskAway -- [www.askaway.info](http://www.askaway.info).

**Contracts for Library Resources**—No one library can afford to buy everything its customers need, so SCLS pays the Madison Public Library more than \$300,000 annually to purchase extra copies of popular items, which accounted for the circulation of nearly 70,000 additional items last year. Madison Public Library also uses these funds to purchase items not owned by other member libraries, and handles requests from libraries nationwide to share materials.

**Cooperative Management Services**—Because no library can or should stand alone, SCLS coordinates orders and shipping for everything from library cards to puppets to computers, thus saving libraries money. The system manages county library budgets on request and cooperative projects on behalf of our member libraries (for example, the e-book consortium and LINK project), and it represents member libraries in statewide forums in the areas of interlibrary loan, delivery, reference, and technology.

**Circulation/Interlibrary Loan**—Shared automation is a cost-effective way to provide library services to Wisconsin residents. In cooperation with its member libraries, SCLS operates the LINK shared automation system that makes the resources of 40 of the major public libraries in the system area readily available to all area residents. The success of this endeavor is indicated by the fact that about 55 percent of the system's more than 786,000 residents have LINK library cards and more than 10.3 million books (and other library materials) were checked out last year by area residents from all our member public libraries that owned these books. Non-LINK public libraries (including Marshfield and Portage County) also circulated another 1.7 million items last year, bringing the total to more than 12 million. At a conservative estimate of \$20 per book, (averaging in the price of everything from paperbacks to reference books) this direct traffic represents \$240 million in value to patrons for this service alone because they can check out books instead of purchasing them. Since the combined budgets of all member libraries total less than \$25 million, it's evident through this shared automation system that libraries significantly multiply the value of the public dollar.

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Most library patrons can find everything they want or need at their local library, but no library can afford all of the print and electronic resources required by its customers. One component of the total circulation figures mentioned above is the LINK interlibrary loan system. Last year SCLS member libraries successfully provided more than 2.5 million books and other materials citizens requested, but which their local libraries did not own. Each book requested through interlibrary loan represented an item that the borrowing library did not have to purchase. Using the same \$20 estimated book cost, the 2.5 million interlibrary loans saved system libraries and taxpayers \$50 million in book purchases last year.

**Other Technology Services**—Harriet, the automated library voice that contacts customers by telephone when their books are available, saved member libraries an additional \$250,214 in postage last year. SCLS also funds and maintains central Internet access, e-mail, and e-lists for member libraries; provides video equipment for meetings and workshops, a training lab and a portable wireless lab, saving time and mileage for member libraries; conducts experiments in new technologies leading to things such as the e-book project and the addition of virtual reference in 2003; and provides computer technician services.

### **SCLS Provides World-Class Delivery Service**

Delivery is essential to resource sharing, so SCLS delivers materials requested by area residents to their local libraries and, when they have finished with these materials, returns them to their home libraries again. In 2006, our red truck delivery service carried 10.2 million items among SCLS member libraries making nearly 34,000 stops over a distance of 373,000 miles.

Our delivery service cost \$1.056 million in 2006. The cost to send an item from one library to another in SCLS costs 20 cents, a vastly less expensive solution than the U.S. mail, which in 1997 cost \$2.41 per book sent. Delivery's volume has increased 25% between 2001 and 2006. Some larger member libraries now receive up to three deliveries a day, which enables them to rapidly respond to customer needs. Delivery staff and member libraries continually work together to increase the effectiveness of this service.

### **SCLS Provides Professional Consultants & Quality Continuing Education Programs**

Citizens can ask librarians any question under the sun in their quest to get up-to-date information. Libraries are vital partners in providing information, education and recreation to their communities, and to perform this task in a changing technological environment, librarians must continue to learn and develop.

Last year, SCLS consultants visited almost every member library in the system. Every day our consultants field a variety of requests from member librarians for assistance with library-related issues ranging from creating a budget to making effective use of the newest technologies.

SCLS maintains a collection of professional materials for use by member libraries. The system also seeks out special grants from the federal government (Library Services & Technology Act [LSTA]), various state programs, and a number of private sources (Wisconsin State Journal Empty Stocking Club) to help libraries supplement local funds.

In a world of information that is ever changing, learning must be never ending. Ongoing training is vital for member library staff, and more than 747 members from all types of libraries attended 42 continuing education programs SCLS produced last year. SCLS also provided 61 scholarships to member libraries to attend non-SCLS continuing education programs or conferences.

Children are our future, and they need libraries to grow and to provide roots as well as wings. SCLS helps member libraries develop programs that serve children, young adults and families, and finds ways to create library programs that foster a culture of literacy. The system also helps sponsor members' Summer Library Programs (SLP), which last year involved more than 22,982 children systemwide.

Libraries help all users realize their goals and dreams. SCLS helps member libraries provide services to users with special needs through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, family and adult literacy programs, Adaptive Technology training sessions, and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

It doesn't matter how good a job libraries do if no one knows about it. SCLS helps its member libraries form partnerships with businesses and community groups, and through publicity materials and web pages inform publics about the services available at their library. The system manages the Library Advocacy Network on behalf of its members libraries, through which nearly 1,700 citizens have volunteered their participation

No library building lasts forever. Commercial building consultants can cost as much as \$1,000 a day. As a basic service to member libraries, SCLS helps members that are building new libraries or renovating old facilities.