

Section 3 Study Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Understanding the complexities of the twelve Regional Library Systems (RLS) and their shared bibliographic control and access systems to answer the study questions required a study design that would direct the study team to collect relevant and useful data. Multi-method study designs are useful when dealing with complex social, organizational, and technological phenomenon. The zILLANE study utilized a customized multi-method approach.

This section describes the overall study design and its component parts. It also contains a summary of the extent of data collection, including numbers of activities and participants involved. More detailed descriptions of each of the study methods are contained in appendixes to this report.

3.2 Research Strategy

The study team positioned this study within a primarily qualitative research context although the study also used quantitative techniques and mixed qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative context recognizes the study's emphasis on process over measurement, understanding and learning over hypotheses testing. A qualitative research approach was appropriate to produce a richly detailed, holistic understanding of the RLS shared bibliographic control and access systems, their operations, costs, and policies.

The research strategy provided overall direction to accomplish the purpose and goals of the study, and involved the use of a variety of research techniques and methods, including:

- Site visits
- Focus groups
- Survey and other forms-based data collection

As the research progressed and the study team's understanding of the RLS and shared bibliographic systems increased, specific activities were modified to target additional data needed for understanding and confirmation. Early data collection techniques provided the study team with preliminary data. These data were analyzed and initial results informed subsequent data collection. The study team then analyzed and synthesized data and results to create preliminary findings. Discussions with and presentations to Illinois State Library (ISL) staff and the Illinois Library Systems Directors Organization (ILSDO) as well as follow-up data collection enriched the preliminary findings and served to improve the trustworthiness of the data and the findings.

The study design was structured yet flexible in allowing refinement of questions and modification of data collection techniques based upon initial data collection and analysis. Early data collection and analysis guided decisions about subsequent data collection and analysis. The research strategy was by design evolutionary.

3.3 Multiple Methods and Specific Data Collection Activities

The study team selected and utilized several methods to gather the information needed to answer the study questions. As an example, site visits to RLS allowed the study team to interview key RLS staff to better understand the past and current situation with the shared systems and broader RLS concerns. Focus group sessions with RLS staff, RLS member libraries, and RLS boards of directors provided opportunities to hear from a broad range of RLS stakeholders.

The appendixes in the report contain detailed descriptions of several of the research methods:

- Appendix C: Site Visits: Methods and Results
- Appendix D: Focus Group Participant Fact Sheet: Methods and Results
- Appendix E: Bibliographic System Cost Survey: Methods and Results
- Appendix F: Data Collection Instruments
- Appendix G: Regional Library System Information Confirmation Follow-up Questionnaire

The following sections provide a general description of the specific data collection activities.

3.3.1 Site Visits

The study team conducted one-day site visits at each of the twelve RLS during the period of February through April 2002. Three RLS were visited during each of four separate trips. The site visits enabled the study team to examine policy, management, technology, and human aspects of the RLS shared systems. For a more detailed description of the site visit method, see Appendix C.

Each site visit included interviews with key RLS staff as well as two or more focus groups with the following:

- RLS staff
- Representatives of member libraries (both LLSAP and non-LLSAP members)
- Members of the RLS board of directors

Interviews usually included the RLS executive director and/or staff directly involved in the operation of the shared bibliographic control and access system. Typically interviews were conducted with RLS staff responsible for financial management. The perspectives of the RLS leadership and key staff helped the study team to understand not only the current situation but also the history and issues related to the shared system. The study team conducted 27 individual interviews and involved a total of 33 persons.

Focus groups served as a key data collection technique during the site visits. Focus groups brought together RLS stakeholders who discussed their perspectives on a series of common themes (e.g., LLSAP membership, cataloging, costs). Typically, several focus groups were conducted during each site visit. In many cases, the following groups attended separate focus groups:

- RLS staff, especially those involved with the LLSAP
- RLS member libraries including both LLSAP participants and non-LLSAP libraries
- RLS board of directors members

The focus groups provided opportunities to explore shared beliefs and goals with respect to LLSAP operations. The study team conducted 30 focus groups involving more than 250 people during the twelve site visits. Table 3-1 summarizes the number of participants in each of the three major categories.

Table 3-1
Focus Group Participation

Number of Focus Groups Conducted	Number of RLS Staff Participants	Number of RLS Member Libraries Participants	Number of RLS Board of Directors Participants	Total*
30	82	136	56	252

*In many cases, an individual attended more than one focus group. Total reflects total unique individuals participating.

3.3.2 Focus Group Participant Fact Sheet

The study team used the opportunity of the focus groups to survey the participants on a set of key questions through the use of a questionnaire. Although administered at the end of the focus group session, the Focus Group Participant Fact Sheet is treated as a discrete data collection event. For additional description of this study method and the results from the questionnaire, see Appendix D.

To supplement the information gathered during a focus group session, this short questionnaire completed by the participants served several purposes:

- Collect basic demographic information about the participants
- Provide an opportunity for participants to record their ideas and opinions – in their own words – on topics covered in the session
- Provide an opportunity for participants to add more comments on topics not specifically addressed in the session

The Focus Group Participant Fact Sheet questionnaire contained eleven questions to collect data that would record participants' perceptions of the benefits, barriers, opportunities and disadvantages to participating in a shared bibliographic control and access system. It also served as a method to corroborate and confirm information gathered during the focus groups themselves.

Focus group participants from all twelve RLS completed questionnaires, and a total of 199 questionnaires were collected and the responses analyzed. Table 3-2 summarizes the number of respondents to the questionnaire for each of the twelve regional systems.

**Table 3-2
Focus Group Fact Sheets Completed Per RLS**

Regional Library System	N	Percent
Alliance Library System	27	14%
Chicago Library System	10	5%
DuPage Library System	16	8%
Heritage Trail Library System	7	4%
Lewis and Clark Library System	16	8%
Lincoln Trail Libraries System	24	12%
Northern Illinois Library System	23	11%
North Suburban Library System	16	8%
River Bend Library System	11	6%
Rolling Prairie Library System	15	7%
Shawnee Library System	16	8%
Suburban Library System	18	9%
TOTAL	199	100%

3.3.3 Bibliographic System Cost Survey

An important question addressed by this study relates to the costs of bibliographic control and access systems for libraries that used a shared system compared with those libraries running stand-alone systems. To answer this question the study team conducted the Bibliographic System Cost Survey of libraries in all RLS. See Appendix E for a description of the method and results from the survey.

The study team used the Bibliographic System Cost Survey to collect data to allow comparisons of direct and indirect costs of bibliographic system operations across all RLS, across four types of libraries, and for LLSAP and non-LLSAP libraries (i.e. those using shared systems and those operating stand-alone systems). The study team drafted a questionnaire for the purpose of collecting cost data from a sample of RLS member libraries. Slightly different versions of the questionnaire were created for LLSAP participants and libraries not fully participating in the RLS shared system.

Between May 1 and August 15, the study team sent the survey questionnaire via email to 466 libraries in all twelve RLS. One RLS provided only partial data relevant to the survey on behalf of its members and the study team conducted a resurvey of that RLS libraries.

The study team received 105 usable questionnaires. Table 3-3 summarizes the number sent to each RLS and the number returned (usable).

Table 3-3
Bibliographic System Cost Survey Participants

RLS	LLSAP Libraries	Returned (Usable)		Non-LLSAP Libraries	Returned (Usable)		Total Sent	Total Returned (Usable)	% Returned
ALS	58	7		23	3		81	10	10%
CLS	12	2		27	0		39	2	2%
DLS	5	4		11	7		16	11	63%
HTLS	10	5		7	1		17	6	35%
LCLS	50	11		34	1		84	12	14%
LTLS	6	1		6	4		12	5	42%
NILS	0	0		17	7		17	7	41%
NSLS	57	2		29	3		86	5	6%
RPLS	23	8		12	3		35	11	31%
SHLS	36	15		25	5		61	20	31%
SLS	4	2		2	2		6	4	66%
RBLS	12	12		0	0		12	12	100%
TOTAL	273	69		193	36		466	105	

The low response rate to this survey is a concern to the study team. Even after repeated efforts to get questionnaires returned, there was very little improvement in the response rate.

3.3.4 RLS Membership and Cost Data Verification

During site visits, most RLS provided documents relating to RLS membership, library participation in the shared bibliographic control and access system, operational costs for the bibliographic system, and other quantitative data. The analysis of those data and other RLS data collected by the ISL indicated a need to confirm specific numbers and figures to ensure accuracy in the study. Too often, different sources of data contained inconsistent or contradictory or incomplete data.

To address this, the study team developed two forms for the RLS to report the most current data relating to the following:

- RLS Membership Information
- LLSAP Participation Information
- LLSAP Participant Trends
- RLS Libraries Using Stand Alone Systems
- RLS Libraries that are Not Automated
- Bibliographic Record Information
- LLSAP Use by All Participants
- LLSAP Cost and Revenue Information
- Cost Components of Operating the LLSAP
- Annual LLSAP Operating Expenses & Revenues

This data collection activity is a reflection of the evolving character of this study. The development of these forms could not have occurred prior to the site visits and collection of RLS documents. Those two activities assisted the study team in developing useful reporting forms to standardize data across all RLS for the purposes of comparison.

The forms were provided online in July, and all twelve RLS responded to the call for information. Copies of the forms are contained in Appendix G.

3.3.5 Literature Review

The study team conducted a literature review to examine costs and cost sharing formulas used by other consortia. The scope of this effort was limited to published material available in print or online.

Abstracting and indexing databases and full-text databases were searched using appropriate search terms such as "consortium," "consortia," "cost ratio," "cost formula," "consortia and cost," as well as combinations and variations of the terms. Databases searched include: EbscoHost, Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) and Library Literature and Info Science Full Text.

To identify potentially relevant web resources, the search terms were submitted to Google and Alta Vista. One RLS director provided the study team with two website addresses, and these were examined for pertinent information.

The study team also used the American Library Directory's section on consortia to identify those consortia that provide services similar to the Illinois RLS. Relevant consortia's websites were reviewed for information regarding consortia costs and membership.

When available information in articles and websites provided membership cost and cost allocation, a study team member recorded the information and compiled all information from the literature into a table that identified the cost components or basis for the cost sharing formula. Section 4 of this report contains information collected through this activity.

3.4 Discussion and Input

Throughout the study, there has been a conscious effort to provide opportunities for input and comment. These efforts began with project status reports to the Systems Presidents and Directors group meeting in March and June, and continued as the study team developed the preliminary findings, recommendations, and drafts of this final report.

The study team produced a draft document that contained a set of preliminary findings in June. This document was reviewed by ISL and the principal investigator met with ISL staff to discuss the findings. The results of that discussion were reflected in a revised document of preliminary findings prepared for review by ILSDO. The principal investigator met with ILSDO at its July 2002 meeting to present the findings and receive comments and suggestions.

A draft of the final report was prepared for review by ISL staff in early September 2002. Feedback from ISL was incorporated into a revised draft of the final report distributed to RLS directors and presidents of their boards of directors for its review. The principal investigator met with the Systems Presidents and Directors group and ISL staff on September 13, 2002 to present the draft report with particular focus on the study's recommendation. The principal investigator also met with the Technology and Telecommunications Working Group to present findings and draft recommendations on September 24, 2002. Discussions with these stakeholder groups resulted in suggested revisions. In addition, the reviews by these groups resulted in additional data confirmation and/or corrections. Comments and suggestions have been incorporated into the report.

The research design was by choice process-oriented. It offered opportunity for stakeholders to comment and provide input into the study, data collected, findings developed, and the recommendations and strategies. The importance of this approach cannot be over-emphasized. Enhancing access to library holdings in Illinois will require collaboration and cooperation among all stakeholders.

3.5 Summary

The study's research strategy and the multi-method data collection activities produced a wealth of information about the RLS, the RLS shared systems, and key issues and concerns of the primary stakeholders. Discussions with ISL staff and ILSDO led to a better understanding by the study team. The study's process-oriented approach encouraged opportunities for better communication between the ISL and the RLS. Review of and input into the findings and recommendations by the stakeholders has assisted the study team to produce a report containing pertinent information, useful findings, and actionable recommendations.