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Kansas Libraries & Kan-ed

A position paper prepared for Kan-ed and the
Kansas Library Association

Kansas Library Association Kan-ed Task Force
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Overview

Libraries in Kansas have long recognized the need for statewide broadband access to the Internet and other computer networks as a means of delivering electronic information and communication to residents of the state. Over a two-year period, advocacy from Kansas libraries and other constituencies led the Kansas legislature to pass laws that established Kan-ed to meet the need for broadband electronic networking in the state.¹ The legislation, K.S.A. 75-7223 states: "The purpose of this act is to provide for a broadband technology-based network to which schools, libraries and hospitals may connect for broadband internet access and intranet access for distance learning. For that purpose, the state board of regents shall contract in accordance with this act for the creation, operation and maintenance of such network, to be known as the KAN-ED network."²

For purposes of administration and management of operations, Kan-ed was assigned to the Kansas Board of Regents. According to its website as of this writing, Kan-ed serves these functions:³

First, Kan-ed provides subsidies to help members pay their commercial Internet costs. To apply for a [subsidy](#), simply fill out a [Broadband Subsidy Application](#) form.

Second, Kan-ed has built a private, statewide network to which constituents may connect for video collaboration and data sharing. Network components are leased through Kansas' facility and equipment providers, and the network is managed through the Kan-ed Network Operations Center (NOC).

Third, Kan-ed provides [grants](#) to help members pay for [Interactive Distance Learning \(IDL\) classrooms](#) and connect them to other IDL sites around the state over the Kan-ed network. Well over 120 such classrooms can now share classes throughout the state.

Fourth, Kan-ed provides [grants](#) to members who want to develop and/or implement innovative uses of the network.

Fifth, Kan-ed provides members with a framework for delivering quality content and services for our members and controlling access to content and services through the Kan-ed portal.

Kan-ed does not function as an Internet Service Provider (ISP), but rather supports access to the commercial Internet through local service providers.⁴ Kan-ed seeks to work with local ISPs to increase the number of constituents with broadband access to the Internet and to extend the functionality of those constituents already connected via broadband.

¹ Relevant legislation is available online at <http://www.kslegislature.org/cgi-bin/statutes/index.cgi>.

² In other legislation pursuant to the creation of Kan-ed, K.S.A. 75-7222 defines terms, K.S.A. 66-2010 sets initial funding for Kan-ed in FY 2003-2004 from the Kansas Universal Service Fund, with future funding to proceed from state general funds, and K.S.A. 75-7225 creates a Kan-ed fund in the state treasury.

³ See www.kan-ed.org.

⁴ Ibid.

This document summarizes libraries' recommendations to Kan-ed for an improved partnership to enhance service to the people of Kansas.

Libraries in Kansas

Kansas libraries come in many types and sizes, from K-12 school media centers to university research libraries, from 2-year community college and technical school libraries to private academic libraries, and from 1-room rural libraries to large urban library systems. No matter what type or size, all libraries in Kansas seek to provide the best service possible within their means to their different populations.

These different populations make distinct demands on their libraries. School libraries support instruction; academic libraries support research, curriculum and some recreational needs; public libraries meet the need for information, recreation, and life-long learning. Special libraries, such as hospital and corporate libraries, seek to support the particular institutional needs mandated by their parent organizations' mission statements.

Libraries may find themselves straddling more than one Kan-ed constituency, defined as hospital, library, higher education or school by enabling legislation.⁵ A hospital library belongs to library and hospital constituencies, university research libraries may be a part of the Regents system and therefore a part of higher education, and school media centers are within the school classification. Libraries in Kansas do not share a single user population, but may serve overlapping segments of the people of the state. Nonetheless, there are some needs that all libraries in Kansas have in common.

Many library budgets are much smaller than the budgets of other Kan-ed constituents. This reality has great significance for Kan-ed services and policy development. The importance of the subsidy program to the library community is an example.

Libraries' Needs and Kan-ed

For an 18-month period ending in December of 2004, the Kansas State University Office of Educational Innovation & Evaluation (OEIE) surveyed the Kan-ed library constituency to determine how well Kan-ed had met the networking needs of our constituent group. The survey found the following areas of interest or concern among Kan-ed constituent libraries: communication, broadband access, content, and technical support.

Communication Between Kan-ed and the Library Community

As Kan-ed has developed from an idea to legislation to a division of the Kansas Board of Regents to a statewide service, communication from Kan-ed to libraries has not always been sufficient to keep Kan-ed member libraries informed of changing policies and practices. At the same time, communication from libraries to Kan-ed has at times been misdirected. Libraries seek clear and consistent communication from Kan-ed with advance notice of policy and procedure changes to enable libraries to accommodate them in their plans and budgets.

Formal and informal communication networks in the library community are well developed and include all different kinds of libraries. It would be extremely advantageous to use this already effective system, a combination of state and regional library organizations,

⁵ K.S.A. 75-7222. "School" includes nearly all Kansas educational institutions.

coupled with the Kansas Library Association (KLA), a well established professional organization, as the mechanism for Kan-ed communication with the library community. This would also be very effective for libraries, functioning within schools universities and hospitals, which use these library networks to exchange information concerning their "library" interests.

Broadband Access for Internet Connectivity

In year one of its post-testing operation, Kan-ed furnished subsidies to member libraries to offset costs for high-speed access to the Internet. Libraries need those subsidies to continue and increase as they seek to expand their services to include videoconferencing and other bandwidth intensive operations for users.

Many smaller libraries would not have broadband access without Kan-ed support. This reality is not likely to change in the near future.

Content for Education, Public Information, and Research

Informational

In its first two years of post-planning operation, Kan-ed furnished statewide access to a number of electronic databases of high quality, reviewed information at the recommendation of librarians and others throughout the state.⁶ In so doing, Kan-ed built on the successful library model for selecting content and making it available. Access to the databases was by way of local IP address recognition, with users' Kansas Library Cards, and later by way of the Kan-ed portal. Libraries consider this access to be the greatest content boon to come out of the early stages of Kan-ed development. Libraries also greatly appreciate Kan-ed content grants that followed to permit digitization of content not available elsewhere.

Professional Development/Education

High-speed networked services and content are only as good as the mediators who make them available to the public. In order to maximize the value of Kan-ed and the content it provides, librarians need training in that content to equip them to furnish information and services to Kansas, and to in turn train Kansans in how to access, evaluate, and use the content themselves.

Technical Support

Kan-ed can help provide cost effective technical training opportunities that address professional development and library management issues. Some forms this help can assume include, but need not be limited to:

- Facilitate technical training.
- Educate constituents in the use of Kan-ed technology and content.
- Provide information for general users about Kan-ed content.

⁶ The databases are: Custom Newspapers, Heritage Quest, Literature Resource Center, Proquest Nursing Journals, and Worldbook.

Library Recommendations to Kan-ed

Immediate Improvements

Communication

The Kan-ed website has been transformed into a portal of information for constituents at all levels, but sometimes questions or concerns are best addressed to an individual. Disconnects in communication between Kan-ed and libraries can be ameliorated by creating or assigning staff to that function. A Chief Information Officer (CIO) or at least a designated staff person with responsibility for library information would be a good first step. This individual should recognize and work with library communication efforts that link different kinds of libraries belonging to different constituent groups, and should work directly with the KLA on matters that require consensus or authorization from the library community. The KLA would also be an excellent source for identifying other organizations that represent specialized library interests that need to communicate with Kan-ed, such as urban libraries, regional library systems, special libraries, school libraries, 2-year academic libraries, college and university libraries, private academic libraries, library trustees, friends of the libraries, and the School of Library & Information Management at Emporia State University.

Communication among the delegate assembly, the user advisory council, Kan-ed staff, and libraries needs to improve. A communication tree for two-way communication between Kan-ed, its user delegates, its user advisory council, and libraries would also help clarify lines of communication. If a communication tree does not accomplish this, a new plan for communications will be necessary. Such a plan should include provisions to make the library delegate assembly a useful, functioning body, or should disband it.

Some formal mechanism for library recommendations to Kan-ed and assurance of Kan-ed feedback on those recommendations is needed. A uniform comment form assigned to the CIO or relevant staff could serve that function. Kan-ed should also send communications to the KLA Executive Director and President to disseminate to Kansas libraries through statewide library e-mail discussion lists and newsletters. Kan-ed could also conduct workshops and/or informational sessions to spread the word about how Kan-ed can assist libraries and their patrons.

Kan-ed should continue to develop an established mechanism by which entities can present proposals for development and or funding to Kan-ed. The mechanism should include a clear process by which the author of the proposal will see a final resolution of the proposal.

Kan-ed has a functional web presence that continues to be developed. Also, Kan-ed News and Events and Kan-ed Live! are two examples of how Kan-ed has fostered collaborative communication. Kan-ed Live! is a digital video service available at no charge to Kan-ed members. As portal and services development continues, simple and effective navigation for libraries and their users should remain a priority. Plans for portal development should include useful gateway services to support collaborative communication among libraries, their users, and other Kan-ed constituent groups.

Broadband Access for Internet Connectivity

Kan-ed currently provides much content and many services that libraries need to use. Libraries continue to look to Kan-ed to furnish increasing amounts of broadband capacity

and the subsidies that libraries need to make it possible for them to access it; both are of paramount importance. Kan-ed should continue to provide broadband access to the network and should continue to provide funding needed by many members to meet actual connection costs.

Content

Informational

Libraries and their users must have continued access to databases of reliable, scholarly, vetted literature across a wide variety of disciplines. Access to such information can only help Kansans conduct quality research, make good decisions, and foster economic development. Such information is often proprietary and available only at a substantial fee. Even at subsidized rates, many libraries would not be able to provide access to such information. Kan-ed should continue to provide free and unrestricted access to a core set of such information delivered over the Kan-ed network. Open access to free content via the Kan-ed website for libraries and their users must also be assured.

Kan-ed would make a good home for broadly applicable library content. A few examples of such content are: online modules for pages or work-study staff to become familiarized with the library (such as Dewey numbers or Library of Congress classification), and basic reference interview questions to help library such staff quickly decide whether they can provide the information needed by the patron or if professional assistance is required.

Professional Development/Education

Library staffs throughout the state sincerely want to furnish the best possible service to the people of Kansas. Kan-ed can advance this intent by providing training in the use of statewide databases and their other services and by hosting and promoting distance education for the library community. Such training and distance education can be useful to other Kan-ed constituencies as well. Some training could be directed at all constituent groups, instead of targeted specifically to libraries and their users. Kan-ed should actively encourage and facilitate collaboration for library professional development.

There is considerable ongoing need for professional development and Kan-ed has the means to deliver some of that development effort. Kan-ed should provide for and deliver on its portal a variety of professional development resources, but particularly development related to content offered on the site. Such training should be devoted to the use of Kan-ed itself, use of the technology used by Kan-ed to deliver services, and the use of those services. Kan-ed could also offer localized training sessions on how to use Kan-Ed content and databases. In addition to online offerings, face-to-face sessions could be held at system offices and rebroadcast on Kan-ed Live!.

Future Steps

Communication

Kan-ed should tailor services to take advantage of already existing communication links within the various constituencies it serves. The KLA recognizes that libraries have a responsibility to promote and market Kan-ed to library users. For its part, Kan-ed could take several steps that would yield significant benefits to library communication. Delivering a Kan-ed online library newsletter would provide a one-stop source of updated policy, practice and procedure for libraries, as would library classifieds and position announcements. Library-related e-mail discussion lists and Kan-ed promotional materials for libraries would make useful additions to the Kan-ed communications toolkit. All additional technology, information and services Kan-ed chooses to implement for communication with and among libraries must be delivered equitably to all Kan-ed library

members. Kan-ed and all its constituencies would benefit if Kan-ed would furnish marketing and informational content that explains what Kan-ed is and how to use it, as well as press releases and news content about Kan-ed that libraries could distribute.

Broadband Access for Internet Connectivity

Libraries look to Kan-ed to continue subsidized broadband access to the Internet and other computer networks. They also look forward to improved network technology that cost-effectively delivers more functionality, through technological improvements developed or adopted by Kan-ed. The lack of affordable, high-speed access to the Internet was among the principal motives for libraries' support of the Kan-ed initiative from the beginning. Libraries of all types will expect Kan-ed to continue to meet the need for affordable broadband connectivity into the future.

Content

Informational

The great value of commercially produced databases of information to libraries and their users has already been noted. This must be continued. Kan-ed content grants promise significant future value to content creation and must continue as well.

Kan-ed would be a logical home for other sorts of digital content, such as historical records, community resources, and webcasts of current events, to name a few.

Subsidized group purchases of vendor-produced content would benefit not only smaller libraries, but also larger public and research libraries. Kan-ed should post content to its portal that would facilitate library evaluation of content, and should clearly identify a process for adding content to the network.

Professional Development/Education

Kan-ed can greatly aid libraries in their pursuit of providing excellent service to the state by supporting the delivery of professional development resources. A sample of such resources is listed below. Many of them would be useful to all Kan-ed constituencies.

- Course management software.
- Archives of videos, documents, et cetera.
- Comprehensive list of searchable links to comprehensive list of professional development opportunities.
- Resource management system, like the hospitals' EM System for coordinating resources.
- Up-to-date events calendar.
- Video/teleconferencing and online collaboration capabilities.
- A model or models for collaborative training.

Kan-ed can also help make other sorts of content available that would enhance library services, such as hosting a statewide database for archiving and searching statewide library professional development records (LEEP certificates, KPLACE class records) and other training equivalencies or standards.⁷ A statewide library survey instrument would make it possible for many libraries to adjust resources and services to successfully meet changing user needs. A searchable archive of library videoconference sessions and meetings would help preserve library history and make staff development possible from a distance.

⁷ See <http://www.skyways.org/KSL/development/libdev.html> for information about LEEP and KPLACE.

Conclusion

The growth of Kan-ed and its services to Kansans in the first few years of its existence indicates potential for substantial impact on existing and future services to K-12 and higher education, libraries and hospitals. For Kan-ed to improve its relationship with libraries, it must take three actions:

1. Continue to fund informational databases for statewide access,
2. Continue to subsidize broadband connectivity to ensure full participation by all members in the use of network resources, and
3. Join with the State Library to create a strategic plan for the future.

Now that Kan-ed is looking beyond its formative stage toward becoming a more permanent service to the state, libraries must play a primary role in its planning process. No one knows their own users better than libraries, and the contribution libraries can make to Kan-ed's future plans will ensure greater Kan-ed user satisfaction.

Because library participation in the planning process holds so much promise, Kan-ed should fund the expense of drafting the strategic plan. Libraries will accept responsibility for marketing and promoting the plan, and will designate representatives to actively participate in the planning process.

Collaboration among Kan-ed and its constituencies is the greatest benefit of the network. Libraries are confident that Kan-ed can reach its full potential with cooperation from its constituent groups. Libraries are committed to helping Kan-ed reach its potential.

***Approved by KLA Council
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Overland Park, Kansas***

Appendix

Members of the Kansas Library Association Kan-ed Position Paper Task Force

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