

**Strategic Options to Realign
Resources for the Southeastern
NY Library Resources Council**
Exploring the Feasibility
of Consolidation

February, 2013

Strategic Options to Realign Resources for the Southeastern NY Library Resources Council

Exploring the Feasibility of Consolidation

February, 2013

Prepared for:
Southeastern New York Library Resources Council

Prepared By:
Scott F. Sittig, MPP
Project Director

1 South Washington Street
Suite 400
Rochester, NY 14614
585.325.6360



www.cgr.org

Strategic Options to Realign Resources for the Southeastern NY Library Resources Council

Exploring the Feasibility of Consolidation

February, 2013

SUMMARY

The Southeastern New York Library Resources Council (Southeastern or Council) is exploring uncharted territory by considering consolidation of services with other library systems in its region. Improvements in technology and infringement upon traditional services by outside vendors have caused the Council to reflect upon their mission and relevance. Part of a complicated and layered support services network, the Council began conversations several years ago with key stakeholders to explore how to provide services more efficiently and meet the changing needs of libraries.

The Council has been a leader in bringing libraries of all types and sizes together for professional development and networking around best practices for many years. Members have come to rely on the resources that are available in close proximity to them, and they often cite the personalized attention they receive as a core value. However, funding cuts of over 20% and staff reductions have limited some services, and the quality of all services is being compromised by the extra burden placed on remaining staff.

The Board of Regents adopted a 2020 vision plan in 2012 about the same time the Council completed its strategic plan. One of the goals highlighted in the plan was to encourage more shared services and consolidation between libraries and library systems. The Board recognizes the advantages of new technology and wants to spur creative thinking for existing systems to improve efficiency and enhance the quality and variety of services to improve literacy at all levels.

There is already good history of shared services and consolidation in the library systems. Libraries, more than most public services available in New York State, are already built on a foundation of sharing services. From interlibrary loans, digitization efforts, shared technology and automation efforts, and sharing of best practices, the library systems have formed essential partnerships with the common goal of improving literacy

and access to information for all citizens in New York State. The challenge is that the systems are created to govern themselves, and funding is driven by geographic considerations that occasionally work against collaboration. There are disincentives built into realigning structures and allowing for sharing across regional boundaries. It is the fragmented and layered structure that needs to be addressed, and that is at the heart of the Board of Regents 2020 vision plan.

Pursuing consolidation would be breaking new ground locally, and there is likely to be a ground swell of interest from other 3Rs across the State. Other school and public library systems will also take note because there are so many unknowns about the implications and effects of consolidation. Thus, the Council must be mindful of the broad ramifications of even studying consolidation, much less formalizing an agreement to make it happen.

Options

There are several options available for the Council to consider, ranging from the status quo on one end to full consolidation on the other. The continuum of options offers the Council a series of potential stepping stones on a path of more exploration.

Status Quo

Maintaining the status quo acknowledges the efforts of the current Council Board of Trustees to initiate change in the context of the current service and staff mix, leveraging the quality of services for incremental but necessary adaptation to market forces. It is clear from the strategic plan and other efforts of the Council that an option of “no change” is not acceptable. Yet, choosing the status quo does not imply “no change”, but that the current strategic planning process can lead to competitive and transformational outcomes. It also pays tribute to members who like the identity and proximity of Southeastern and are concerned about losing the personalized support they receive. The Council has a nice facility that is reasonably central to its entire geographic coverage area. Though funding has been cut, the board has already made difficult decisions and stabilized the budget for the short term. Overall, the status quo is reasonable and does not need to be dismissed completely as an option.

Shared Services

Built on a foundation of shared services, the Council can continue to expand its offerings by looking for new partnerships and more creative ways to meet the needs of its members. Willing partners such as Metro and Capital District 3Rs, as well as the major school and public library systems in the region, have resources and are confronting their own challenges. It may be an opportune time to place more emphasis on

creatively expanding the service mix by leveraging the expertise and resources of all the library systems in the region.

Several ideas emerged in the course of this review. Technology infrastructure and support services are better managed by some systems than others. Finding ways to leverage technical skill and infrastructure capacity should be a core emphasis for all library systems going forward. Technology will increasingly dictate the needs and demands of end consumers and getting ahead of that curve may represent the single biggest challenge to remaining relevant in the world of literacy.

Professional development and networking are also topics that all library systems encounter. Expanding the capability of remote training, webinars, and online courses can cut across library systems and benefit members in all of them. Maintaining personalized support will demand a culture shift within the membership. It does not need to be sacrificed, but members will need time to adapt to new ways of receiving the personalized attention that they have come to expect.

The unique services of the Council, such as digitization efforts and work with the cultural heritage organizations, are likely to remain a top priority. Efforts to streamline those services with other 3Rs and leverage best practices should become a focus for the Council. Limited funding will continue to strain the full potential of these efforts, but bringing together resources across regional boundaries may open new opportunities to expand these services.

Administrative Consolidation

Several interviews noted that the existence of nine 3Rs across the State creates a lot of administrative overhead. A simplified structure with less required overhead could free up resources and redirect them to programs and services. Combining 3Rs at the administrative level is possible through a legal agreement. The Capital District Library Council is open to considering this idea. By retaining the legal entities and organizations for both 3Rs, the funding from state aid would not be reduced. There are many organizational implications that would need to be studied before a full implementation could take place. However, this type of arrangement is possible within the existing statutory framework.

Functional Consolidation

Functional consolidation further formalizes the relationships among, and potential change to, components of the existing 3Rs structure. Under this option, a potential partner such as the Capital District Library Council would enter into agreement with Southeastern to fully consolidate all services. However, each organization would remain intact with its own separate board of trustees. Some services provided by the Capital District

may be more efficient and/or provided with more technical expertise than Southeastern. In that case, those services would be consolidated within the Capital District operation. The same could be true of Southeastern. A complete review of any duplicative services would be required and a plan would have to be developed to fully integrate them for all members of both 3Rs. Examples include the DHP and other digitization efforts for many of the cultural heritage organizations. Technology support and automation may be another area.

At this point it is not known whether any savings will emerge through functional consolidation. Staffing budgets have already been trimmed and the needs for many of these services have not changed. The goal of this type of consolidation would likely be to streamline for efficiency and coordination, and assure that no duplicative efforts exist between the two organizations. Additionally, the two partner organizations may find they can offer more services to their members because of the efficiencies and partnerships that emerge.

Full Consolidation

Full consolidation is the “heaviest lift” in this process, and the one that may be of most interest. There are two different paths. Southeastern may choose to explore consolidation with another 3R, or it could study consolidation with another library system.

With Another 3R

The easier of the two paths is consolidating with another 3R. Regionally, the candidate for a potential consolidation is the Capital District Library Council. It has a similar membership mix, provides similar services, has a limited staff, and is regionally accessible for membership in both districts. Conversations between these two districts have been ongoing for several years with both expressing openness and willingness to consider the idea.

The primary obstacle is the major disincentive that exists in statutory funding. If two 3Rs merge, there is no provision for the base grant of state aid to remain at the same level. One of the base grants would be eliminated. It would have to be determined how much of the loss of revenue could be made up through efficiencies in administration and overhead. The primary benefit to a consolidation would be to free up resources to provide more programs and services. If that could not happen, it may make more sense to consider one of the shared service alternatives.

There is also no current framework in state statute that governs a consolidation between 3Rs. Thus, any effort would have to track closely with State Library Development and the Commissioner to receive the necessary approvals. The State appears to be supportive of the potential

for consolidation between 3Rs and would likely be a willing participant in any process that worked towards full implementation.

With Another Library System

Consolidating with non-3R library systems creates many challenges. Overlapping geography, different membership eligibility criteria, different funding streams, and catering to the different needs of members create challenges that could be difficult to overcome. There are synergies in many of the services that are provided, and it may be possible to develop a different library system that could provide those services to all the different constituencies. However, the potential extent of change involved would require key stakeholder buy-in, particularly from the library systems and their members, as well as the State. Consolidation with a non-3R is the option that represents the biggest change to the status quo, and it would require robust study and a long term implementation plan.

Conclusion

Southeastern is a pioneer in the 3R community for considering consolidation. It does not stand alone, however. The Capital District Library Council is willing to explore consolidation for the sake of its members and the broader library community. Additionally, the Ramapo-Catskill and Mid-Hudson Public Library Systems are willing to explore the idea of consolidation further. Each organization understands the uncharted nature of these explorations. However, each also understands that library services in New York State can and must be a top priority. In order to remain relevant and sustainable, new structures must emerge that accommodate modern technology and leverage opportunities that exist for sharing services across regional boundaries that did not exist when the structures were put in place.

The complexity of challenging the historic paradigms of library systems in New York State may give the Board of Trustees of Southeastern pause. There are intermediate steps that can be taken that could improve efficiency and open opportunities to enhance services. However, someone will need to pioneer realigning the current structures in order to fully understand the potential benefits. Other library systems across the State are engaging in similar studies. If the ultimate goal is to create readers, improve literacy and access to quality information, and continuously improve in both areas, the system needs pioneers to lead a charge away from the status quo. Southeastern is poised to lead that charge.

Acknowledgements

CGR would like to thank John Shaloiko, Executive Director of the Southeastern NY Library Resources Council, for providing timely access to his staff and data as well as for making connections with key stakeholders to interview during the process. We appreciate all those who volunteered their time to be interviewed and sent additional information about their organization or library services in general. We also would like to recognize the time given by Assistant Commissioner for Libraries and the State Librarian, Bernie Margolis, and his staff to meet and discuss with us the potential impacts of consolidating the 3Rs in NYS.

Staff Team

CGR's staff team consisted of Associate Director Scott Sittig and Research Assistant Dan Whalen. Mr. Sittig served as project director, primary interviewer, project manager, and author of the final report.

Mr. Whalen provided support in budget analysis, the legislative review and general background research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary	i
Options	ii
Status Quo	ii
Shared Services.....	ii
Administrative Consolidation.....	iii
Functional Consolidation.....	iii
Full Consolidation.....	iv
With Another 3R	iv
With Another Library System.....	v
Conclusion	v
Table of Contents	vii
Introduction	1
Feasibility Study Overview	1
Historical Context for 3Rs Councils	2
3Rs in the Context of all Library Systems	3
Technology's Influence.....	4
SENYLRC in Context	4
Organizational Mission and Vision	4
Service Territory	5
Membership	5
Services	6
Recent Financial History.....	7
Expenditures by Fund	8
Expenditures by Function	9
Payroll (Salary and Benefits).....	10
Revenue by Fund.....	12
Financial Summary	12
Other Challenges.....	13
Opportunities	13
NYS Legislative Barriers	13
Education Law	14
Implications for Consolidation	14
Commissioner of Education Regulations	15
Implications for Consolidation	15

Options for Consolidation	16
Status Quo	16
Shared Services	17
Service Sharing Agreement to Consolidate Administrative Functions	17
Functional Consolidation	18
Full Consolidation with another 3R	18
Consolidation with Other Library Systems	19
Potential Partners for Future Study	19
Other Partners	21
Challenges	21
Opportunities	22
Conclusion	22
Appendix I – Committee Members and Key Interviews	24
Study Committee	24
Key Interviews	24
Appendix II – SENYLRC Strategic Plan	26
Appendix III – Library-Related Acronyms	40

INTRODUCTION

The Southeastern NY Library Resources Council (SENYLRC) is a not-for-profit 501-c-3 organization that serves academic, private, public and special libraries and cultural heritage organizations by helping them connect and share resources with each other and with public library systems. SENYLRC has experienced significant cuts in its state funding due to the national and state economic climate. Having lost over 20% of its revenue since 2008, it has been under pressure to critically assess how to fulfill its mission with fewer resources.

Methods and tools for providing library services continue to evolve. The increasing prevalence of technology based services, as well as growing competition from private vendors, has challenged the traditional niche occupied by SENYLRC and the other 3Rs across the State. During their recent strategic planning process, leadership identified the emergence of multiple organizations providing similar services as a significant threat to the future relevance of SENYLRC.

Simultaneous to SENYLRC's strategic planning process, the Regents Advisory Council on Libraries developed a vision plan for the future of library services across New York State. At the behest of the Board of Regents, the Advisory Council was challenged to creatively accommodate advances in technology and improve access to library services for people of all ages and economic backgrounds. The resulting 2020 Vision Plan was adopted by the Board in 2012. Among other things, the plan put a significant emphasis on improving shared services and exploring consolidation between library systems across the State.

Recognizing the need for change, SENYLRC developed a strategic objective aimed at exploring the concept of consolidation. The board secured a private grant to fund the process and hired the Center for Governmental Research, Inc. (CGR) to facilitate the study.

FEASIBILITY STUDY OVERVIEW

The Council views a potential path towards consolidation as a long term process. The aim of this study is to establish the feasibility of consolidation for a Reference and Research Library Resources System (3R) in New York State. If this study reveals sufficient merit for the idea, the Council may pursue a formal consolidation study by engaging other willing partners. Thus, two significant issues must be considered in this initial process:

- What organizations (e.g. other 3Rs or library systems) may be interested in partnering on a consolidation study effort?
- What barriers could negatively impact either future funding streams or the potential for increased efficiencies?

The Council was also interested in learning about other alternatives to consolidation as part of the process. CGR designed a work plan that addressed three key elements:

- Historical Budget Analysis;
- NYS Legislative Review; and
- Interviews with Potential Partners and Key Stakeholders.

The focus of this study was on SENYLRC. While interviews yielded informational context about other organizations, there was no attempt to analyze their operations and/or conduct an assessment of the efficiencies that could result from a future consolidation. Further study would be required to give adequate attention to the details of other organizations.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR 3Rs COUNCILS

The Reference and Research Library Resources Systems (3Rs) were formed by authorizing legislation nearly a half century ago. *Education Law*¹ established the framework for 3Rs in 1966 and laid out the rules that governed their formation. The 3Rs were developed to offer services to non-profit and for profit academic, medical, law, business, and special libraries interested in improving reference and research library resources services. The law required each to be governed by a board of trustees. Later, legislation was added in the *Regulations of the Commissioner of Education*² that defined requirements for their operation and membership. An explanation of these laws is referred to later in this report.

There were nine 3Rs created inside territory that contiguously covers all of New York State. The goal of the 3Rs, and all library systems to a large extent, is to improve access to resources by improving collaboration, training library staff on best practices, and lowering costs. Funding for the

¹ <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/excerpts/edn272.htm#2-3Rs>

² http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/excerpts/finished_regs/905.htm

3Rs primarily comes from a combination of state aid and membership dues.³

3Rs IN THE CONTEXT OF ALL LIBRARY SYSTEMS

Many of the State's other library systems interact with one of the 3Rs in their region. In context, the Regents Commission on Library Services reports that there are 7,000 libraries in New York State served by a network of 23 public library systems, 42 school library systems, and nine 3Rs.⁴ 3Rs typically do not deal directly with public or school libraries, but they support the associated library systems and encourage interaction between the public systems and the academic, business, law, hospital, and other special libraries in their region.

New York State's Library Development website reports that the New York 3Rs Association members currently include 276 college and university libraries; 460 hospital, museum, corporate, and other specialized libraries; as well as library systems representing more than 5,200 school and public libraries.⁵ Operating under the same authorizing legislation, all nine 3Rs have a similar emphasis of improving collaboration between these institutions while offering services that enhance the quality and accessibility of the information they provide. Library Development⁶ has chronicled the following list of services as those most common across all 3Rs in the State:

- Support for the latest technologies and their application, including digitization projects, social networks, e-books, Internet access, lists, websites, locator tools, equipment and software;
- Interlibrary loan, document delivery services, reciprocal borrowing cards and other resource sharing services;
- Special library research services for small rural hospital libraries to ensure access to major research collections;
- Staff expertise in areas such as medical information, advanced technology, collection development, management, reference services, digitization, and information literacy;
- Programs of professional development and training for library staff and trustees on site, online and through video conferencing;

³ <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/libs/lrc/brochurr.htm>

⁴ <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/rcols/finalrpt.htm>

⁵ <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/testimony12/index.html#ny3rs>

⁶ Ibid.

- Coordination of state funding programs for academic collections, hospital services, regional resource sharing and documentary heritage;
- Working with the New York State Library to develop the New York Online Virtual Electronic Library (NOVELNY);
- Coordinating the statewide Documentary Heritage Program in cooperation with the New York State Archives;
- Cooperative grants administration, consulting and grant writing assistance; and
- Marketing, advocacy and public relations services.

Technology's Influence

As technology has improved and become more affordable and accessible, the traditional services that were exclusively provided by the 3Rs (or subsidized to make them cost efficient) have met with increasing competition. Outside vendors have been able to market services for database access and management at competitive prices, and the library systems themselves have improved their technological capacity. Many of the academic libraries already access services outside of the 3Rs, and the public library systems have their own incentive to adapt to the changing environment to keep up with the needs of their local libraries. The niche for the 3Rs has not been eliminated, but it is in this changing landscape that SENYLRC (and all the 3Rs) must adapt to remain relevant.

SENYLRC IN CONTEXT

Organizational Mission and Vision

SENYLRC has an engaged and forward thinking fifteen member Board of Trustees. They include both librarians and lay members representing the research community. The recent strategic planning process was an attempt by this group to think beyond the present financial struggles and look at the challenges in light of new opportunities to serve their members. As the niche that libraries occupy changes, the traditional set of services and training initiatives that SENYLRC has offered to serve them must change as well.

The strategic planning process did not yield a new mission or vision statement. As noted in their organizational documents, the mission of SENYLRC is to support its members in the Mid-Hudson Valley in order to enrich their services and enhance access to information for their users.

They further refine their mission with a vision statement. Their vision is to achieve service excellence in libraries by:

- Thoughtfully applying emerging technologies to resource sharing, collection building, information access and communications;
- Providing imaginative, accessible and relevant professional development opportunities for staff at all levels; and
- Becoming a focal point for the exchange of ideas, collaboration, the development of new tools and the promotion of the transforming power of libraries.

The mission and vision statements provide a clear expectation for the role that SENYLRC plays in serving its members. However, there is nothing inherently unique about these statements that would distinguish SENYLRC as a 3R versus another public library system. That captures the dilemma faced by the organization. The primary mission and vision of SENYLRC is tied to the general purposes of all library systems. While the constituencies and membership are different, the services and purposes are generally the same. This can and does create duplicative services and potential inefficiency as each library system must provide for overhead and administrative costs in addition to the costs for the services it provides.

Service Territory

As noted earlier, each of the nine 3Rs serves a defined geographic area. SENYLRC serves eight counties in the Mid-Hudson Valley including Columbia, Greene, Ulster, Dutchess, Orange, Sullivan, Putnam and Rockland. Over one million people reside within the 5,372 square mile area served by the Council. The Council headquarters is located in Highland, New York.⁷

Membership

Currently 104 libraries and cultural heritage organizations from the region are listed as members of SENYLRC (61 governing members and 43 Hudson River Valley Heritage (HRVH) members). According to their membership list, public libraries and public library systems, many of which are only HRVH members, comprise the largest group of members with 27. Academic and cultural heritage libraries are the next largest groups, each having 21.

⁷ <http://www.senylrc.org/about/>

SENYLRC Membership

Type	Number
Academic	21
Cultural Heritage	21
Hospital	15
Public Libraries and Public Library Systems	27
Theological	4
School Libraries and School Library Systems	6
Special	10
Total	104

SENYLRC characterizes its membership as organizations from both the non-profit and for profit arenas, in both the public and the private sectors. The size of the institutional collections ranges from small specialized collections of a few hundred volumes to large research collections with over a million volumes.⁸

Services

While geography provides the most significant distinguishing feature among the 3Rs, many also differentiate themselves by the set of services they offer to members. SENYLRC provides the following services:

- Interlibrary loan of books and serials;
- Access to electronic databases and documents;
- Online digital repository of historical images, documents and objects;
- Union list of periodicals;
- Compilation of a regional union catalog of library resources;
- Continuing education programs for the staff of member organizations;
- Training in new hardware technologies and software releases;
- Delivery of materials;
- Administration of state funded regional automation program;
- Coordinated collection development;
- Hospital library services program and access to health related information;
- Online searching;

⁸ Ibid.

- Consulting services; and
- Communications (SENYLRC News, Miscellaneous).⁹

CGR learned that some 3Rs provide more services than others, SENYLRC being one of them, and the types of services can vary significantly depending on regional needs. Some library systems around the State may prefer to access some of the services available in other regions, either because they perceive the quality to be better, or simply because the service does not exist in their region. This, however, is not currently possible as it raises potential inequities in funding that is apportioned by formula to each region.

Reviewing the differences in services raises another set of hurdles for SENYLRC to consider. Sharing services among the 3Rs will gain increasing awareness as technology eliminates some the barriers to doing so. However, the current structure of the state laws will continue to inhibit and even discourage this type of collaborative partnership until new ideas emerge for how to manage the funding streams.

Recent Financial History

Amidst the challenging economic and fiscal landscape that has flowed from the Great Recession, mission oriented organizations such as SENYLRC have had to curtail services, lay off staff and refine and realign their scope and resources to continue operations. SENYLRC has fared better than some, but the financial overview that follows reveals that it has not been immune to difficult fiscal decisions.

SENYLRC generates its annual budget using multiple accounting funds. This allows it to track revenue by subject matter and assign costs for personnel and other unique costs against the funding that is received to pay for them. The funds used for budgeting purposes include:

- Operating;
- Regional Bibliographic Database (RBDB);
- Hospital Library System Program (HLSP);
- Medical Information Services Program (MISP);
- Vendor; and
- Federal Grants¹⁰

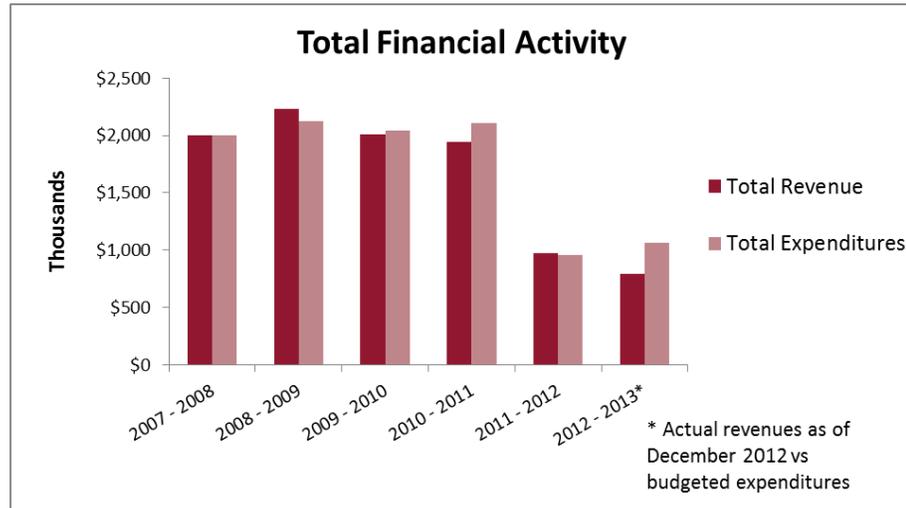
In Fiscal Year (FY) 2007/8, SENYLRC's total expenditures and revenues were essentially equal. In FY 2008/9, the Council experienced a \$105,000

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ CGR did not include the federal grants in this analysis. They represent pass-through funding and vary from year to year.

surplus. However in FYs 2009/10, and 2010/11, the organization operated at a loss.

SENYLRC cut nearly \$1 million out of its \$2 million budget for FY 2011/12 when the Council eliminated the WALDO database service and difficult reductions in personnel and payroll were realized. By the end of FY 2011/12, the Council again managed a small surplus.



Expenditures for FY 2012/13 are not yet complete. However, the majority of expected revenues for the current fiscal year (2012/13) have been received as of the writing of this report. As of December 2012, SENYLRC's actual revenues were nearly \$270,000 below budgeted expenditures for the year. The bulk of this deficit is due to a shortfall in vendor revenue, particularly from a delay in payments by libraries for database services.

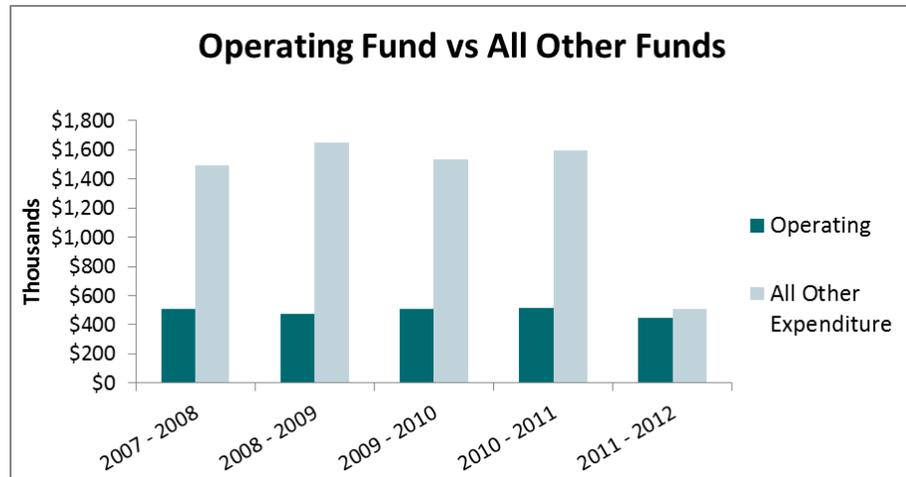
Total Activity	Total Revenue	Total Expenditures	Deficit/Surplus
2007 - 2008	\$1,997	\$1,996	\$1
2008 - 2009	\$2,226	\$2,121	\$106
2009 - 2010	\$2,004	\$2,044	-\$39
2010 - 2011	\$1,940	\$2,108	-\$168
2011 - 2012	\$971	\$959	\$13
2012 - 2013*	\$793	\$1,063	-\$269

Thousands of dollars

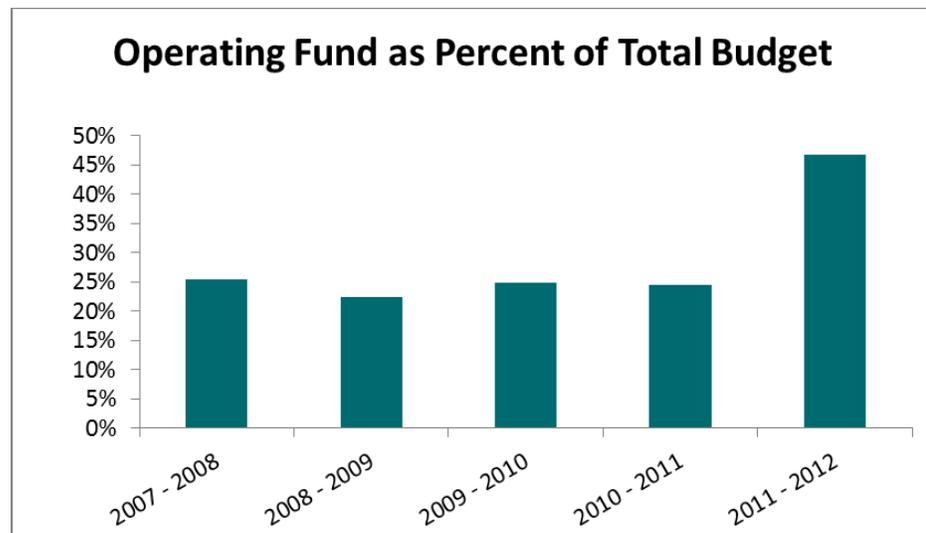
** Actual revenues as of December 2012 vs budgeted expenditures*

Expenditures by Fund

The budget for the operating fund has been relatively flat since FY 2007/08. The graph below highlights this relative to all other budget funds (e.g. HLSP, MISP, etc.).



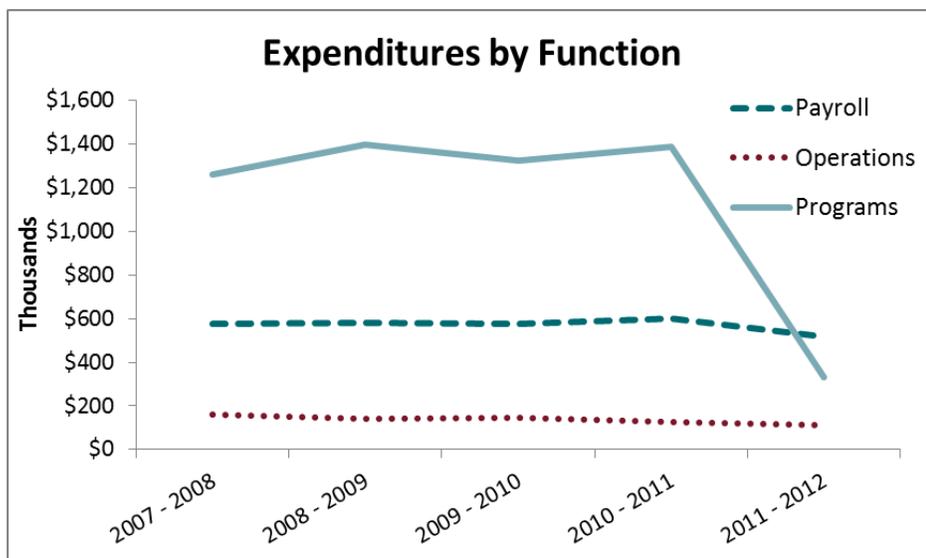
From 2007/08 through 2011/12, the Operating Fund hovered around one quarter of the overall budget. However, as other expenditures were cut, the operating fund has grown as a portion of SENYLRC's total budget. In 2011/12, the operating fund for SENYLRC represented nearly one half of the total budget.



Expenditures by Function

For analysis, CGR divided SENYLRC's expenditures across all funds into three functional service categories: Operations; Salaries and Benefits (Payroll); and Program/Services. Each of these categories cut across all budget "funds" as they were described in the previous section. For instance, there are some operational costs for supplies, overhead for space, equipment etc. that are budgeted in the Operating Fund as well as in the MISP, HLSP and other funds. Similarly, salaries are captured in all funds while programs/services largely fall in the non-operating funds. The goal of this categorization was to view the organization's expenses through a more global lens to determine if any trends emerge.

The largest cost for most organizations is personnel. As seen in the graph below, until 2011/12, that was not the case for SENYLRC. The presence of the WALDO database service caused program/services to be the largest cost center in the SENYLRC budget even though this was primarily a pass through program.¹¹ The removal of revenue and expense for WALDO represented a significant cut in services, and shifted the cost categories so that payroll became the largest cost as of FY 2011/12. Payroll expenses also declined in 2011/12 by nearly \$86,000 from the previous year.



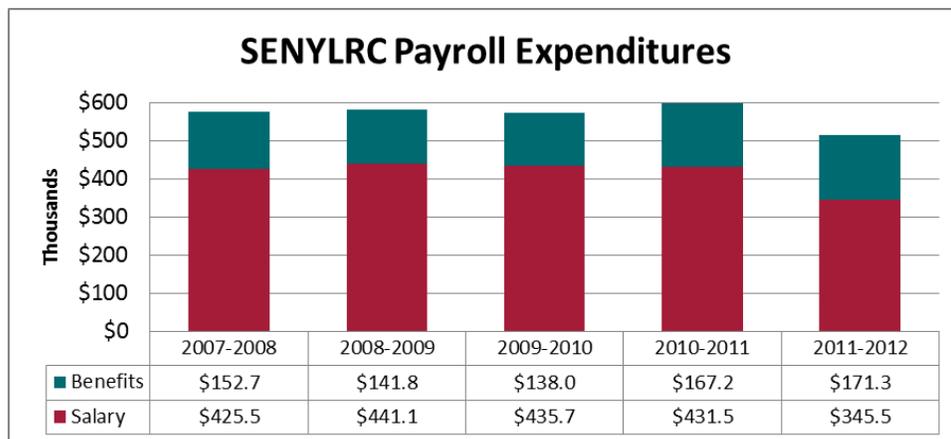
Payroll (Salary and Benefits)¹²

Until 2011/12, payroll expenses accounted for approximately 28% of the overall Council budget. In 2011/12, payroll expenses represented 54% of the overall budget. As noted above, the increase in payroll as a percentage of budget is not due to an increase in payroll but a significant reduction in program expenses by discontinuing the WALDO database service.

In fact, payroll expenses have dropped nearly \$86,000 over the past two years. The salary portion of payroll expenses in the budget has fallen since 2008/09 through a variety of staff cuts and pay decreases. The cost of providing personnel benefits has increased, but not enough to offset the decrease in salaries.

¹¹ The WALDO database service represented a pass through funding stream which significantly skewed the overall budget picture for SENYLRC. Its removal in 2011/12 reveals a more realistic financial profile of the organization.

¹² For the purposes of this report, payroll expenditure refers to salary and benefit expenditures together.



Staff salaries are divided such that portions are budgeted in each of the separate funds. For most staff, the bulk of their salaries are paid through the operating fund. Staff administering or facilitating the other funds have salary lines in those particular funds.

There are a few positions where the salary is paid entirely from non-operating funds or from an array of non-operating funds. For example, in FY 2011/12, the System Manager, Member Services Librarian, and Program Assistant received no portion of their salaries from the operating fund.¹³

Starting in FY 2009/10, notable changes were made in personnel and salaries:

- Between 2008/09 and 2011/12, SENYLRC went from having two full time Program Assistants to one part time Program Assistant (a decrease of approximately \$46,000);
- In FY 2011/12, the Business & Office Manager position was discontinued (a decrease of approximately \$49,000);
- An approximately \$19,000/year Bookkeeper position was added in FY 2011/12;
- Between FYs 2010/11 and 2011/12, the Member Services Librarian position was trimmed by \$27,000; and
- In FYs 2009/10 and 2010/11 the Council held salaries flat with a 0% increase. In 2011/12, they were able to increase salaries by 2%, though some staff hours were reduced.

The net effect of these and other staff changes has been extra strain on existing staff. Some services have been discontinued while others

¹³ The operating fund is used to pay for benefits packages of all employees.

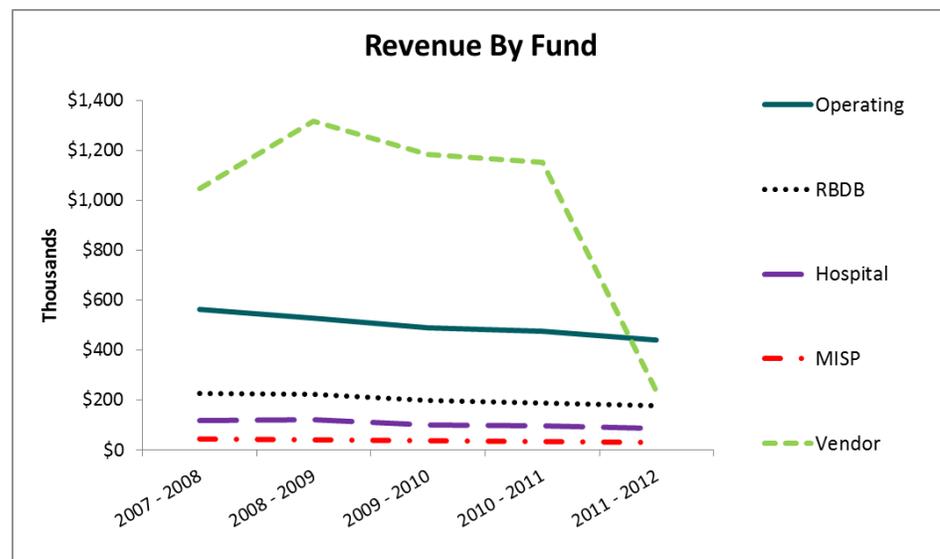
continue but with less investment of time. The table below highlights the changes that have occurred in salaries year over year since 2007/08.

Salaries by fund	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2008/9	2007/8
Operating	\$169	\$243	\$233	\$220	\$210
RBDB	\$108	\$108	\$117	\$129	\$124
HLSF	\$53	\$60	\$68	\$70	\$68
MISP	\$16	\$21	\$19	\$22	\$24
Total	\$345	\$432	\$436	\$441	\$426
Difference	-\$86	-\$4	-\$5	\$16	
% Change	-20%	-1%	-1%	4%	

Thousands of dollars

Revenue by Fund

Operating fund revenue fell steadily during the fiscal years CGR reviewed, and vendor revenue in particular not only dropped, but has been the most variable.



Much of this is due to the cuts in state funding that have affected all the 3Rs in the State. The sharp drop in vendor revenue between 2010/11 and 2011/12 reflects the impact of dropping WALDO from the budget.

Financial Summary

Declining revenue creates a challenge that cannot be ignored. With over 50% of the organization's resources tied to personnel expenses, it is clear that any significant cuts to match losses in revenue may have to involve more cuts to personnel. This may be impractical or impossible given the current programs and services. Any further reduction in services may compromise the mission of the Council, or at the very least further blur the

lines of distinction between SENYLRC and the other library systems. For these reasons, it is both timely and essential for the board to strategically assess the potential for collaboration in order to maintain relevance and financial sustainability.

Other Challenges

As noted in previous sections, SENYLRC faces significant challenges in differentiating itself from the other library systems in the region, and from vendors that have begun to fill the same space. SENYLRC touches a unique market niche relative to the school and public library systems. However, many of the services address the same needs whether the library is private, school, or public. Professional development and coordination of database services, as well as the support provided to the academic institutions may not be enough to encourage members to maintain their relationships going forward. The academics in particular noted that they already receive much of their support from outside of SENYLRC. While they enjoy having the connection, and receive the Coordinated Collection Development Aide (CCDA) funding from the State because of it, they do not find a strong need to maintain the relationship other than for networking with others in the region.

Opportunities

The Council plays an essential role in convening librarians and system directors within the region for networking and support. There is a wide range of expertise and technical capacity in these groups and many expressed a fear of losing the element of “proximity” to the Council. The opportunity this creates may have less to do with specific services and content, and more to do with continuing to support local system directors and cultural heritage organizations with accessible networking and professional development learning opportunities.

This need may be met in a variety of ways administratively, and the Council should look at alternative structures that support this value while simultaneously reducing overhead and taking advantage of new technology. For instance, regional networking and professional development meetings could be held in accessible libraries within the region without emphasizing the need for a bricks and mortar location for SENYLRC. Additionally, trainers and speakers can offer lectures and sessions remotely while groups meet locally for follow-up discussions.

NYS LEGISLATIVE BARRIERS

The legal framework establishing reference and research library resources systems comes from Education Law and is further refined in the

Commissioner of Education Regulations. Education law defines the makeup of 3R territories and the statutory funding formulas for them. The commissioner regulations primarily define governance and membership.

Education Law

Section 272.2 of Education Law requires that each 3R must serve at least 750,000 people based upon the most recent federal census, or not less than 10,000 square miles. The territory must include at least two counties and essentially not infringe upon the territory of another 3R in the State unless the Commissioner determines there is appropriate need.

Funding for 3Rs is comprised of several statutory elements found in section 273.a of the Education Law. Baseline grants for each 3R are set at \$270,000. 3Rs also receive additional money of \$1.50 per square mile and \$.06 per person based upon the most recent federal census. The legislature has cut state aid repeatedly for the last several years (as evidenced in the previous financial analysis section) causing an underfunding of the statutorily required amounts to the 3Rs.

Sections 273.b and 273.c outline additional formula grants that are administered to each of the 3Rs to meet specialized needs for their members. Section 273.b appropriates \$506,000 to provide “formula grants to approved reference and research library resources systems for provision of consumer health and medical information services for all types of libraries and library systems.” Section 273.c appropriates \$1,396,000 to provide “formula grants to approved reference and research library resources systems for provision of services to member hospital libraries in not-for-profit hospitals licensed by the New York State health department, or to member libraries serving such hospitals.” The Commissioner is also authorized to add additional funding to either of these lines as needs arise.

Implications for Consolidation

There are two primary issues for SENYLRC to consider from Education Law as it pertains to consolidation.

1. First, a consolidation with another 3R would have to be approved by the Commissioner of Education. As the territories would infringe upon each other, the consolidation would violate the current statute. Thus, the Commissioner would have to determine there is appropriate need for a consolidation and either make a special provision or adopt special legislation that would accommodate the consolidation.
2. Second, the base grant for each 3R would not be additive in a consolidation. In other words, if two 3Rs were to consolidate, the base grant would be eliminated for one of them.

The other provisions of these statutes would not prevent a consolidation of two or more 3Rs. However, there is currently no framework built into any statute for merging 3Rs with each other. With no consolidation template, there will be many issues that could arise that have not been considered by anyone previously. At minimum, this will add time to a study process.

Consolidating a 3R with another public library system would require a more substantial review of the statutory implications. Since there is more than one public library system in the SENYLRC territory, and several school systems, a full consolidation between SENYLRC and any of these entities would cause overlapping jurisdictions. Additionally, the membership criteria for each system are different. These issues would require accommodating legislation and in-depth study should SENYLRC decide to pursue this option.

A partial or functional consolidation between a 3R and another public system is also feasible. There may be fewer legislative hurdles to overcome, but a thorough review of the statutes would still be advisable. The current Assistant Commissioner for Libraries shared with CGR that he is supportive of new ideas and would be open to considering alternatives that challenge the status quo.

Commissioner of Education Regulations

Section 90.5 of the Commissioner of Education Regulations defines that a 3R must employ a full-time director. The criteria for the director, however, are not unique to a 3R. The position could be filled by a public library system director as the criteria for each are satisfactory for the other. This section also states that a treasurer must be bonded.

Membership for a 3R can include public, school, free association, hospital, and Indian libraries; libraries of educational agencies; libraries of nonprofit organizations; and other special libraries that provide service within the area served by the system. Criteria for membership are determined by the local 3R board of trustees and the Commissioner.

This section also requires that each 3R submit a plan of service and budget report for approval to the Commissioner once a year. The plan of service defines the mutual commitments, responsibilities and obligations of the 3Rs and its members.

Implications for Consolidation

The basic elements of the commissioner's regulations do not create barriers to consolidation of 3Rs with other 3Rs. The primary challenge would be that there is currently no provision for combining boards into a consolidated entity. Similar to Education Law, the Commissioner would have to be involved in this process to assure that appropriate legislative

accommodations were made to account for the lack of definition in the current statute.

These regulations do not adequately address the concept of consolidating a 3R with a public or school library system since there is a different set of requirements among the three system types. Supplying a qualified director may not be an issue, but membership in the 3Rs is substantially different than from those of public and school library systems. A full consolidation between a 3R and a non-3R system would require substantial legislative accommodation.

Partial or functional consolidation between two 3Rs or a 3R and another public library system would not require substantial legislative intervention. It would be advisable to consult closely with the Commissioner and/or his staff during any planning process, but the regulations would not appear to inhibit most collaborative arrangements that maintain separate legal entities.

OPTIONS FOR CONSOLIDATION

There are several options for SENYLRC to consider given the financial, legal and long range service planning issues facing the organization. The options range along a continuum from the status quo through full consolidation. Some options can be pursued independent of the State Commissioner, while others would have to be tracked closely and have substantial investment from the Commissioner in order to operationalize them.

Status Quo

SENYLRC is currently in a long range planning process that could result in a better suite of services for its members. The current review of fees charged for those services could result in a relief of fiscal pressure provided existing membership supports the changes by renewing their membership. Additionally, the core identity and proximity of SENYLRC is valuable to the existing membership, and current leadership may deem this too valuable to change.

While identity, proximity and local support are valuable to current members, SENYLRC will continue to face pressure to differentiate services and maintain its relevance moving forward. There will continue to be pressure from outside vendors, and the large contingent of academics will continue to find their primary support from outside of SENYLRC. Decoupling the CCDA funding from the membership requirement would remove the most significant benefit for academics to be members of SENYLRC. While there is no current legislative initiative on the horizon

to make this happen, it underscores the reality that the academics are already largely operating without the support of SENYLRC.

Staffing has been cut for several years, placing more pressure on remaining staff to provide high quality services. Several of the services have had to be scaled back or cut altogether meaning the cadre of services and ultimately the benefit provided by SENYLRC has been reduced for several years in a row. The board has been engaged in a strategic planning process as it is well aware of all of these issues. The process acknowledges that some change is necessary, but there is also a desire to do so incrementally recognizing the valuable role an independent Southeastern fills for its members. The board must determine whether the incremental change of the current process is adequate to address the market forces weighing on the Council, or whether existing resources could be better leveraged in a shared service or consolidation agreement.

Shared Services

The driving force behind the SENYLRC strategic planning process is the need to define the core competency of the organization relative to its market niche. The unique makeup of the member organizations, such as the cultural heritage organizations, suggests that digitization efforts for HRVH members will keep SENYLRC relevant for the foreseeable future. But that relevance will not extend to all of its membership, and other services will increasingly overlap with vendors and other library systems.

Professional development, training and technology infrastructure support are particular areas where SENYLRC may not have a competitive advantage in the future. All of the public library systems that were interviewed, as well as the other 3Rs, expressed interest in expanding the types of collaborative service sharing opportunities that are offered. Streamlining these services, leveraging expertise across systems, and allocating resources where they are most needed could be done in the short term, even as longer term consolidation issues are studied.

Service Sharing Agreement to Consolidate Administrative Functions

One step beyond service sharing would be to develop an agreement to consolidate administrative functions with another 3R. Administrative functions could include consolidating the executive director positions, assistant director positions, and support staff roles such as bookkeeper or treasurer. The goal would be to eliminate the cost for certain overhead positions and possibly streamline some of the oversight and reporting functions in order to reallocate some funding to programs and services. The logistical challenges would be difficult to navigate, and further investigation would be required regarding implementation. There are no

current known legislative barriers, and funding would not be reduced as long as both 3Rs remained in existence. Both would still have to submit plans of service and budget reports to Library Development.

Functional Consolidation

An agreement to consolidate all functional services of two or more 3Rs represents another option for SENYLRC to consider. A functional consolidation could result in a more streamlined staff both administratively and in programs and services that serve an enlarged territory. In a functional consolidation, one 3R may take over the services provided by the other, particularly if there is a level of expertise that exists. If all services were consolidated, but each 3R retained its legal status, it is possible that more resources could be allocated to programs and services. This is not guaranteed, however, as staffing has already been cut to account for revenue cutbacks.

A functional consolidation would still require that two plans of service be developed each year, two applications be submitted and two annual reports be produced. The State would still require all this documentation to be submitted annually for each 3R.

The other challenge to a functional consolidation is that there is no current provision to combine the boards of two or more 3Rs. Thus, staff would report to two separate boards. The success of this arrangement would depend on the collaboration and willingness of each board to support the structure. It may be possible to hold joint board meetings regularly, provided a suitable venue could accommodate the group. However, this would not be required as both entities would retain their legal status. A situation where two boards were asking a single staff to work at cross purposes to accommodate two sets of goals could create inefficiency and put additional strain on staff.

Full Consolidation with another 3R

A full consolidation of two or more 3Rs is feasible. As noted earlier, the largest drawback would be the potential loss of base grant funding. This will need to be reviewed again by the Commissioner prior to any formal agreement being adopted to consolidate. Other potential detriments to this relationship include:

- Loss of identity for current members as the territory expands;
- Reduced attendance at events if professional development opportunities are offered outside of the area; and
- Loss of awareness of member needs.

The benefits of this type of arrangement vary from streamlining reporting requirements to the State (e.g. one plan of service, one application, one annual report), to streamlining administrative personnel and other operational overhead. Leveraging expertise that exists between 3Rs while maximizing the allocation of resources to programs and services could yield the most significant benefit in this option.

Consolidation with Other Library Systems

There are many hurdles in place for SENYLRC, or any 3R to merge with a public or school library system. Those hurdles include, but are not limited to, different definitions of membership eligibility, different criteria for funding, different boundary limitations, and different service type needs based upon the members that are served. Some of these are service level considerations that could be potentially resolved during a consolidation study process. However, many of these are legal hurdles that could only be resolved by changing state law and/or developing special legislation.

The magnitude of the changes should not prevent SENYLRC from exploring the idea. The purpose of considering this option would be much larger than determining a future for SENYLRC. The myriad of library systems that has developed over many years in New York State has created a fragmentation in implementing the vision for library services as defined by the Board of Regents and the Regents Advisory Council on Libraries. The vision defined in their 2020 document clearly articulates a more streamlined system with the goal of leveraging technology to enhance the services that are provided to all New Yorkers. This would cut across the many silos that have developed over time and would require a significant overhaul of how library services are rendered across the State.

SENYLRC has willing partners (as discussed in the next section) and has demonstrated through this feasibility study that it is willing to explore a difficult concept. A comprehensive study of this process is warranted, and the result may be a barometer for other 3Rs as well as for the State Library regarding the feasibility of restructuring a complicated and layered system.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS FOR FUTURE STUDY

The most synergistic choice for collaboration with SENYLRC is the Capital District Library Council (CDLC). The culture of the two organizations and the makeup of the membership are substantially similar, as is the service mix. Interviews with CDLC's executive director and board chair revealed a willingness to explore an enhanced partnership, and

the contiguous geography does not represent a barrier. The following table outlines some key metrics for comparing the two 3Rs.

3R	Population*	SQMI	Members**
Capital District	1,110,577	7,197	64
SENYLRC	1,455,651	5,574	96
Combined	2,566,228	12,771	160

*2010 Revised

**30 of the 96 SENYLRC organizations are HRVH members. Capital District does not have an equivalent membership category.

The SENYLRC geography is smaller in square miles and shorter by distance from its furthest points. It is approximately 100 miles long and 80 miles across. Meetings that are central to the region can be driven to in less than one hour from almost any location.

The Capital District 3R is approximately 120 miles long at its furthest points and 75 miles across. Albany represents the obvious regional gathering point and is accessible throughout the region in less than two hours of drive time.

Interestingly, Albany is almost equidistant from the northern most edge of the Capital District 3R territory to the southernmost area of the Southeastern territory (about 110 miles either direction). Drive time from the furthest points in each territory would be under two hours in smooth traffic.

CGR considered drive time as an essential component for the feasibility of merging the two 3Rs. Proximity to resources, training and professional development events, and the ability for staff to do site visits were important factors cited during interviews. Interviewees expressed fear that the needs of Southeastern members may be lost in consolidation with the Capital District. Members want to be assured that the services they use and the networking they rely on will remain accessible to them. Drive time of up to two hours would not significantly reduce the accessibility of members to training events.

The Capital District is a good example for SENYLRC to follow in regards to shared service ideas. They already share a finance person and other technology staff with the Upper Hudson Public Library System (UHPLS). In addition to staffing, they currently share space limiting overhead costs to operate the CDLC. Whether through expanded shared services or a review of full consolidation, the CDLC will be an ally for the Council as it explores its options.

Other Partners

There are two other potential partners if SENYLRC chooses to move forward with a full consolidation study. Both the Ramapo-Catskill and Mid-Hudson Public Library Systems expressed willingness to engage in a study of the potential for consolidation. They acknowledge the inherent difficulties, but also the potential to be creative and consider alternatives.

Metro 3R is open to the possibility of partnering, but it sees itself as geographically and demographically unique from SENYLRC. Metro expressed openness to consider shared service ideas and wants to engage in more strategic discussions about how to make 3Rs more relevant to their members. The needs represented by the members of Metro are substantially different than those represented by SENYLRC and would likely create significant challenges for a consolidated entity to resolve.

The school library systems did not see a direct correlation between SENYLRC and themselves. They were supportive of SENYLRC and expressed a willingness to partner on venues for professional development. They were concerned that a consolidated entity might make it harder to access Advisory Council meetings, but they did not cite that as a reason for SENYLRC not to move forward with its process.

Similar to Metro, Westchester Public Library System is an outlier in this process. Because they belong to the Metro 3R, they are limited in their ability to partner with SENYLRC. Geographically, however, they are closer to and more similar to the public library systems in the Southeastern region. While they identify with the SENYLRC region, there may not be potential for partnership or collaboration. However, they expressed support for the potential consolidation of 3Rs from a digital literacy perspective. The opportunity to grow online training and conferencing is available and technology affords new opportunities to become more mobile.

The academic institutions do not represent potential partners for consolidation. Their governance and funding are tightly intertwined with their local college or university and it would be difficult to see SENYLRC building a consolidated partnership with any single institution. Some of the professional development topics are suitable to the academics, and those interviewed expressed a willingness to travel further to partake in the offerings if the 3Rs eventually did consolidate.

Challenges

The challenges to a future consolidation are many. They include:

- Maintaining the unique identity of Southeastern in the context of a new and larger geography and membership;
- Counteracting the fear of loss of a local partner and resource for the sake of networking and professional development;
- Addressing rising costs and allocating scarce resources to programs and services;
- Improving sharing across libraries and resourcing them to support that goal;
- Working through the implications of the physical delivery process of an expanded territory; and
- Accounting for the financial disincentive from the State for consolidating with another 3R.

Other challenges may emerge as the Council engages in a formal consolidation process. Many of the challenges exist because no one has taken the time to figure out a solution. SENYLRC may be in the position to establish a protocol for addressing these issues going forward.

Opportunities

As noted above, SENYLRC has many willing partners to pursue a consolidation study. The timing for this study is opportune considering the willingness of partners and the current economic climate. In addition, State Library Development and the Board of Regents have expressed a strong willingness to look creatively at structures and systems to assure that they align with the resources available to advance library services across the State.

Several other opportunities were cited during this process. They include:

- Partners for the academics in the Southeastern region could expand;
- The links between libraries are already growing (SLS, PLS, Academics) and consolidation could tap resources or trends that would further benefit this organic process; and
- Many programs need to be changed and a consolidation effort could yield an opportune time to review the merits of all programs to determine what remains relevant in today's changing market.

CONCLUSION

The continuum of opportunities for SENYLRC ranges from maintaining the status quo to considering full consolidation with another 3R or public

library system. The existence of willing partners (both 3R and public), supportive state officials, and a changing landscape for delivering library services suggests that SENYLRC should move forward with studying the idea of full consolidation. The issue will require further analysis to adequately determine how staff and services would be impacted, and what the fiscal impact would be on the partner organizations. An engaged study team should include members from all participating organizations as well as someone from the State to help lend perspective and carry concerns back to state officials. Engaging all stakeholders, including membership, will be essential to assuring that the process is both open and transparent.

Should the Council decide not to pursue consolidation, there are many avenues to explore for enhanced shared services. Synthesizing professional development and training across multiple systems, improving digitization efforts, sharing best practices and enhancing technological capacity for member organizations all represent the type of shared services that could provide a more efficient use of resources. Reaching further and functionally consolidating some or all services with another organization could also yield savings over time. These types of efforts do not have to be engaged in all at once. In fact, small incremental steps to establish partnerships and share resources are often more successful than wholesale change. Over time, as two organizations share more together, the lines become increasingly blurred between the two leading to the obvious question of why both still exist. At that point, the issues of consolidation become more pragmatic and less emotional.

The strategic planning process for SENYLRC has the potential to radically alter the organization and change its future. The needs of libraries across the State are changing and the fragmented system that serves all of them will require out of the box thinking and fresh perspective. SENYLRC is poised to offer leadership for all systems across the State by continuing to assess options for achieving a more effective, sustainable structure.

APPENDIX I – COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND KEY INTERVIEWS

Study Committee

The process was overseen by a Systems Structure Exploratory Committee made up of members of the SENYLRC board as well as other interested parties identified by the leadership of SENYLRC. The study committee members were:

- Mary Jo Russell, Manager of Library Services, Vassar Brothers Medical Center
- Merribeth Advocate, Assistant Director, Mid-Hudson Library System
- Kari Mack, Library Director, Ulster Community College
- Danielle Yeomans, Director, Ulster BOCES School Library System
- Stephan Macaluso, Ex Officio (Board President), Director of Distance Learning, SUNY at New Paltz
- John Shaloiko, Executive Director, SENYLRC
- Tessa Killian, Associate Director, SENYLRC
- Cathy Carl, Library Director, Dutchess Community College
- Kevin Gallagher, Member-at-Large (formerly, Director of Thrall Public Library)

Key Interviews

Interviews were conducted with individuals that were either suggested to CGR or who requested to be interviewed for this process. The list of interviewees included:

- Mike Nyerges, Director of Mid-Hudson PLS
- Merribeth Advocate, Staff Member of Mid-Hudson PLS
- Robert Hubsher, Director of Ramapo-Catskill PLS
- Priscilla Brendler, Director of Greater Hudson Heritage Network
- Jackie Haley, Board Member of Greater Hudson Heritage Network
- Carol Ann Desch, Coordinator of Statewide Library
- Barbara Lilley, State Library Development Specialist
- Cassandra Artale, State Library Development Specialist
- Bernie Margolis, State Librarian and Assistant Commissioner for Libraries
- Jean Sheviak, Executive Director of Capital District Library Council
- Tim Burke, Board President of Capital District Library Council and Director of Upper Hudson PLS

- Jason Kucsma, Executive Director of Metro Library Council
- Terry Kirchner, Director of Westchester PLS
- Danielle Yeomans, Director of Ulster BOCES SLS
- Rebecca Gerald, Coordinator of Dutchess BOCES SLS
- Anthony Hosmer, Rockland BOCES SLS
- Lynn Miller, Director of Sullivan BOCES SLS
- Sabrina Pape, Vassar College Library
- Mark Colvson, Director of Sojourner Truth Library, SUNY New Paltz

APPENDIX II – SENYLRC STRATEGIC PLAN



**Southeastern NY Library Resources Council
Strategic Plan**

FY 2012-2015

March 15, 2012
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page Number</u>
I Strategic Planning Process	3
II Organizational Mission Statement	4
III Summary of Environmental Scan	5
IV Strategic Initiatives	6
V Strategic Plan Initiatives with Detailed Action Plans	7- 19

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Executive Director of the Southeastern NY Library Resources Council (SENYLRC) along with the Board of Trustees is accountable for the development and coordination of strategic and financial planning for the organization. In November 2011, Jon Allen of Performance Matters, Inc. was hired by the Executive Director to facilitate a strategic planning process for the organization and to assist in the development of a FY 2012-2015 strategic plan.

In December 2011, the Consultant conducted an employee focus group to solicit their input as part of identifying the internal strengths and weaknesses of the agency. A summary of those focus groups is included as Attachment B. In addition, the Finance Manager provided historical financial data to provide a context for the strategic planning process.

In January 2012, an online survey was sent out to all SENYLRC members to solicit their input on the value of the agency's programs and services and their satisfaction levels with the work performed on their behalf. A copy of the results from the online survey is included as Attachment C. In addition, during the month of January, a series of focus groups were conducted by the Consultant with a variety of SENYLRC member libraries. A summary of those focus groups is included as Attachment D.

In February 2012, a survey of all SENYLRC Board members was conducted to gather their feedback on the strategic direction for the agency as well as input on the effectiveness of the Board. The results of that survey are included as Attachment E.

The planning approach that was used included an Environmental Scan to first identify the internal weaknesses and strengths of the organization and to review the external threats and opportunities facing the agency. Drawing upon the input from the various stakeholder groups, the Consultant prepared a detailed SWOT Analysis which is included as Attachment F.

An offsite planning retreat was held in February 2012 which included all SENYLRC Board members and key leadership staff. The purpose of the planning retreat was to discuss the results of the Environmental Scan (SWOT Analysis) and to begin drafting a set of potential Strategic Initiatives.

The Consultant then drafted a set of specific action steps related to each of the Strategic Initiatives which were then reviewed and edited by the

leadership staff and members of the Strategic Planning Committee. Based upon the background information that was compiled from these various activities, a first draft of a strategic plan document was prepared by the Consultant for review and editing by the Executive Director and the Strategic Planning Committee.

ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Southeastern NY Library Resources Council is to support its members in the Mid-Hudson Valley in order to enrich their services and enhance access to information for their users.

Goals:

Achieve service excellence in libraries by:

- Thoughtfully applying emerging technologies to resource sharing, collection building, information access and communications;
- Providing imaginative, accessible and relevant development opportunities for staff at all levels;
- Becoming a focal point for the exchange of ideas, collaboration, the development of new tools and the promotion of the transforming power of libraries.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Discussions and focus groups contributed to a scan of SENYLRC’s internal and external environment. Using the SWOT Analysis technique the information gathered was classified into internal strengths (S) or weaknesses (W), and external opportunities (O) or threats (T).

Internal	<p>Strengths</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff valued by members; professional and supportive; staff and Board are open to change; Board supportive of SENYLRC; easily accessible location. 2. Networking; professional development; meet the needs of many types of libraries; collaborative. 3. Digitization services; consortia purchasing; IT support. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of communication about SENYLRC’s value and benefits to members. 2. Program and membership are too broadly defined; lack membership and programmatic focus. 3. Financial resources are limited, resulting in a reduced staff. Highly valued services may not be what members are willing to pay for (e.g. networking, helpful staff that are responsive).
External	<p>Opportunities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Examine member needs to determine what services need to be continued, changed, added or discontinued. Rethink how we offer programs and services (use new technologies). 2. Financial opportunities: fees for service, rent space, identify revenue generation for services; rethink fee structures. 3. Identify collaborations and partnerships among members, regionally and statewide to achieve higher effectiveness and efficiency. 	<p>Threats</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Multiple organizations provide similar services and creates competition and overlapping services with SENYLRC. Members not renewing because of several factors, including the lack of beneficial services from the Council. 2. The role of libraries is changing and there is a lack in State-level leadership and vision for libraries and library systems. 3. The economy affects both library (members) funding and funding provided to SENYLRC.

Note: The summary above is based on an analysis of the comments and ideas presented and discussed in the focus groups and from the online member survey. Please refer to Attachment F for a more detailed list of this information.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- 1 Revisit the role of SENYLRC in the library community to determine who and how we can best serve in today's environment of fiscal constraints and rapidly changing technology. This may result in redefining the mission of SENYLRC and the exploration of greater collaboration and potential affiliations with other library systems.**

- 2 Review and assess the viability of programs and services to determine which ones are effective for the various membership types. Establish the appropriate pricing strategies to support the organization, considering the costs among other factors.**

- 3 Reorganize internal staff assignments and board committees to facilitate the focus needed on new SENYLRC priorities and to ensure regular monitoring of the new strategic plan by the Board.**

- 4 Develop a plan to enhance communications with key stakeholders (clients and funders) regarding the value of SENYLRC in the library field with a focus on core services.**

SENYLRC STRATEGIC INITIATIVES 2012-2015

ACTION STEPS

Strategic Initiative #1

Revisit the role of SENYLRC in the library community to determine who and how we can best serve in today's environment of fiscal constraints and rapidly changing technology. This may result in redefining the mission of SENYLRC and the exploration of greater collaboration and potential affiliations with other library systems.

Action Steps	Person(s) / Group Responsible	Target Dates
Conduct informal preliminary discussions with library system management & staff from the Southeastern NY Library Resources Council and the Capital District Library Council to identify issues, challenges, potential roadblocks regarding shared services / system consolidation	Board President, Director, Associate Director	2012, May – July
Conduct a panel discussion at the 2012 Annual Meeting on June 1 to solicit feedback on this Initiative	Board of Trustees / Director	2012, April-June
Explore grant possibilities to fund a feasibility study focusing on shared services, consolidation or merger	Director	2012, July – August
Create an ad hoc system merger exploratory committee composed of members of the Board, staff, and a select number of managers from member organizations of the systems	Board Executive Committee, Director, Associate Director	2012, July – August

Action Steps	Person(s) / Group Responsible	Target Dates
involved		
Identify and contract with a planning/management consultant to guide the feasibility study in conjunction with an exploratory committee	Director, Board President, Exploratory Committee	2012, July – September
Merger exploratory committee meet on an ongoing basis with management consultant	Exploratory committee	2012 – 2013
Review the mission and vision statements and revise if and as appropriate	Director, Board	TBD
Implement recommendations of feasibility study	Board, Director, staff	2014, July

Strategic Initiative #2

Review and assess the viability of programs and services to determine which ones are effective for the various membership types. Establish the appropriate pricing strategies to support the

organization, considering the costs among other factors.

Action Steps	Person(s) / Group Responsible	Target Dates
Determine value vs. true costs and/or alternative service options for all SENYLRC services in relation to each organization they primarily benefit:	SENYLRC staff and an ad hoc review group/committee, including members, for each service	2012 – 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing education and staff development for library and cultural heritage staff 	SENYLRC staff and an ad hoc review group/committee for each service	2012 – 2015 (ongoing)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore pricing structure for member dues, administrative fees and fees for services 	Director, Associate Director, Board	2012, July – December
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional resource sharing, including SEAL, OCLC, DOCLINE, virtual union catalog, medical/consumer health requests 	SENYLRC staff and an ad hoc review group/committee for each service	2012, July – December
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinated collection development to support CCDA grants to academic libraries 	SENYLRC staff and an ad hoc review group/committee for each service	2012, July – September
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service to hospital libraries, including consulting, website development/maintenance, electronic resource subsidy 	SENYLRC staff and an ad hoc review group/committee for each service	2012, August – October
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Library Catalog service -- OPAC and cataloging 	SENYLRC staff and an ad hoc review group/committee for each service	2012, August – October
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital repository service – HRVH Hudson River Valley Heritage 	SENYLRC staff and an ad hoc review group/committee for each service	2012, October – December
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IT support and consulting 	SENYLRC staff and an ad hoc review group/committee for each service	2013, January – March

Action Steps	Person(s) / Group Responsible	Target Dates
Upon quarterly reporting by the Director to the Board on the statewide service initiatives developed by the NY3Rs Association, Inc., continue participation by SENYLRC in these initiatives, including an annual funding contribution to the NY3Rs for such initiatives.	Director, Board, staff	2012 – 2015
Prioritize grant seeking opportunities and establish guidelines for application process and grants management	Director, Associate Director	2012, July – September

Strategic Initiative #3

Reorganize internal staff assignments and board committees to facilitate the focus needed on new SENYLRC priorities and to ensure regular monitoring of the new strategic plan by the Board.

Action Steps	Person(s) / Group Responsible	Target Dates
Foster an organization culture that is proactive in identifying and communicating new service opportunities that fit within SENYLRC's mission and vision	Board, staff	2012 – 2015
Redefine the structure of the Board of Trustees to infuse new and additional expertise	Board Executive Committee, Trustee Nominating Committee, Director	2012, April – June
Review management responsibilities and adjust as appropriate to allocate resources for the organization review leading to shared services/consolidation	Director, Board President, Associate Director	2012, May – August
Review the structure of the committees of the Board that will result in a more active and meaningful input and decision-making process, considering the following board committees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning (including SI implementation and consolidation feasibility) • Finance and Audit Review • Personnel and Human Resources • Programs and Services • Bylaws • Trustee and Officer Nominating 	Board Executive Committee, Director	2012, June – July (or August – October)
Enhance the Board orientation process	Board President, other board member(s), Director	2012, June – July

Action Steps	Person(s) / Group Responsible	Target Dates
Review the agenda structure and meeting calendar of Board meetings and revise if necessary to incorporate annual strategic initiative program review, board/council committee work, and “board education”	Board Executive Committee	2012, June – July
Formulate a procedure for annual goal setting and resulting annual evaluation process of the Executive Director	Board Executive Committee	2012, July – August
Review and redefine SENYLRC staff position responsibilities to support service priorities	Director, Associate Director	2012, July – October
Establish annual goals for staff based on service priorities and ensure regular practice of annual staff evaluations.	Director, Associate Director, with appropriate staff	2012, September – October
Determine the value of an annual “retreat of the board” and implement the timing and structure of such an event	Executive Committee, Board, Director	2012, October – December
Propose revisions to the bylaws based upon strategic initiative outcomes	Board Bylaws Committee, Board	2013, April – June

Strategic Initiative #4

Develop a plan to enhance communications with key stakeholders (clients and funders) regarding the value of SENYLRC in the library field with a focus on core services.

Action Steps	Person(s) / Group Responsible	Target Dates
Conduct visits to member organizations	SENYLRC staff	2012 – 2015
Contract with a PR consultant with public relations and social media expertise	Director, Associate Director	2013, April – June
Determine how to target state legislators with the SENYLRC / NY3Rs message and value and implement a communication strategy	SENYLRC staff	2012, July – December
Create a communication strategy for sharing information effectively with SENYLRC's target population; methods may include newsletter, blog, website, use of social networking, annual meeting, etc.	Director, Associate Director, staff , PR consultant	2013 July – December
Implement the communication strategy	PR Consultant, SENYLRC staff	2013, July-December

APPENDIX III – LIBRARY-RELATED ACRONYMS

SENYLRC* (Southeastern New York Library Resources Council) Specific:

DAC – Digital Advisory Committee
HLSP – Hospital Library Services Program
HRVH – Hudson River Valley Heritage
MISP – Medical Information Services Program
RIC – Regional Interlibrary Loan Committee
SEAL – SouthEastern Access to Libraries
SSLC – Southeastern Special Library Catalog
TRAC – Technology Review & Advisory Committee
VUC – Virtual Union Catalog
SEULS – SouthEastern Union List of Serials

New York State Specific:

ACRL – Association of College and Research Libraries
ALLUNY – Association of Law Librarians of Upstate New York
ASLS – Academic and Special Libraries Section (of NYLA)
ConnectNY – Coalition of 18 NY Academic Libraries
CDLC* – Capital District Library Council
CLRC* – Central New York Library Resources Council
BOCES – Board of Cooperative Educational Services
DHP – Documentary Heritage Program (in cooperation with NYS Archives)
DLD – (New York State Library) Division of Library Development
GHHN – Greater Hudson Heritage Network
IDS – Information Delivery System (an academic interlibrary loan service in New York State)
LARC – Library Association of Rockland County
LILRC – Long Island Library Resources Council
METRO* – Metropolitan New York Library Resources Council
MHLS – Mid-Hudson Library System
MuseumWise – service provider for museums in New York State
NNYLN* – Northern New York Library Network
NOVEL – New York Online Virtual Electronic Library
NOVELNY – NYS Online Virtual Electronic Library

NY3Rs – Reference and Research Library Resources Systems

NYALS – New York Alliance of Library Systems (a coalition of New York State library systems and their directors)

NYLA – New York Library Association

NYSHEI – New York State Higher Education Initiative (an organization of public and private academic and research libraries in New York State)

NYSL – New York State Library

PuLiSDO -- Public Library Systems Directors Organization (New York State)

RBDB – Regional Bibliographic Database (and Resource Sharing) Program

RCLS – Ramapo-Catskill Library System

RRLC* – Rochester Regional Library Council

SED – State Education Department

SCRLC* – South Central Regional Library Council

WALDO – Westchester Academic Library Director's Organization

WLS – Westchester Public Library System

WNYLRC* – Western New York Library Resources Council

National:

ALA – American Library Association

CCDA – Coordinated Collection Development Aid

CONTENTdm – Content Data Management (owned by OCLC)

DHP – Documentary Heritage Program

DPLA – Digital Public Library of America

ICOLC – International Coalition of Library Consortia

III – Innovative Interfaces Inc, (an integrated library system used by some libraries in our region)

ILL – Inter Library Loan

IMLS – Institute of Museum and Library Services

KOHA – An open source Integrated Library System (ILS), used world-wide by public, school and special libraries. The name comes from a Māori term for a gift or donation.

LSTA – Library Services and Technology Act (Federal)

MARC – MACHine Readable Cataloging

MLA – Medical Library Association

NEH – National Endowment for the Humanities

NLM – National Library of Medicine

NNLM – National Network of Libraries of Medicine

OCLC – a global library cooperative governed by its members, providing technology solutions to libraries

OPAC – Online Public Access Catalog

PLS – Public Library System

RDA – Resource Description & Access (new standard for resource description [cataloging] and access in the digital world)

SAA – Society of American Archivists

SLA – Special Libraries Association

SLS – School Library System

SLSA – School Library Systems Association

VDX – Virtual Document Exchange (owned by OCLC)

This Feasibility Report was made possible through a Management Assistance Program Grant from the Dyson Foundation, Millbrook, NY.

The Dyson Foundation works toward improving people's lives through grant funding, promoting philanthropy, and strengthening the capacity of nonprofit organizations, with special interest in New York's Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Putnam and Ulster counties.