SALS 2016 STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

PROCESS SUMMARY

This planning process was designed to provide staff and trustees from all of the member libraries with multiple ways to participate in the identification of the priorities to be included in the *SALS Plan of Service 2017-2021.*

- The process started in March with a one-day meeting of representative staff and trustees from each member library during which the participants began to describe the support they would need from SALS to provide effective services to the residents of their communities over the next five years.

- In April, trustees and members were invited to attend one of four focus groups to continue the discussions started during the March meeting. The recommendations from these focus groups were tabulated and posted on a SALS planning website for people to review and discuss.

- In May, trustees and members were invited to attend one of three groups to review and refine the draft recommendations that came from the April focus groups. The draft recommendations were also presented during the 2016 Annual SALS Trustee meeting.

The recommendations that came from these meetings are described below.

CORE SERVICES

Focus group participants identified three "core services:"

- **Joint Automation/Polaris Support**
- **Delivery Services**
- **Advice and Support from SALS Staff**

It was clear throughout the planning process that member library staff and board members strongly support the continuation of these "core services" and do not want to see the resources allocated to these services reduced.

EXPANDED AREAS OF EMPHASIS

SALS is currently providing a variety of services beyond the "core services" identified above. Focus group participants suggested that the SALS Board consider allocating additional resources to four current services. Those services are listed below in alphabetical order.

- **Continuing Education:** SALS currently offers continuing education programs for library staff and trustees. The number of continuing education programs for one or both audiences could be increased and new topics could added to the continuing education schedule. Staff and trustees of some member libraries find it difficult to travel within the SALS region to attend training, so consideration should be given to offering some training via Webinars or online. Continuing education opportunities could be expanded to include scholarships for staff and/or trustees to attend conferences sponsored by NYLA or PLA. Consideration should be given to offering formal orientation sessions for new directors and for new board members.

- **Challenge Grants:** SALS currently awards technology challenge grants to member libraries. Staff and trustees in member libraries have found these grants to be valuable and would like to see the grant process expanded. Challenge grants could be offered for services or programs other than technology. The maximum amount available to each grantee could be increased.

- **Digital Content**: The Central Library currently provides e-content through Overdrive. The JA staff incorporate e-content into the Polaris. SALS could provide access to additional e-content such as Freegal, Hoopla, Zinio, or Lynda.com.

- **Public Programming Support**: SALS currently provides some support to help staff in member libraries present programs during the Summer Reading Program. SALS also updates the Performers and Programmers Database occasionally to include local performers. SALS could take a more active role in helping member libraries provide public programming by adding reviews to the database, coordinating webinars of book talks for different ages, arranging for author programs, bringing programs to the libraries, etc.

NEW AREAS OF EMPHASIS

Focus group participants identified four new services that would be of value to their libraries and to the customers they serve. Participants suggested that the SALS Board consider allocating resources to support one or more of these services, which are listed below in alphabetical order.

- **Access to Professional Specialists:** As noted above, ongoing support and advice from SALS staff is one of the three "core services" that member libraries strongly support. However, there are times when staff or boards from member libraries need access to professionals in fields other than librarianship, including human resources, law, social work, and accounting. SALS could make it possible for member libraries to receive a limited amount of clearly defined services from selected professionals.

- **Literacy Coordinator**: The organization that has coordinated literacy services for the counties served by SALS has lost the grant funding needed to continue providing that coordination. Literacy initiatives are important to the staff and trustees in a number of the member libraries and to the people they serve. The SALS Board should consider how SALS might support ongoing literacy coordination. One option would be for the SALS Board to expand the job responsibilities of the Outreach Coordinator to include providing literacy support.

- **SALS Technology Trainer**: Many staff members in SALS libraries are struggling to keep up with the ever-changing mobile device environment and new versions of commonly used software. Although SALS staff provide some training and support, the demand from member libraries exceeds the available resources. SALS could allocate resources to hire a part-time technology trainer or to contract with local trainer(s) for a set number of hours.

- **Technology Tools and Services**: There a number of technology tools or services that member libraries would find useful. SALS could develop a mobile app to provide access to the POLARIS catalog. SALS staff could help with ongoing upgrades to member library web pages. SALS might also provide equipment such as Wifi Hot Spots, Roku, and equipment to scan photographs for use by member libraries or possibly public loan.