

1.2 Challenges the System Faced

- Member libraries were hard hit by the **economy**. Special libraries were closed or downsized significantly. Law firm libraries for example were downsized to one staff member from three or four. The staffing of our school media center libraries were also affected by cuts. In some cases superintendents and principals choose to not fund library programs. A total of fourteen special libraries, five academic, and five school libraries were dropped to developmental or dropped completely because of closure. *RESPONSE: Librarians were invited to events to network with each other and update resumes. Our strategic plan identified advocacy efforts on behalf of school libraries and librarians at the superintendent and principal level.*
- Delivery of materials continued to escalate reaching an all time high of \$7.5 million items transported this fiscal year. Injuries occurred and it was determined the load was too great for one person. Changes were made to insure safety. *RESPONSE: The test of two man trucks was successful and for the coming fiscal year becomes a reality for four of the five days a week. Additional staff for delivery was added all working a 15 hour work week. This will allow for a savings of \$28,981 for FY2010. A safety program was instituted and staff is continually reminded about lifting and sorting to lesson injuries*
- Public library **sustainability** has been a topic of discussion over the course of this fiscal year. Public libraries are faced with record use of the library. A record number of families are using libraries for programs, story hour, movie night, internet use and job searches. Loss of jobs, foreclosures, loss of income tax due to non payment for real estate tax all add up to significant budget issues for some public libraries. So, we have an increased use of libraries with some public libraries barely making payroll each month. *RESPONSE: Local advocacy breakfasts were held with elected officials to discuss the crises facing public libraries. Additional continuing education programs were held related to serving patrons in a time of stress.*
- Technology challenges continue to exist with the **digital divide increasing** within MLS. It is difficult for poorly funded libraries to keep up-to-date technologically; as members of SWAN their inability to upgrade equipment, routers, etc. affects decision-making for consortia members. Librarians voice frustration with aging technologies and the inability to afford upgrades. Additionally, sufficient bandwidth is also becoming an issue with the increased use of laptops on wireless networks. *RESPONSE: Preliminary work has been done by staff to apply for federal funding for infrastructure upgrades. We intend to have a proposal ready for the second round of funding. We wrote a letter of support for the grant submitted by the Illinois Century Network middle mile fiberoptic proposal and connected with Governor Quinn's staff on our the bandwidth proposal.*
- MLS faced an increase in our IMRF contribution. We have been over funded in the past and with the IMRF loss of income due to the financial downturn, our contribution for the coming fiscal years is \$90,000. *RESPONSE: The board chose to sunset facilitated interlibrary loan for out-of-state requests for our members. Two full time staff members lost their positions effective, June 1, 2009 to achieve a balanced budget for FY 2010.*