Long-term Impact of COVID-19 Working Group: Initial Findings

A preliminary report of the Working Group investigating ongoing needs and long-term implications for Federal Depository Libraries of the COVID-19 pandemic

Members

DLC Working Group Members

- Aimée Quinn

- Allen Moye

- Richard Leiter

- Lisa Pritchard

- Rick Mikulski (Chair)

- Susanne Caro (Secretary)

- Hayley Johnson

DLC Working Group Members

- Lara Flint
- Abigail McDermott
- Cynthia Etkin (DFO)

Today's Presenters and Moderators

- Aimée Quinn
- Cynthia Etkin
- Lisa Pritchard
- Rick Mikulski

Charge

This working group will examine the practices, policies, and procedures enacted by FDLs since March 2020 as they adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it will assess the long-term impact of these efforts at the institutional and national level. It will examine pandemic practices, policies, and procedures enacted by FDLs and the GPO relating to services, procedures, collections, staffing, etc., and it will assess whether such policies may or should continue into the post pandemic era.

Scope of this Initial Report

- Provide update on process of Working Group.

- Provide overview of initial feedback from Biennial Survey.

- Provide information on Working Group's data analysis methods and processes.

- Outline next steps.

Note: All data in this study was collected in late 2021 / early 2022 as part of the 2021 Biennial Survey, so trends reflect a point in time.

Methodology

- Data was collected as part of the 2021 Biennial Survey.
  Question 6: "In which areas, if any, has your institution implemented new policies and/or procedural changes as a result of COVID-19?"
  - The question was broken into subtopics/categories:
    - Collection maintenance and weeding
    - Instructional and Educational Services
    - Interlibrary Loan Services
    - Item selection / FDLP selection profile
    - Outreach Services
    - Processing
    - Public access
    - Reference Services
    - Shelving
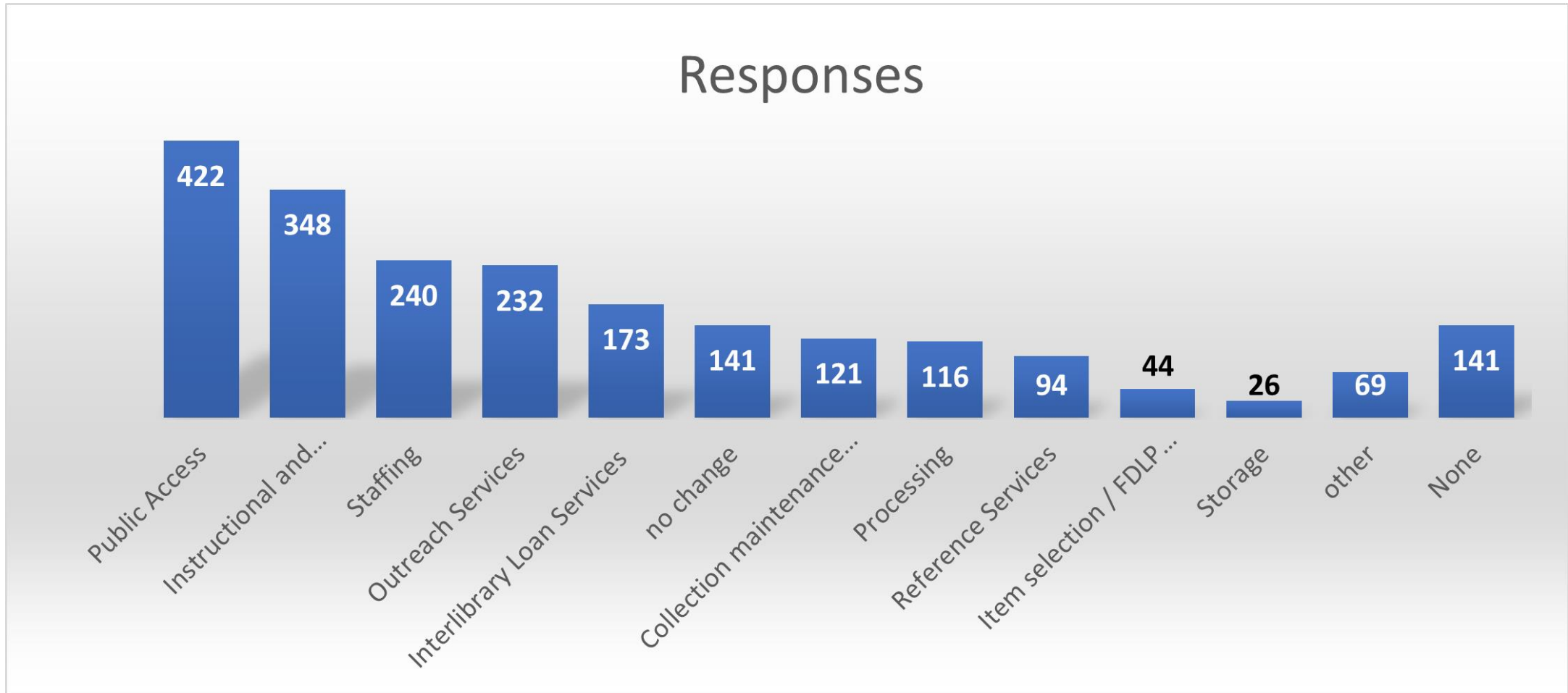   - Staffing
    - Storage
    - Other

Methodology (Continued)

- After responses were collected, data was compiled by GPO and provided to Working Group as a spreadsheet.

- The topical categories of Question 1 ([a] through [m]) were broken up among the 10 members of the Working Group for examination.

- Small teams (three members each) were assigned to examined the topical subcategories and identify key themes from the responses.

- This information was shared back with the full Working Group.

- The summaries shared in the following slide are anonymized summaries of themes and threads reported by the respondents.

Overview Data from Biennial Survey

Responses

Public Access	422
Instructional and…	348
Staffing	240
Outreach Services	232
Interlibrary Loan Services	173
no change	141
Collection maintenance…	121
Processing	116
Reference Services	94
Item selection / FDLP …	44
Storage	26
other	69
None	141

Organization of Report

- Administration Related:
  - Public Access
  - Staffing
  - Other
- Collection Related:
  - Collection maintenance and weeding
  - Shelving
  - Storage
  - Item selection / FDLP selection profile
  - Processing
- Service Related:
  - Reference Service
  - Instructional and Educational Services
  - Outreach Services
  - ILL Services

Public Access

- More demand for public computers
- Reduced hours
- Access by appointments only
- Closed to public or closed stacks
- Limited public access
- Limited to local community
- Focus on virtual services
- Restricted # of patrons in building
- Restricted access

- No printing
- Remote services only
- Items only accessible through reserve
- Masks required
- Prove of vaccination required
- Totally closed /no services
- Curbside services
- Security stations created to restrict access
- Online services only

Staffing

- Remote Work
- New and Additional Duties
- Reassignments
- Retirements
- Furloughs

- Hiring Freezes
- Health and Safety Protocols
- Staff Reductions
- Unfilled Vacancies
- Flex Schedules

"Other"

- Physical changes to the library

- Use of new technologies:
  - Mobile hotspots
  - Lockers
  - New checkout tools and technology

- Fines waived

- Extended lending

- Daily health checks

Collection Maintenance and Weeding

- Collection maintenance and weeding projects suspended/paused/halted
    - Example reason: limited access to physical collections/staff working remotely
    - Example reason: discard review databases paused (ASERL Docs, FDLP eXchange)
- Collection maintenance and weeding projects launched/prioritized
    - Example: more weeding because library was closed to users, staff still onsite
    - Example: library facilities reorganized, including moving materials to offsite storage
- Collection development policy changes, with an increased focus on e-resources, streamlined acquisitions for tangible materials that also allowed for quarantining materials and providing social distance for staff working onsite

Shelving

- Shelving (as a work process and as a facility resource) was impacted by staff limitations and facilities closures

- Facility closures

- Remote work

- New procedures to deal with potential COVID contamination
  - Ex. use of masks and gloves, and wiping down materials before shelving

- Space reallocation in library facilities

- Quarantine materials in a separate area before re-shelving

- Impacted by staffing turnover

Storage

- Interruptions to access of offsite storage facilities

- Facility reallocation away from materials storage to other uses
  - Example: storage areas repurposed for use as student/user work/study areas and more socially-distanced staff work areas

- Quarantine procedures impacted storage space because they required a dedicated area for holding materials before re-shelving

Item selection / FDLP selection profile

- Focus on digital and prioritization of digital

- Deselection of print

- Staff issues impact ability to actively curate selection profile

- Focus on cataloging and discovery

Processing

- Covid Heath Protocols:
  - quarantines, physical distancing, cleaning & limited staff on site
- Shipment/Physical Processing Stoppages
- Processing off-site
- Records cleanup and updates
- Updated workflows
- Updated physical processing spaces
- Backlogs due to closures or lack of staff
- Workflow Changes
- E-materials preferences started or accelerated
- Processing off-site

Reference Service

- Virtual reference is the biggest theme
  - It was implemented, or existing services were increased.
    - Respondents report they're likely to keep these services
- Changes to methods of providing reference, including changing the service points or requiring appointments
- Implementation of physical barriers and covid safety measures
- Building closures and changing hours

Instructional and Educational Services

- Move to synchronous and asynchronous
- Online consultation
- Virtual public programming
- Virtual Reference
- Courses moved online
- Webinars, instruction, distance learning all offered either pre-recorded or live
- Mask mandates in place

- Seasonal classes were suspended
- Virtual appointments Limited staff Remote work
- Virtual presentations
- Hybrid instruction
- Limited attendance/registration requirements

Outreach Services

- Suspended all in-person Outreach

- Substituted Online/Virtual Outreach during closures or distancing requirements

- Shifted to Online/Virtual Outreach permanently

- Continued Online/Virtual Outreach after in-person outreach resumed

- Shift in Staff Duties related to curtailment of outreach efforts

- Shift in outreach due to digital first collections approach

- Outreach procedures put in place—distancing, masks, limits on attendance

- Curbside pick-up/remote check-out for patron services

- Need for increased signage

- Reduced travel/visitation services

- Increased voice mail and more social media for better external communication

- Hired specialized Outreach/Marketing people

- Increased online communication (Teams/Chat are examples for internal communication)

- New workflows became permanent

- Recorded and pre-recorded videos, presentations

ILL Services

- Suspended interlibrary loan services

- Experienced issues with staff availability/ building closure

- Increase in electronic loans

- Digital e-book lending

- No fines

- Added rapid ILL

- Added curbside pickup or mail directly to requestor

- Changes to process (quarantine)

- Decreased number of ILLs per patron

- Overall volume of requests increased

Future Work

- Examine data from Part 2 of the Biennial Survey question:
  Q06 [2]- Which of these implemented changes, if any, do you anticipate will remain part of your normal operations?

- Identify which COVID-19 policy changes were still in place at the time of the 2021 Biennial Survey.

  - At time of the survey, 491 (53%) reported "Changes were made due to COVID-19 but now back to pre-COVID policies "

- Draft and submit a report for the Superintendent of Documents in Spring 2023, based upon the 2021 Biennial Survey, to assess the overall manner in which the pandemic impacted the Federal Depository Library Community.

Questions?