

**FLICC/FEDLINK
Member, Vendor and Staff Surveys**



March 2006

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FLICC/FEDLINK Business Plan Surveys

Throughout its 40-year existence, the Library of Congress's FLICC/FEDLINK division has served as a major catalyst for federal libraries by providing library services, education/training, procurement, financial management, advocacy, advice, and consulting. Currently, librarianship is going through an extensive transformation, and entities that cannot adapt or adjust to the new wave of changes will cease to exist. FLICC/FEDLINK is poised to help federal libraries not only survive, but excel, in this turbulent environment.

To meet the needs of its members and stakeholders, FLICC/FEDLINK is designing an array of services, functions, and procurement options for Fiscal Years 2007-2011. To create the best offerings, FLICC/FEDLINK will incorporate the ideas, suggestions and views of its key user groups and stakeholders.

In February 2006, FLICC/FEDLINK surveyed its members, vendors, staff and participants. We received 484 responses from the following four surveys:

<p>FLICC/FEDLINK Survey FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey FEDLINK Vendor Survey FLICC/FEDLINK Staff Survey</p>

FLICC/FEDLINK will incorporate this feedback into its FY07-FY11 Business Plan. This document describes and analyzes the FLICC/FEDLINK surveys.

In our findings, we summarize the most important trends, unusual results, and/or significant data that will impact FLICC/FEDLINK's FY07-FY11 Business Plan. Our recommendations reflect the suggestions and needs articulated by members, vendors and staff. We make recommendations to FLICC/FEDLINK about possible new revenue streams, improvements to existing systems and processes, and ideas for new avenues to explore that will help FLICC/FEDLINK grow.

Survey Design and Analysis Team

Cindy Boeke, research analyst/contractor to the Library of Congress, and Karen Walfall, Library of Congress Leadership Development fellow, designed, conducted, and analyzed the surveys and their results. FLICC/FEDLINK Executive Director Roberta Shaffer and FEDLINK Network Operations Coordinator Lynn McDonald redesigned the surveys through their numerous iterations.

A team of graduate students from the University of Maryland's Master's of Information Management (MIM) program and the University of Michigan's

Master's of Science of Information (MSI) program also wrote and/or edited sections of the survey analysis. The graduate students are Michiko Chand, Allen DeRidder, Farah Faisal, Trent Rockwood, and Asiya Sarbasova.

Survey Goals

Although tailored for each group of stakeholders, the FLICC/FEDLINK Business Plan Surveys' overarching goals were to determine:

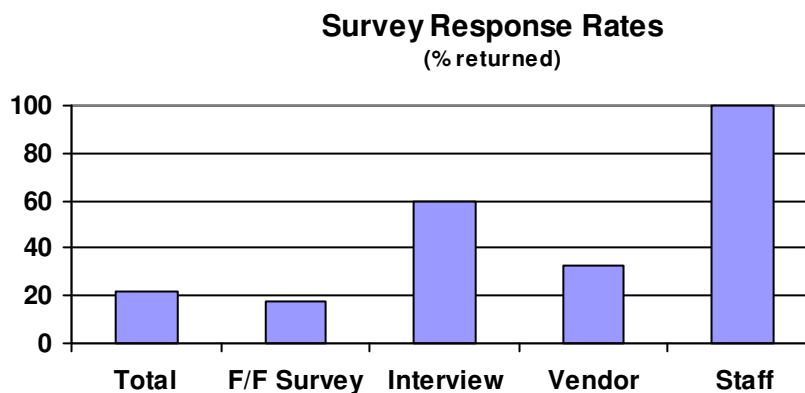
- perceptions of and satisfaction with FLICC/FEDLINK;
- current and future use of FLICC/FEDLINK's products and services; and
- suggestions for future FLICC/FEDLINK products and services.

Survey Format

All surveys were provided to respondents in online format using the SurveyMonkey web service. The FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey gave participants the option to provide information over the phone.

Survey Descriptions and Response Rates

Overall, the four surveys were sent to 2,163 potential respondents. We received 484 responses, for a total response rate of 22 percent.



FLICC/FEDLINK Survey

The 26-question FLICC/FEDLINK Survey was targeted for mass distribution to a wide range of FLICC/FEDLINK participants. This survey was shorter than the FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey in order to achieve a higher response rate. On February 1, 2006, the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey was sent by email to 1,804 FEDLINK members and/or participants in FLICC/FEDLINK's training and education programs. We received 326 responses for a total response rate of 18

percent. Seventy percent of the respondents are librarians in the 1410 series. Seventy percent have an MLS (or equivalent) degree.

FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey

The 55-question FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey was sent to 62 key stakeholders and library leaders in the FLICC/FEDLINK community on January 31, 2006. FLICC/FEDLINK's most senior members and/or largest purchasers of FEDLINK's products and services received this longer survey. FLICC/FEDLINK used this survey to obtain a greater pool of data and information from its largest participants. Six of the respondents selected the phone interview method. Survey team leaders Cindy Boeke and Karen Walfall conducted the phone interviews. They transcribed the answers, received respondents' approval, and keyed the data into the online survey. We received 37 responses for a total response rate of 60 percent. Eighty-four percent of the respondents are librarians in the 1410 series. Ninety-five percent have an MLS (or equivalent) degree.

FEDLINK Vendor Survey

The 48-question FEDLINK Vendor Survey was sent to 263 FEDLINK vendors on February 1, 2006. We received 87 responses for a total response rate of 33 percent.

FLICC/FEDLINK Staff Survey

The 31-question FLICC/FEDLINK Staff Survey was sent to FLICC/FEDLINK's 34 staff members on February 1, 2006. We received 34 responses for a total response rate of 100 percent.

Notes about Survey Analysis

The FLICC/FEDLINK Business Plan Survey team members analyzed all major aspects of the survey. Our findings are presented in this document.

Throughout the findings, please note that not all respondents answered each question, and the response rates for questions vary dramatically. For example, only several questions received answers from everyone. Open-ended questions generally received the fewest answers.

All questions asking respondents to rank aspects of FLICC/FEDLINK used a 1-5 rating, with 5 being the highest rating. Charts that show ratings are based on the combined numbers for all surveys that contained the question. Some questions were worded slightly differently depending on the survey. Data for the combined numbers is included in Appendix A: Combined Data for Ratings Charts.

The percentage of respondents who answer a question relates to the pool of respondents who answered that specific question (versus the percentage of overall respondents).

Contact Information

Readers can discover a wealth of information by reading the survey responses as a whole. We encourage you to view the survey results online. You may obtain access to the survey results and/or survey instruments by contacting Roberta Shaffer, executive director of FLICC/FEDLINK, at rsha@loc.gov. For questions about the survey and/or its findings, please contact Cindy Boeke at cboeke@verizon.net.

Executive Summary of Survey Results

Our surveys uncovered a wide range of issues, trends, and needs that will affect FLICC/FEDLINK's business plan. Members revealed how they perceive FLICC/FEDLINK and what types of new services they would like to see developed. FLICC/FEDLINK stakeholders described the challenging and changing environment in which federal libraries are engulfed today. Staff gave ideas on how FLICC/FEDLINK can improve in many different areas.

All four surveys contained questions to determine how the respondents perceive FLICC/FEDLINK. Overall, respondents have a mixed perception of the organization. On the positive side, many members believe FLICC/FEDLINK is evolving to meet new market needs. However, a substantial portion from all the surveys "Don't know" the answer to that question. Members believe that FLICC/FEDLINK could enhance its value by upgrading its billing/accounting system and procedures, and work on their behalf to establish consortium pricing on beneficial terms with vendors. They associate FLICC/FEDLINK most often with the Library of Congress, OCLC and the Federal Government. Most of the respondents provided neutral, vs. positive or negative, terms that they connect with FLICC/FEDLINK. The terms "bureaucratic" or "bureaucracy" also come to mind to a significant portion of survey-takers.

Common Themes throughout the Surveys

- **automate FEDLINK's financial system**
- **allow electronic invoicing and electronic access to accounts**
- **permit members to use credit cards for FEDLINK purchases**
- **decrease the amount of paperwork required to use FEDLINK**
- **provide more timely responses to emails and phone calls**
- **redesign the web site to make it more useful and easy to navigate**
- **market vendor products more proactively**
- **provide distance learning and training outside of DC**
- **promote the interests of federal libraries to agencies and the public**
- **examine consulting opportunities in web design, digital library development and preservation**
- **provide consortium pricing on behalf of large groups of members**
- **add more and new types of vendors to FEDLINK**
- **lower FEDLINK fees or find new ways to make FEDLINK more attractive to members**

The "FEDLINK Report Card" section of the four FLICC/FEDLINK surveys highlighted some interesting member, vendor and staff perceptions about

FLICC/FEDLINK’s operations. Overall, FLICC/FEDLINK received good ratings, but the number of “Don’t know” answers was high across the board. The vendors seemed to know the least amount about FLICC/FEDLINK’s services, and answered with the most “Don’t know” responses. The staff was the least satisfied with FLICC/FEDLINK’s procedures, perhaps because of their vantage point of being able to look from the inside out, and gave the lowest overall marks. The two member surveys (FLICC/FEDLINK and Interview) were the most positive, giving very high marks on the report cards almost without exception. However, these surveys also contained a significant number of “Don’t know” answers.

Members were asked if and why they purchase library and information-related products from agencies and companies other than FEDLINK. GSA is the most common government agency used by FEDLINK members. They also buy directly from vendors and/or go through their own agency’s internal purchasing structures. Some of the most commonly cited reasons are the inability to use credit cards, avoidance of FEDLINK’s fees, better pricing from vendors, and/or the non-participation of a vendor in FEDLINK. Both members and vendors provided a number of suggestions that could make FEDLINK more popular with members.

As the sole revenue source for FLICC/FEDLINK, FEDLINK forms the backbone of the organization. Our surveys asked a variety of questions to determine member and vendor satisfaction with FLICC/FEDLINK’s procurement arm, solicit feedback on how to make FEDLINK viable in the coming five years, and ideas on how to make it more popular with federal agencies.

A large number of members, vendors and staff believe the accounting system is outdated, cumbersome and slow, and that members should be able

“More members are using credit cards for purchases and we are losing business by not providing this option.” —FLICC/FEDLINK Staff Survey

to use credit cards as a payment option. Members, vendors and staff have complained and/or heard complaints about these issues, and also mention poor customer service, inaccuracies in accounts that lead to repeated dunning notices that are difficult to stop, and dissatisfaction with what they perceive as being

“Assign [a] specific individual to help with consortia purchasing, then fees would be easier to justify. Earn your worth! It is difficult to sell to non-FEDLINK libraries why they should pay fees for your services.” —FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey

exorbitant fees. Many vendors and staff believe FEDLINK must increase its marketing effort to help boost awareness of FEDLINK’s products and services.

A variety of questions were used to determine members’ interest in new services and roles for

FLICC/FEDLINK, elicit new service suggestions from all three user groups, and see which existing services need to be discontinued.

Members want a range of new services, including more distance learning, consortium/group purchasing, temporary staffing via FEDLINK, institutional repository development, data/information sharing, and new vendors and services added to FEDLINK.

Staff recommend that FEDLINK cease its use of scanned and hardcopy invoices and move to an electronic invoicing system that allows members to view their accounts online. Staff members also recommend FEDLINK allow members to use credit cards for purchases of all types, and that the preservation services are reexamined and/or marketed more effectively.

Staff and vendors mention CIOs and general counsels' offices most often when suggesting new members FEDLINK can target. Many times, vendors suggested federal agencies in general, leading to the possible conclusion that FEDLINK is not serving these agencies thoroughly.

Although members generally are not aware of FLICC/FEDLINK's role as a consultant, they are interested in a variety of potential consulting services.

Digital library development and web design are the two most popular potential consulting services. Members also want FLICC/FEDLINK to take on the role of advocate, especially by promoting the role of federal libraries and helping them prevent closures and outsourcing.

“I would like FLICC/FEDLINK to be leading the federal library community, rather than just satisfying its traditional needs. There is a lot more promise here that has not been realized, not only when it comes to evolving new services but also in that undefineable category of leadership.”—FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey

FLICC/FEDLINK received very high ratings for its communications with members and vendors. Questions about obstacles and unmet information needs, however, revealed a sense of frustration related to unanswered questions, emails, and phone calls. The web site and “FEDLINK Technical Notes” newsletter received fair to high ratings. The high ratings at times contradicted with suggestions for new features and changes, particularly for the web site, where a significant number of respondents called for new navigation, a search function, and various degrees of web site redesign.

FEDLINK turned to its vendor community to find out whether they believe their product sales through FEDLINK will increase over the next five years, and to get their feedback on vendor demonstration programs and options. A significant number of Vendor Survey respondents believe their sales via FEDLINK will

increase, although a notable amount said they “Don’t know.” More disturbing to FEDLINK is the fact that nearly 50 percent of the vendors only sell 10 percent of less of their government sales through FEDLINK, and only 2 percent sell 75-100 percent of their government sales through FEDLINK. The vendor demonstration program, it turns out, is not well-known by the vendors. Those who are not aware of it are interested in using this venue; those who have used it expressed concern over low turnout rates. A great deal of interest was expressed in the possibility of conducting vendor-related webinars.

The Interview Survey of stakeholders contained questions on how they like to receive information from vendors. This group of members prefers to receive information about FEDLINK products through FEDLINK-moderated venues, although a substantial number also want to work directly with vendors when purchasing materials and services through FEDLINK.

**“I like the fact that we are given freedom to work independently. I feel like we are respected. That is very important.” —
FLICC/FEDLINK Staff Survey**

Overall, FLICC/FEDLINK received positive feedback as a place to work. However, staff did complain about a lack of promotion opportunities for some staff, divisions between

FLICC/FEDLINK’s various units, and heavy reliance without backups for some key functions. Five of 15 staff respondents would like to see a technology-related position added to FLICC/FEDLINK. The skill sets mentioned most often for new FLICC/FEDLINK employees are technology and/or technical in nature.

FLICC/FEDLINK stakeholders predict a difficult era ahead for federal libraries. They mention budget cuts, decreased staffing as more people are retiring, and a general decline in the value of their organizations, as perceived by their agencies and users. With such issues surrounding the federal library community, FLICC/FEDLINK’s role as an advocate on their behalf could help promote their image, garner additional support for them, and increase the usage of federal libraries and their services.

As FLICC/FEDLINK members move ahead into an uncertain future that is likely to include less funding, a diminished stature, and decreased support, FLICC/FEDLINK’s role of promoting the interests and services of federal libraries will take on a greater importance. One only needs to look at the popularity of and support for the National Library of Medicine, to name just one example, to realize that the role libraries play can make a difference within the federal government and throughout the country. FLICC/FEDLINK’s unique advantage of bringing together the federal library community can and should be galvanized to help this important sector of the information profession transform itself to succeed in the next five years.

1. Perceptions of FLICC/FEDLINK

All four surveys contained questions to determine how the respondents perceive FLICC/FEDLINK. Overall, respondents have a mixed perception of the organization. On the positive side, many members believe FLICC/FEDLINK is evolving to meet new market needs. However, a substantial portion from all the surveys “Don’t know” the answer to that question. Members believe that FLICC/FEDLINK could enhance its value by upgrading its billing/accounting system and procedures, and work on their behalf to establish consortium pricing on beneficial terms with vendors. Most of the respondents provided neutral, vs. positive or negative, terms that they associate with FLICC/FEDLINK. Most of the respondents provided neutral, vs. positive or negative, terms that they connect with FLICC/FEDLINK. The terms “bureaucratic” or “bureaucracy” also come to mind to a significant portion of survey-takers.

FLICC/FEDLINK: Meeting New Needs?

Nearly 60 percent of the respondents to the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey think that FLICC/FEDLINK has evolved with the changing market to provide the right mix of services such as education/training, simplified procurement, financial management, consulting services, etc., to government agencies. Close to 75 percent of the respondents to the FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey believe that FLICC/FEDLINK is evolving with the changing market to provide the right mix of services.

“Please offer education/training at other sites besides DC; so many great programs are offered, but always in DC. Take the show on the road!” —FLICC/FEDLINK Survey

Many respondents to the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey believe FLICC/FEDLINK meets a substantial need within the federal government. In fact, one often-repeated request they made is that FLICC/FEDLINK should “take the show on the road” to members outside of the Washington, DC area. A portion of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with FEDLINK’s payment processes, but listed Direct Express as an outstanding improvement. Others expressed dissatisfaction with the mix of

vendors, and suggested that more be added.

FLICC/FEDLINK should be concerned that over 33 percent of those who answered the question in the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey, 66 percent in the Vendor Survey, and nearly 15 percent in the FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey said they do not know if FLICC/FEDLINK has evolved with the changing market. When asked why they gave that answer, many expressed a belief that FLICC/FEDLINK is resistant to change, continues to operate an antiquated billing system, and needs to conduct consortium negotiations that result in better pricing.

Enhancing the Value of FLICC/FEDLINK

The question of “What actions FLICC/FEDLINK should take today to enhance its value to your organization?” was asked in the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey and the FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey.

One hundred and eighty-nine people answered this question in the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey. Thirty-six of the suggestions centered on how to make accounting and billing more efficient. Suggestions included streamlining the financial and accounting processes, speeding the IAG process, increasing efficiency for bill processing, correcting accounting mistakes, and purchasing a new accounting system. Six of the 33 people who answered this question in the FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey also thought that improvements in FEDLINK’s accounting and billing would enhance FLICC/FEDLINK’s value to their organizations.

The second largest category of responses from both member surveys calls for FLICC/FEDLINK to take the lead in consortium negotiating and pricing. Members want FLICC/FEDLINK to take advantage of its status as a core player in the procurement of information products and services for federal libraries, and use its leverage as a negotiating tool for consortium-wide services and prices.

“[FLICC/FEDLINK] has made some evolution but needs to continue into more content spaces and consortial coordination.” — FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey

Brand Recognition

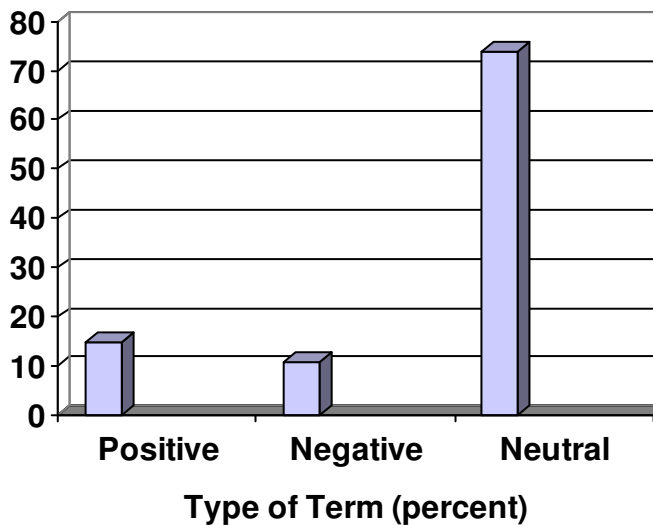
A recent OCLC report, *Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources*, offers insight into the branding of libraries. The report defines brand as an idea or word in the mind of the consumer. For example, 70 percent of the respondents to the OCLC study associate “books” with the term “libraries”.

The vendor survey was the only survey that produced a higher percentage of negative responses compared to positive.

In an effort to further delve into how members, vendors and staff perceive FLICC/FEDLINK, we asked what words first come to mind when respondents hear the terms FLICC or FEDLINK. The responses, too numerous to delineate in this document, varied from the “Library of Congress” to “federal libraries,” from “contract” to “education,” from “OCLC” to “consortium buying,” and more. Respondents identified FLICC/FEDLINK mainly with neutral terms. Library of Congress was the term mentioned most often by respondents.

Brand Recognition

All four surveys contained 1,149 words or phrases that respondents associated with FLICC/FEDLINK. Of those, 170 (15 percent) were positive, 129 (11 percent) were negative, and 850 (74 percent) were neutral. In the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey, 128 (16



percent) responses were positive, 81 (10 percent) were negative, and 602 (84 percent) were neutral. In the Interview Survey, 15 (12 percent) responses were positive, six (10 percent) were negative and 103 (83 percent) were neutral. Vendor Survey respondents gave 17 (12 percent) positive responses, 37 (25 percent) negative, and 93 (63 percent) neutral. The vendor survey was the only survey that produced a higher percentage of negative responses compared to positive ones. The Staff Survey produced 10 (15 percent) positive responses, five (7 percent) negative terms, and 52 (78 percent) neutral ones.

The top three responses across the four surveys were:

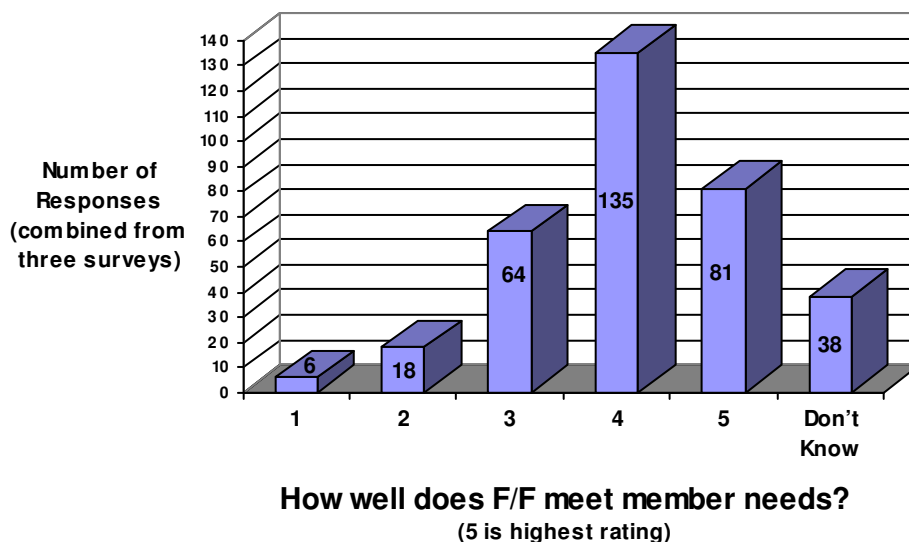
	FLICC/FEDLINK Survey	FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey	FEDLINK Vendor Survey	FLICC/FEDLINK Staff Survey
1)	Library of Congress	OCLC	Library of Congress	Federal Government
2)	Library contracts	Collaboration	Bureaucratic	Libraries
3)	Bureaucracy	Consortia	Federal agencies	OCLC

2. FEDLINK Report Card

The “FEDLINK Report Card” section of the four FLICC/FEDLINK surveys highlighted some interesting member, vendor and staff perceptions about FLICC/FEDLINK’s operations. Overall, FLICC/FEDLINK received good ratings, but the number of “Don’t know” answers was high across the board. The vendors seemed to know the least amount about FLICC/FEDLINK’s services, and answered with the most “Don’t know” responses. The staff was the least satisfied with FLICC/FEDLINK’s procedures, perhaps because of their vantage point of being able to look from the inside out, and gave the lowest overall marks. The two member surveys (FLICC/FEDLINK and Interview) were the most positive, giving very high marks on the report cards almost without exception. However, these surveys also contained a significant number of “Don’t know” answers.

The high number of “Don’t know” choices selected when rating FEDLINK’s programs and services showed that one place FEDLINK might improve upon in the future is education on the services it offers and how to best utilize them. Another area of general frustration seemed to be the slow pace at which FEDLINK operates, and the general desire to go from a slow, disconnected, somewhat bureaucratic process, to a streamlined, simplified, paperless process -- especially in terms of communication, distribution, billing, and customer service.

Meeting Member Needs

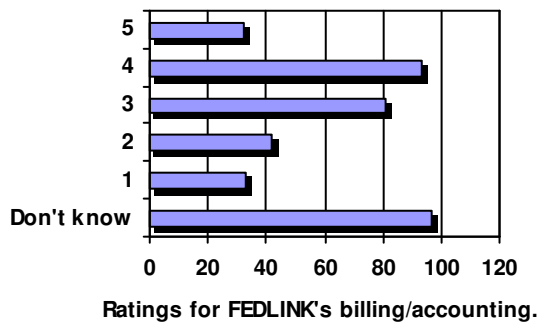
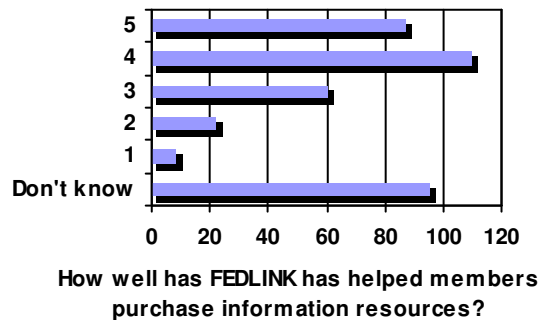


Overall, when asked the question of how well FLICC/FEDLINK has succeeded in supporting the needs of the federal libraries and information centers, there

was a high score given by the members and stakeholders (124 member/stakeholder respondents out of a total of 308, or about 40 percent gave a score of 4 out of 5 for overall satisfaction). Surprisingly, it was the vendors and the staff who gave the lowest marks, and seem the most dissatisfied with the support offered. Vendors for the most part selected “Don’t know”, with an even spread across the rest of the scale, while 14 out of 34 FLICC/FEDLINK staff (41 percent) gave a score of 3 out of 5.

Report Card Details

In general, most vendors and members responded that they didn’t know how to rate FEDLINK’s success at purchasing, selling, and accounting. Thirty out of 77 vendor respondents (39 percent), and 65 out of 269 FLICC/FEDLINK Survey respondents (24 percent) answered that they didn’t know how FEDLINK helps information professionals purchase information resources, while

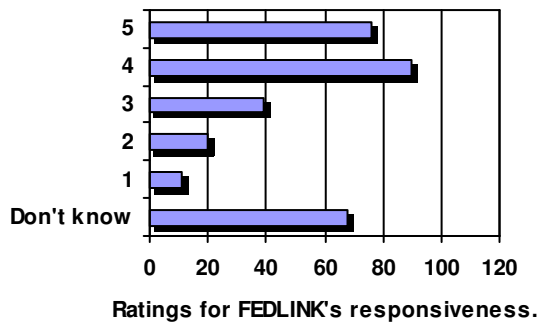


roughly the same percentage didn’t know how to rate the billing and accounting procedures. Those who did provide ratings on how well FEDLINK helps members procure materials at advantageous tended to rank FEDLINK’s on the high end of the scale, e.g. 4-5. The ratings were slightly lower, e.g. 3-4, for billing/accounting.

FEDLINK stakeholders in the Interview Survey generally liked the billing/accounting procedures, with 13 out of 35 respondents (37 percent) giving FEDLINK a score of 4 out of 5, and only seven (20 percent) answering “Don’t know.” Stakeholders were also generally satisfied with how FEDLINK helps information professionals purchase information resources, with an equal split of 13 respondents (37 percent) out of 35 respondents who gave a 4, and another 13 giving a 5. Among the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey, there were a high number of respondents that “Don’t know” about how effective FEDLINK was in helping libraries purchase information resources. While 80 respondents out of 270 (30 percent) gave a score of 4 out of 5, and 66 (24 percent) gave a 5, almost the same number of people gave an answer of “Don’t know.”

As for the preference of payment methods, out of 34 respondents, the highest rating went to Direct Express with 11 respondents giving it 5 out of 5. The next most popular was Transfer Pay with 14 (41 percent) giving it a 4 out of 5, then Direct Pay and lastly credit cards. One interesting fact is that both Direct Pay and credit cards had the largest number of respondents giving a “Don’t know” for their answer, hinting that these two forms of payment are not fully understood.

The vast majority of FLICC/FEDLINK Survey respondents replied that they “Don’t know” about the payment methods at all (160 out of 268 of them), the most unfamiliar being Direct Express, then credit cards, Direct Pay, and lastly Transfer Pay (Transfer Pay had the most respondents from within the member surveys, with 67, or 25 percent of them giving it a 5 out of 5).



FEDLINK got a good grade for its responsiveness, with many respondents giving it a 4-5 and, as usual, a large number of “Don’t knows.” Fifteen stakeholder respondents out of 35 (43 percent) gave FEDLINK a 4 out of 5 on FEDLINK’s responsiveness to purchasing and payment-related issues. About half of the 269

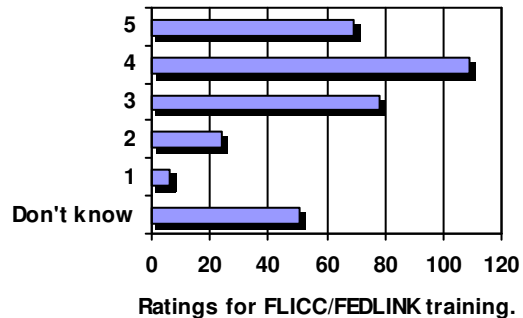
FLICC/FEDLINK Survey respondents gave a score of 4 or 5 out of 5 for responsiveness; however there were 63 (23 percent) who stated that they “Don’t know.” This would most likely be a result of not having participated in the purchasing process.

More telling, however, are the low marks received from vendors on the question asking them to rate how well FEDLINK helps vendors sell their products to federal agencies. Again, the highest percentage of respondents answered that they didn’t know (17 out of 76), but the rest of the respondents were weighted towards the bottom end of the scale, with 39 respondents (51 percent) giving between a 1 and 3. This high percentage of respondents that “Don’t know” means that either they aren’t aware that FEDLINK can help them sell their products or don’t know how to tap into such services. At the very least, it is apparent vendors are somewhat dissatisfied with this aspect of FEDLINK.

The FLICC/FEDLINK staff was in general less kind in rating FLICC/FEDLINK on the issues discussed, especially its support of member needs. Fourteen out of 34 total respondents (41 percent) gave FLICC/FEDLINK only 3 out of 5, with only 5 respondents (15 percent) giving a perfect score of 5.

At the same time, they gave fairly high ratings in the question of how well FEDLINK helps members streamline their procurement process, with 12 out of the 32 (36 percent) giving a 4 out of 5. Among the members, there were almost an equal number of respondents who gave a 4, 5, and “Don’t know.” Seventy-four 74 respondents out of 270 (27 percent) gave a 4 out of 5, 63 (23 percent) gave a 5 out of 5, and another 61 respondents (22 percent) said “Don’t know.” These ratings indicate that the process is not well known; however, those who are familiar with it like it. The stakeholders interviewed generally liked the procurement process, with 12 out of 34 respondents (35 percent) giving FEDLINK a 4 out of 5, and another 12 giving a 5 out of 5.

FLICC/FEDLINK training received mid-high ratings, and fewer than usual “Don’t knows,” suggesting that training is program with which members are more familiar. Out of the 33 FEDLINK staff who responded, 13 (39 percent) gave a rating of 4 out of 5 for how well they think



FLICC/FEDLINK has succeeded in education and training, with 5, or 15 percent not knowing. Whereas 17 out of 35 (43 percent) of the stakeholders gave a 4 out of 5, and another 10 (29 percent) gave a 5 out of 5. Eighty-one out of the 269 member respondents gave FLICC/FEDLINK a score of 4 out of 5, and 61 respondents (23 percent) gave a score of 3. Forty-four respondents out of the 269 (a significant number) responded with “Don’t know.”

It seems that FLICC/FEDLINK’s role as a consultant advisor to information professionals is also less than optimally understood (also discussed later in this document). Thirteen stakeholder respondents out of 35 (37 percent) gave FLICC/FEDLINK a 4 out of 5, however another 37 percent stated that they “Don’t know,” meaning that they probably aren’t aware of FLICC/FEDLINK’s consulting services. Among the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey respondents, a majority of respondents said that they “Don’t know” (114 out of 267, or 43 percent), while the second highest rating was a 4 out of 5 (55 respondents, or 21 percent). This data is not surprising, given FLICC/FEDLINK’s limited endeavors in this regard.

3. Purchasing outside of FEDLINK

Members were asked if and why they purchase library and information-related products from agencies and companies other than FEDLINK. GSA is the most common government agency used by FEDLINK members. They also buy directly from vendors and/or go through their own agency's internal purchasing structures. Some of the most commonly cited reasons are the inability to use credit cards, avoidance of FEDLINK's fees, better pricing from vendors, and/or the non-participation of a vendor in FEDLINK. Both members and vendors provided a number of suggestions that could make FEDLINK more popular with members.

Why Members Purchase outside of FEDLINK

All surveys asked respondents why they think federal agencies purchase library and information-related services outside of FEDLINK.

**“1) acceptance and awareness of GSA, especially among contracting officers
2) lack of awareness of Direct Express among contracting officers
3) barriers in IAG process at customer agencies
4) if they have something else established and it works, it's easier not to change it
5) cost savings” —FLICC/FEDLINK Staff Survey**

In the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey, 157 people responded to this question. There were a number of answers given but the one provided most often was unavailability of the desired product through FEDLINK. Thirty-nine people said they did not purchase the product through FEDLINK when the vendor or service is not offered by FEDLINK or if the product they want is exclusively available through only one organization which is not FEDLINK.

Thirty-two respondents felt that FEDLINK's service fee too high and they avoided using FEDLINK services to save on the cost of the fee. Similar feelings were echoed in the Interview Survey where out of 33 respondents, nine felt that the FEDLINK fee was a deterrent for them from using FEDLINK's services. On a similar line 19 respondents felt that the prices negotiated by FEDLINK were more than those offered by others or when they negotiated with the vendor directly themselves.

Several respondents in the Interview and FLICC/FEDLINK Surveys felt that being unable to pay for FEDLINK's services with a credit card prevented them from using FEDLINK. Interestingly enough more than half of FEDLINK's staff felt that the current payment methods are sufficient to meet customer's needs. Some Interview Survey takers also mentioned that FEDLINK makes a customer go through too much paperwork.

“Our company's name and services are found on GSA's website making them readily available for anyone searching for this kind of service. They may use their own internal procurement procedures and simply cite our GSA contract # on their purchase order to receive a GSA discount.” —FEDLINK Vendor Survey

Six vendors compared FEDLINK’s services with those of GSA and said that GSA had a stronger

presence, was better known and provided easier and quicker services than FEDLINK. The vendors made a strong point about the awareness of FEDLINK saying that some customers go directly to GSA or other procurement agencies because they simply don’t know of FEDLINK.

FEDLINK and Vendor Initiatives to Increase Purchasing

Twenty-six Interview Survey respondents provided suggestions when asked what FEDLINK could do to make purchasing through FEDLINK more attractive to them. Eight felt that a lower service fee would attract customers to use FEDLINK’s services. Out of the 33 vendors who responded to this question, 12 were not sure of what steps FEDLINK could take to increase its customer base. However, eight vendors suggested that setting up an e-procurement platform with the option of payment by a credit card would definitely help in achieving the goal. The Direct Express payment method was praised and some suggested that FEDLINK expand this service.

Thirty-one vendors suggested initiatives they could take to take to make it more advantageous for agencies to use FEDLINK’s services. Ten vendors felt that they could offer better rates and discounts especially for products

“We'd be happy to do special offers at different times in the buying cycle, but it's hard to get to the right people, unless Fedlink helps with the marketing.” —FEDLINK Vendor Survey

bought by consortia. The same thought was echoed in the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey by 12 out of the 15 respondents who answered the question about what vendors could do to make FEDLINK more attractive. Some vendors felt that they already offer competitive prices when their products are purchased through FEDLINK but agencies are not aware of these prices because of their lack of awareness about FEDLINK itself. Some vendors suggested they could advertise about FEDLINK to their customers through e-mails and informal sessions.

Vendors outside of FEDLINK

Both member surveys were asked to name the entities, agencies and companies outside of FEDLINK from which they purchase information-related materials/services. In the list of other agencies with which members deal, the

name of GSA was the most prominent. Thirty-four out of the 136 respondents to the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey, ten of the 20 respondents to the Interview Survey, and 24 of the 64 vendors who answered this question said they used or worked with GSA or had a contract with them. In the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey 22 people said that they deal directly with EBSCO and 20 mention Lexis-Nexis. Other names mentioned more than once include Amazon, Thomson, Elsevier, and GPO.

When the vendors were asked how else their companies sell their products to federal agencies, 75 percent said they directly sell their products to the customers. Twenty-nine out of 32 Interview Survey takers said that they deal directly with vendors.

Members provided an extremely diverse range of vendors when asked which companies they would like to see added to the vendor network. Names that were repeated were Amazon, Elsevier, EBSCO, ProQuest, Lexis-Nexis, Majors, IEEE, Barnes & Noble, WEST, Gaylord, and document delivery vendors.

4. Improving FEDLINK

As the sole revenue source for FLICC/FEDLINK, FEDLINK forms the backbone of the organization. Our surveys asked a variety of questions to determine member and vendor satisfaction with FLICC/FEDLINK's procurement arm, solicit feedback on how to make FEDLINK viable in the coming five years, and ideas on how to make it more popular with federal agencies.

“Sales will continue to decline because of antiquated billing techniques, inordinate delays in billing cycles, and high costs.” —FEDLINK Vendor Survey

A large number of members, vendors and staff believe FEDLINK's accounting system is outdated,

cumbersome and slow, and that members should be able to use credit cards as a payment option. Members, vendors and staff have complained and/or heard complaints about these issues, and also mention poor customer service, inaccuracies in accounts that lead to repeated dunning notices that are difficult to stop, and dissatisfaction with what they perceive as being exorbitant fees. Many vendors and staff believe FEDLINK must increase its marketing effort to help boost awareness of FEDLINK's products and services.

Existing Payment Options

Vendors and staff members were asked if the existing stable of payment methods, e.g. Transfer Pay, Direct Pay and Direct Express, are sufficient to meet federal agency procurement needs.

More than half (44) of the respondents to the FEDLINK Vendor Survey and more than half (16) the respondents to the FLICC/FEDLINK Staff Survey reported that this mix of payment methods adequately meets federal

“Reduce internal overhead to reduce fees. Increase purchasing power through FEDLINK with pricing deals that are better than can be obtained through other sources (when factoring in FEDLINK fees). Allow online banking-style access to the funds deposited into FEDLINK.”—FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey

agency procurement needs. However, those who gave their open-ended view on this topic provided a disturbing critique of FEDLINK's automation system, particularly citing members' inability to use credit cards.

Fourteen vendors offered an explanation as to why or why not they believe the existing payment methods are adequate. Most of those who responded said the current payment methods are cumbersome and slow. An equally large number of respondents said that automation and allowing members to use credit cards would make FEDLINK more popular.

Twelve FLICC/FEDLINK staff members provided their views on whether or not the existing payment methods are sufficient. Seven of those who responded state unequivocally that FEDLINK is losing business by the systems' inability to accept credit cards.

Customer Complaints

Vendors and staff members were asked to share customer complaints they received about FEDLINK services.

**“[T]he dunning notices for accounts paid [are] not only annoying but extremely frustrating. We have to show proof on our side that FedLink received payment. Not only that, it is frustrating to not open up new accounts, replenish old and move funds until the delinquent account has been cleared. We've paid. Why should we continue to be plagued by notices that we have not?”—
FLICC/FEDLINK Survey**

Forty-three (49 percent) of the vendors responded to this question. The majority of those who answered said they have not received or are not aware of any customer complaints. Those who did hear complaints wrote about a variety of issues, from dissatisfaction with the timely delivery of an order to confusion about FEDLINK's procurement processes. Eleven of the 43 respondents described complaints

about the payment process being cumbersome and slow. Overall, vendors reported an equal number of complaints about poor customer service, antiquated billing systems, and the high cost of doing business with FEDLINK.

Twenty-four of the 34 staff shared their stories about customer complaints. Seven staff members said the majority of complaints focus on sub-par customer service. Members' frustration with FEDLINK's slow and inconvenient procurement processes formed the next largest group of criticism, followed by members' frustration with FEDLINK's slow and inconvenient procurement process. Staff members have also heard complaints from members about their inability to make purchases using a credit card, FEDLINK's outmoded accounting system, and seemingly high fees.

**“The paperwork shuffle appears to be the biggest bottleneck.”—
FLICC/FEDLINK Staff Survey**

Improving Billing/Accounting and Procurement: Member Feedback

We asked members how they think FEDLINK could improve its billing and accounting procedures. Typically, members believe FEDLINK can improve its billing and accounting procedures by acting more quickly. Examples included lessening the time it takes to get invoices from vendors, promptly paying bills,

handling the debiting process more quickly, forwarding reports on balances faster, issuing statements more quickly, etc.

Fifty-four percent of the respondents who answered this question in the FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey suggested that FEDLINK can improve its billing and accounting processes by lessening the time it takes to receive statements, posting invoices sooner, and reporting training expenses on accounts more quickly. In general, they believe that making the accounting and billing system fully electronic will improve efficiency and eliminate some of the timing problems associated with FEDLINK.

**“Faster updates to account information. While FEDLINK is a godsend in many ways, it has its own bureaucratic problems, which can sometimes negatively impact members.”—
FLICC/FEDLINK Survey**

We also asked both member groups how FEDLINK could improve its procurement

services. The answers from the respondents to the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey closely mirror their answers about the improvement of accounting and billing. The majority of those who responded said FEDLINK should reduce the time it takes to complete procurement transactions and decrease what they perceive are exorbitant fees. Some of those who commented on FEDLINK’s high fees stressed their belief that FEDLINK should negotiate aggressively with vendors to get better pricing for the federal library community. An almost equal number of respondents said FEDLINK should invest in an extreme customer service makeover and a procurement billing upgrade. A few respondents believe FEDLINK should

**“[L]ower fees so that using Fedlink versus going direct (for contractors) really is a viable alternative.”—
FLICC/FEDLINK Survey**

provide education to its customers. For example, several respondents want FEDLINK to offer classes on its renewal process. One respondent recommended that FEDLINK produce a step-by-step guide to procurement on its web site.

Six of the 19 FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey respondents who made suggestions on how FEDLINK can improve its procurement services also said FEDLINK should decrease the time it takes to complete its procurement services. Two respondents would like to see FEDLINK offer additional services at more efficient prices.

Improving Billing/Accounting and Procurement: Vendor Feedback

Thirteen of the 29 vendor respondents who answered the question about how FEDLINK could improve its procurement services did not offer any actual recommendations. Out of the 16 remaining, four said that FEDLINK needs to

provide an array of better customer service options, and three said that FEDLINK needs a better marketing effort.

One-fourth of the 40 vendors who responded to the question of how FEDLINK could improve its billing and accounting procedures did not make any concrete suggestions. The majority of the remaining respondents said they would like to see invoice tracking information made available, faster posting of the invoices, prompt payments of the invoices, and better communication from FEDLINK. Some vendors said that the contracting renewal process could be improved by making renewals automatic and forms available electronically. In response to how to improve the RFQ and RFP process, a few vendors said they find the RFP language challenging, while others would like more time to respond to the RFQ's.

General Improvement: Staff Feedback

**“The entire staff has to have knowledge of what everyone does and is responsible for. I think the lack of this affects our ability to consult our membership.”—
FLICC/FEDLINK Staff Survey**

We asked FLICC/FEDLINK staff how the organization could be improved overall. Four out of the 17 who responded would like to see FLICC/FEDLINK increase its marketing of FLICC/FEDLINK services. Four respondents think that cross-training is essential, and two staffers would like to see FLICC/FEDLINK take a more proactive

role in educating and training the members on how to use FEDLINK services.

Staff was specifically asked their opinion on how FEDLINK could improve its existing procurement processes and programs. They offered the following ideas:

- Make the procurement process much less complicated by putting more information on the web.
- Reduce the amount of paperwork needed to transact business.
- Deliver services electronically.
- Streamline the procurement process.
- Accept credit cards for payment.
- Provide cross-training between the sections.
- Update contact information.
- Create a comprehensive email distribution list.

One-half of the staff members who answered the question of how FEDLINK could improve its billing and accounting procedures said that implementing an electronic billing and accounting system is the best improvement FEDLINK could undertake. When asked the question of what services customers would like that they are not being provided, four out of the 15 who responded said members repeatedly ask to use credit cards.

5. New Service Opportunities and Roles for FLICC/FEDLINK

A variety of questions were used to determine members' interest in new services and roles for FLICC/FEDLINK, elicit new service suggestions from all three user groups, and see which existing services need to be discontinued.

Members want a range of new services, including more distance learning, consortium/group purchasing, temporary staffing via FEDLINK, institutional repository development, data/information sharing, and new vendors and services added to FEDLINK.

“Before developing new products/services, you need to fine tune what you already have/do. Until you get what you have right, moving on to other activities is not a wise decision.” —FLICC/FEDLINK Survey

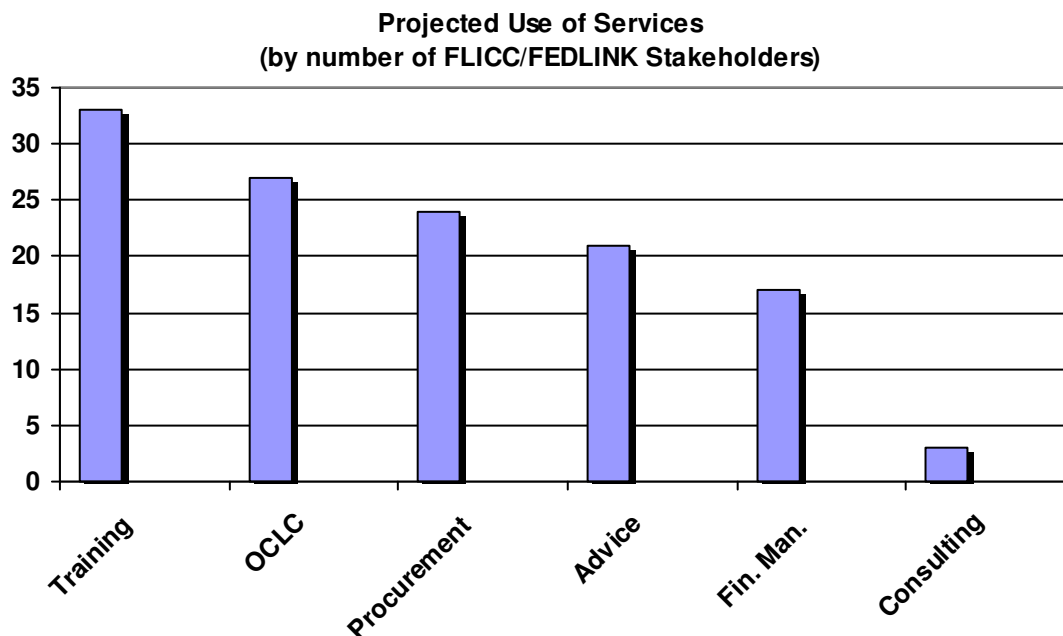
Staff recommend that FEDLINK cease its use of scanned and hardcopy invoices and move to an electronic invoicing system that allows members to view their accounts online. Staff members also recommend FEDLINK allow members to use credit cards for purchases of all types, and that the preservation services are reexamined and/or marketed more effectively.

Staff and vendors mention CIOs and general counsels' offices most often when suggesting new members FEDLINK can target. Many times, vendors suggested federal agencies in general, leading to the possible conclusion that FEDLINK is not serving these agencies thoroughly.

Although members generally are not aware of FLICC/FEDLINK's role as a consultant, they are interested in a variety of potential consulting services. Digital library development and web design are the two most popular potential consulting services. Members also want FLICC/FEDLINK to take on the role of advocate, especially by promoting the role of federal libraries and helping them prevent closures and outsourcing.

Members' Projected Future Use of Services

Stakeholders were asked which of FLICC/FEDLINK's five major services they plan to use over the next five fiscal years. Respondents could select more than one answer. Education/training was the number one choice, with 33 (89 percent) of the 37 the respondents selecting it. OCLC came in second (73 percent, 27 respondents). Procurement was third (65 percent; 24 respondents); followed by free advice (57 percent; 21 respondents) and financial management (46 percent; 17 respondents). Consulting was last, with only 3 respondents (8 percent).



These results suggest that FLICC/FEDLINK’s largest users and/or stakeholders will place a heavy emphasis on education/training and continue to be large users of OCLC. The low response given to consulting contradicts other answers (discussed below) that reveal a much higher level of interest in potential consulting services.

Thirty-four stakeholders in the Interview Survey also answered whether their purchases of materials in the following categories would increase, decrease or stay the same: books, electronic resources, OCLC, preservation and serials (print).

Electronic resources comprised the only category where a significant number expect their purchases to increase (30 percent). Twenty-two percent of the respondents, not surprisingly, expect their purchases of print serials to decrease. By and large, the respondents expect their purchases of books, OCLC, and electronic resources to stay the same (44 percent or more for each category). There were also large groups who do not and do not expect to purchase books, preservation services or serials through FEDLINK (41 percent or more).

Overall, the figures represent a flat or declining level of procurement through FEDLINK. Electronic resources are the only significant exception. Although the 34 respondents are a small pool of FEDLINK’s overall purchasing base, they are indicative of the members’ move from print to online resources, shrinking/flattening budgets, and/or direct purchases from vendors.

New Product/Services Suggestions

“FEDLINK should try to create a scientific federal repository on the scale of PubMedCentral. FLICC/FEDLINK needs to work with other players like CENDI (an interagency working group of senior Scientific and Technical Information Managers from 12 U.S. federal agencies). FLICC/FEDLINK should take a strong leadership role in forming ideas about federal repositories.”—FLICC/FEDLINK Survey

Both member surveys asked respondents to suggest new services they think FLICC/FEDLINK should develop. One hundred and twenty-three people responded on the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey. Five answers were

repeated most often: 26 people requested new training/education services, 23 said they didn't know what services to suggest, 15 requested new vendors and new types of materials to be added to FEDLINK, nine want to contract temporary library staff and technicians through FEDLINK, and eight would like FEDLINK to purchase subscriptions to databases and/or e-journals on consortium basis, e.g. on behalf of a whole agency or multiple agencies, to help extend access and bring down costs for members. Several people recommended that FEDLINK improve its existing services before branching out into new areas. Individual responses, too numerous to mention, include completely redesigning the FLICC web site, using electronic invoicing, advocating on behalf of federal libraries, creating a directory of federal libraries, and more.

Twenty-seven stakeholders in the FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey made suggestions for new services. Four suggestions were mentioned multiple times. Seven respondents said FEDLINK should play a stronger role in obtaining consortium pricing for its members; seven said they don't know what new services FLICC/FEDLINK should offer;

five would like FEDLINK to add new vendors, services, and/or materials to its existing stable of products; four want FLICC/FEDLINK to take a leading role in helping members develop institutional repositories

“[FEDLINK should create a] multi-agency accessible web site with worldwide full text e-journals (science, technology, military, economic, etc.) at a more cost effective access that agencies could subscribe to.”—FLICC/FEDLINK Survey

and/or government-wide repositories; and four said FLICC/FEDLINK should provide data mining and/or data sharing, with a particular emphasis on mining and sharing the expertise and lessons learned from FLICC/FEDLINK's federal librarian member base. Individual responses call for FLICC/FEDLINK to offer Direct Express for all products, provide better marketing of FEDLINK to vendors, advocate on behalf of members, add taxonomy/ontology tools to the product mix, offer expanded consulting services, and conduct budget oversight training.

“There needs to be more emphasis on studying federal libraries, data gathering and sharing lessons learned. Librarians need to be encouraged to step forward and share lessons learned on various topics.” —FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey

New training/education suggestions in the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey spanned a wide range of topics. The two suggestions mentioned most frequently are more training for members outside of the DC

area, and greater use of distance learning and web-based training.

In the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey, members requested vendors, services and/or materials in the following areas: books, international suppliers, computer supplies, music, audio books, video services, pay-per-view/pay-per-use items, electronic newsclipping services, TV/Radio news monitoring services, local messenger/courier services, and arts-related resources.

Specific vendors they said they would like to join FEDLINK are Amazon, Borders, Barnes & Noble, Elsevier, the Library of Congress’s FRD, InfoCurrents, and C. Berger.

Stakeholders in the FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey want FLICC to provide more medical materials, federated searching, intellectual property rights information, and digitization products.

Thirteen staff suggested a variety of new services. Many gave more than one suggestion. Five people suggested that FEDLINK move to electronic invoicing and a more automated financial system, including one that permits the greater use of credit cards; four people suggested distance education; several people suggested more software, multimedia and online products be added to FEDLINK. Two people called for digitization products/contracting and cataloging contracting. Individual answers include more contracting/consulting, content management services, library binding contracting, consortium/group pricing, and credit card payment options.

Providing Additional Support

A number of FLICC/FEDLINK Survey respondents to a broad question asking them how FLICC/FEDLINK could better support their needs would like for FLICC/FEDLINK to offer more training in web page development and design to better support the needs of their agencies. Other suggestions are listed below. Many of their suggestions mirror feedback provided in other parts of the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey.

- Advocacy and support for small libraries

- Being able to transmit FEDLINK forms electronically and the use of debit card
- Better customer service
- Classes outside of the WDC area
- Having FLICC/FEDLINK persuade vendors to offer additional content and lower their prices.

FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey respondents requested the ability to access classes electronically, a more responsive staff that listens to their concerns and responds accordingly, and the communication of best practices in dealing with FLICC/FEDLINK.

Vendors suggested that FEDLINK must invest in upgrading the procurement process. Many would also like for FEDLINK to give vendors direct access to the members. One vendor said that allowing them access would be a “win-win” situation, because vendors can market more effectively than FEDLINK and could share the proceeds.

Staff Suggestions to Discontinue Services

Ten staff members answered the question of which services they thought should be discontinued. Five respondents said no services should be discontinued. The remaining answers fell into

“Our support should be more customer support focused. [Members] are not keeping us from doing our job. They ARE our job. Without our members, FLICC/FEDLINK would not exist and they do have other options.”—FLICC/FEDLINK Staff Survey

two categories: stopping the use of scanned or paper invoices to send members their financial information, and examining why the preservation services offered by FEDLINK are underutilized.

Two staff members said FEDLINK’s preservation services, or parts of it, are not well-used and should be discontinued or marketed more effectively. One

“We need to proceed with the initiatives for receipt of electronic invoices, and being able to have these forwarded/attached to member statements.”—FLICC/FEDLINK Staff Survey

person feels the preservation services are too time-consuming, often due to changing customer requirements, for vendors and staff. This staff member says that, ultimately, the administrative fees FEDLINK receives do not cover the amount of time required to provide the services.

Three people said FEDLINK’s paperwork processes need to be streamlined and/or moved into an electronic environment. One said the scanning process needs to be discontinued; one said that invoices would not need to be sent in

hard copy format each month if members could access their accounts electronically; and one said only members need to be sent copies of account shortfalls and that the current method involves too much paperwork.

Potential New Members

Staff and vendors were asked what federal agency units, other than federal libraries, FEDLINK could target to expand its business.

Staff provided 33 new member possibilities, some of which are outside of FEDLINK's authority to serve. Chief Information Officers and IT staff were mentioned the most often (nine times). Schools, including DoD dependent schools, school districts, universities, technical schools and educational programs, were mentioned six times. Procurement/contracting offices, general counsels/legal offices, and scientists/researchers were mentioned more than once (four, three, and three times, respectively). Other potential new members are human resources, U.S. AID, other LOC units, Bureau of Indian Affairs, state government agencies, librarian technicians, public affairs, and outreach programs.

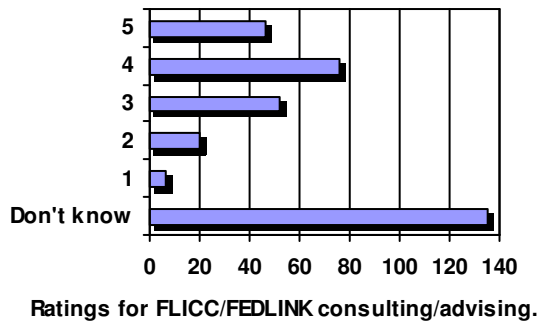
Thirty-five vendors provided 47 suggestions. Many times, vendors suggested federal agencies in general, e.g. Department of Transportation, branches of the military, or broad users, e.g. "any agency with records needing permanent retention." Seventeen suggestions included agencies FEDLINK presumably reaches, leading to the possible conclusion that FEDLINK is not serving these agencies thoroughly. Specific suggestions also include training departments, medical units, Single Audit Clearinghouse, consultants, and JAG.

FLICC/FEDLINK Consulting

Both member groups were asked several questions about their interest in using FLICC/FEDLINK's consulting services. They were asked to rate the importance of consulting, to rate FLICC's current consulting activities, and to select consulting services they would be interested in purchasing from FLICC/FEDLINK. Staff was also asked to rank FLICC/FEDLINK's success in providing consulting services.

"[Interested in the following consulting services:] Statistical packages for tracking web traffic; PART (Performance Analysis Review Tool) training; GPRA (Government Performance and Results Act) training; institutional repositories; preservation technologies; user authentication packages; standards in general; data security; contingency operation planning training; wireless technology planning and implementation. If FLICC/FEDLINK were to engage a consultant who had a track record in business process reengineering (BPR), that would be something we would be interested in."—FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey

Overall, members do not know about FLICC/FEDLINK’s role as a consultant. This finding is not surprising, given the fact that FLICC/FEDLINK has only provided a few non-fee-based consulting services related to preservation. At the same time, members are interested in a range of fee-based consulting services. Digital library development, web site design, and preservation are the top three choices, but each option presented in the survey garnered a substantial amount of interest.



The Interview Survey group largely ranked FLICC/FEDLINK’s role as a consultant/advisor as somewhat important to important, and FLICC was given a fairly positive rating by this group. As mentioned earlier in this report, 37 percent of the 35 who answered gave FLICC/FEDLINK a 4. However, the same number of people selected “Don’t know,” and when

asked which FLICC/FEDLINK services they plan to use over the next five fiscal years, only three percent selected consulting.

This answer contradicts a related question. When asked if they would be interested in consulting services offered through FLICC/FEDLINK, 52 percent (17) of the Interview Survey respondents said yes. Of the seven consulting options, digital library development, preservation, and web site design were selected the most often. Content management selection and space planning were also popular.

When asked to rank the importance of consulting, the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey respondents selected “Don’t know” the most often (37 percent out of 100 responses). Forty-three percent chose “Don’t know” when asked to rank FLICC/FEDLINK’s success in providing consulting services. The question presenting specific consulting options, however, revealed a substantial level of interest in FLICC/FEDLINK consulting. Each of seven possible consulting services was chosen 42 or more times. Digital library development and web site design were the two most popular options.

Overall, these numbers indicate a general lack of knowledge of FLICC/FEDLINK’s role or potential role as a consultant, and a significant interest in the possibility of using FLICC/FEDLINK’s consulting services in the future. As was mentioned earlier, FLICC/FEDLINK has played a limited role as a consultant (non-paid) in the field of preservation, and it is not surprising that members are not aware of this nascent role. Interestingly, many members do not envision using consulting services in general; but when presented with

specific options, they specify a demonstrable interest in purchasing such services.

FLICC Advocacy

The question of whether FLICC should play a greater role as an advocate for federal libraries was asked in the

“FLICC needs to figure out how to proactively help libraries survive. It’s really a survival issue.”—FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey

FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey and FLICC/FEDLINK Staff Survey. Both groups were also asked to rank the importance of advocacy as a FLICC function. The feedback reveals that a large portion of FLICC/FEDLINK’s stakeholders and a significant number of staff (25 percent) believe FLICC/FEDLINK should actively promote the interests of its members to various constituent groups.

**“We need a BIG voice in DC to say we are important – FLICC needs to work with ALA, SLA, AALL, MLA and get news releases and great stories out in the press about Federal Libraries and Librarians and what they mean to the Federal Gov and to taxpayers.”—
FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey**

More than half (52 percent) of the stakeholders in the Interview Survey gave advocacy a high rating in terms of importance to their organization, e.g. 4 or 5. This number was also high for the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey, where 40 percent of the 269 participants who answered the question ranked advocacy with a 4 or 5. The main difference between the two survey groups fell in the “Don’t know” category. Eleven percent of the Interview Survey respondents said they “Don’t know” if advocacy is an important FLICC role, compared to 36 percent of the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey respondents. One possible reason for the difference is that the Interview Survey respondents are generally leaders and directors of their library, and as such are faced with the need to promote

the library at the highest level.

Twenty-nine Interview Survey respondents answered a question asking what types of advocacy initiatives FLICC should conduct on their behalf. Although the answers range from very broad, e.g. promoting the acquisition and use of information, to specific, e.g. helping librarians understand copyright law, one issue was repeated in many of the answers. Half of those who responded called for FLICC to advocate on behalf of libraries that are threatened by closure and/or librarians who might be outsourced. Suggestions in this vein recommend FLICC raise the image of libraries within the government and public, work with external agencies and library groups to build an awareness of the role federal libraries play, and work actively on their behalf when they are in danger of being shut down or outsourced. One respondent questioned FLICC’s ability to

advocate effectively for libraries in Executive Branch agencies, given FLICC's status as part of the Legislative Branch.

Several Interview Survey respondents would like FLICC to help make the librarian 1410 series more secure, either by working "tirelessly" to promote a positive education requirement or by making the 1410 series a professional series.

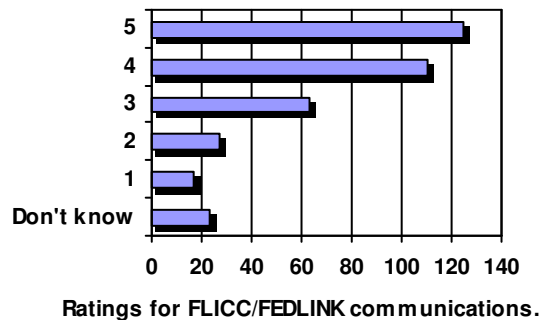
Thirteen staff members provided possible advocacy initiatives for FLICC. Staff answers were often specific and in many cases related to financial issues, such as promoting deeper discounts with vendors, taking over libraries' services when requested, and having FEDLINK use more electronic services. Mirroring the members, a significant portion (8) suggested FLICC promote the awareness of libraries and their services.

6. FLICC/FEDLINK Communications

FLICC/FEDLINK received very high ratings for its communications with members and vendors. Questions about obstacles and unmet information needs, however, revealed a sense of frustration related to unanswered questions, emails, and phone calls. The web site and “FEDLINK Technical Notes” newsletter received fair to high ratings. The high ratings at times contradicted with suggestions for new features and changes, particularly for the web site, where a significant number of respondents called for new navigation, a search function, and various degrees of web site redesign.

Communications: Ratings

Members and vendors were asked to rank how responsive they believe FLICC/FEDLINK is when they communicate with the organization. A majority of the member and Vendor Survey groups reported that FLICC/FEDLINK provides a high level of responsiveness when it comes to communications issues. This question also received the lowest number of “Don’t know ratings.



The overall rating is 4, when all four survey results are averaged together. Eighty percent of the 35 stakeholders in the Interview Survey who rated FLICC/FEDLINK’s communications selected a high rating, e.g. 4 or 5. This number was lower for the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey with 64 percent of the 265 respondents giving a high rating of 4 or a 5. Vendors responded with the lowest rating of all the surveys with 55 percent giving a high score, indicating the need for better communications is highest with this group.

Communications: Unmet Needs and Obstacles

**“Direct phone numbers for employees. An alternate contact number in case the person I’m trying to reach doesn’t return my call in 7 days.” —
FLICC/FEDLINK Survey**

Seventy FLICC/FEDLINK Survey respondents answered a question asking what type of information they would like to receive that they currently are not getting. Answers ranged from broad, e.g. “none” to specific, e.g. “Have staff answer the telephone.” Over half had complaints pertaining to the lack of

responses or follow-ups by FLICC/ FEDLINK. Suggestions demanded responses from staff and mentioned information requests that went unanswered in the past.

Twenty Interview Survey respondents answered the question asking what type of information they would like to receive that they currently were not getting. Answers ranged from “none” or “not sure” to “annual report highlighting best practices.”

Thirty-three Vendor Survey respondents answered the same question. Their main concerns were how to receive better and more detailed contact information on clients. Ninety percent of the responses indicated problems with simple client information such as email addresses not being current.

Thirty Interview Survey respondents explained the obstacles they encountered when communicating with FLICC/FEDLINK. More than half said they have difficulty reaching FLICC/FEDLINK. Many members expressed frustration when they received untimely responses or no response at all.

The 37 Vendor Survey respondents who answered the same question reported a better experience. Less than half experienced

“FEDLINK staff responds very quickly unless an email just happens to slip through the process. When brought to their attention, prompt response follows.” —FEDLINK Vendor Survey

communications issues and the remainder indicated they had positive experiences with responsive people.

Communications Methods

Thirty-five Interview Survey respondents answered a question on how they learn about FLICC/FEDLINK news, events, services and training. The FEDLIB listserv was the most popular method, selected by 83 percent of the respondents. Word of mouth was the least used, selected by 26 percent of the respondents. Two other popular methods are mailings and email.

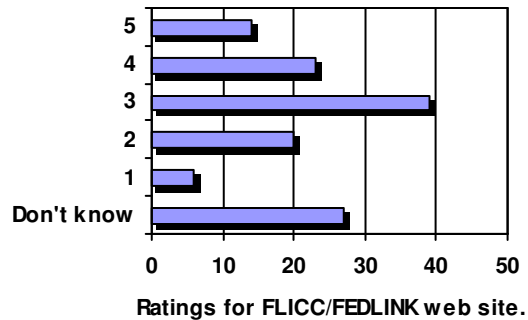
Both member survey groups were asked to select from an array of new communications methods in which they would be interested if FLICC/FEDLINK provides them. In both the FLICC/FEDLINK Survey and the Interview Survey, e-letter was selected most often (52 and 48 percent, respectively). In the Interview Survey, e-letter tied with RSS feeds. Wiki was the least popular choice among both groups.

Web Site: Ratings and Suggestions

Both member surveys and the Vendor Survey asked respondents to rank the web site on a scale of 1-5. The web site received an overall average rating of 3.74. The Interview Survey respondents gave it the lowest ranking (3), and a

disproportionate number of vendors gave it a rating of “Don’t know,” indicating they had never been to or used the web site.

Vendors, Interview Survey respondents, and staff were asked what changes or new features they would like to see on the web site. Suggestions ranged from obtuse to specific. Vendors had suggestions such as “improved list of vendors.” Interview Survey respondents commented on the need for better navigation and even stated “I suggest getting UMD Lib School or Catholic Lib School to do a usability study.”



Twenty-five Interview Survey respondents answered the question. More than 75 percent of the responses revealed issues with navigation and layout. The oft-repeated request for a search function indicates users are having trouble with the web site’s navigation.

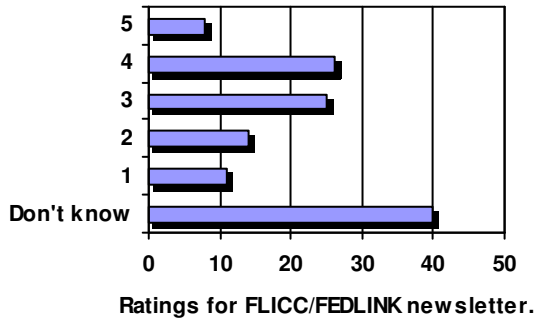
“The web site is difficult to use, and not terribly interesting. You need a redesign of the web site using a content management system.” —FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey

Twenty Vendor survey respondents answered the same question indicating they wanted more vendor-orientated features, such as the ability to update their own pages and “feature vendor of the month” pages. The vendor suggestions tended to be constructive and should be examined carefully

Twenty-three staff survey respondents agreed, in general, with the above surveys, repeating the need for better navigation and layout. The request for a search engine was also mentioned.

Newsletter: Ratings and Suggestions

The Interview, Staff, and Vendor Survey respondents were asked to rate the “FEDLINK Technical Notes” newsletter. On a scale from 1-5, the average for the three surveys was a 4. Respondents from the Interview and Staff Surveys tended to give it the highest ranking. A significant proportion of the Interview Survey and Vendor Survey respondents selected “Don’t know,” indicating that they are not familiar with the newsletter.



Thirty-three Interview Survey respondents rated the usefulness of the “FEDLINK Technical Notes” newsletter, with 39 percent giving it a high score, e.g. 4 or 5. A large number, 27 percent, said they “Don’t know.” Sixty vendors answered the same question with an even higher number of “Don’t know” (42 percent). Thirty-one staff rated the newsletter’s usefulness, with 45

percent giving it a high rating. Overall, the newsletter received medium ratings with a large percentage of people who are not aware of it.

7. Vendor Predictions and Feedback

FEDLINK turned to its vendor community to find out whether they believe their product sales through FEDLINK will increase over the next five years, and to get their feedback on vendor

“A better online electronic system that works more like Amazon.com, Online banking, or tax e-filing. A system that provides electronic procurement, tracking, invoicing and reporting.” —FEDLINK Vendor Survey

demonstration programs and options. A significant number of Vendor Survey respondents believe their sales via FEDLINK will increase, although a notable amount said they “Don’t know.” More disturbing to FEDLINK is the fact that nearly 50 percent of the vendors only sell 10 percent or less of their government sales through FEDLINK, and only two percent sell 75-100 percent of their government sales through FEDLINK. The vendor demonstration program, it turns out, is not well-known by the vendors. Those who are not aware of it are interested in using this venue; those who have used it expressed concern over low turnout rates. A great deal of interest was expressed in the possibility of conducting vendor-related webinars.

Vendor Sales through FEDLINK

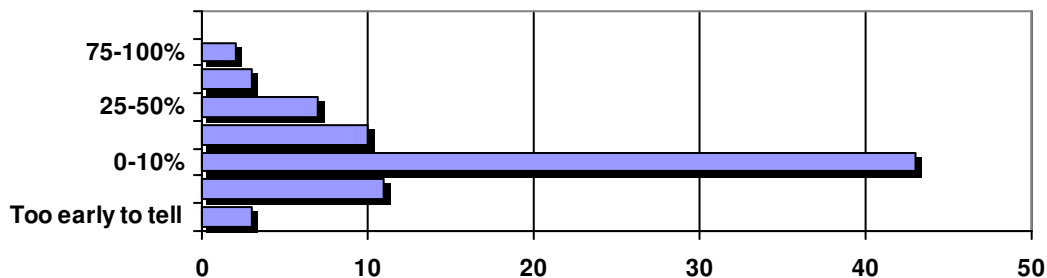
Many vendor representatives did not provide their personal and company names when taking the survey. However, from the information that was provided, some vendors included organizations such as Barnes and Noble, Environmental Protection Agency, ebrary, Bibliographical Center of Research and several others.

When asked about FEDLINK program participation duration, 25 percent (22 out of 87) of the respondents to the Vendor Survey reported that they have been members of the program for more than 10 years. Fifteen people said that they have participated in FEDLINK for less than a year and are still quite new to it. The rest of the respondents were somewhere in the middle.

Almost half of the respondents (39 out of 80 people) who answered the question on future sales believe that sales conducted through FEDLINK will increase in the next five years. Sixteen people think that sales will probably stay at the same level; three said they will decrease; and 22 said they “Don’t know.” In answers to a question as to why they had such prognosis for the future, a majority of respondents were brand new or relatively new members. Many of them express enthusiasm and have a great deal of hope that FEDLINK will boost sales by marketing and promoting itself more effectively. At least one participant believes that doing business through FEDLINK is the “easiest and quickest way to get funding and documentation processed and approved.”

Concerns associated with FEDLINK included “billing cycles,” “billing techniques,” “cost,” “cumbersome paperwork,” and “not being able to use a government credit card for purchases.” It is important to note that only a few vendors mentioned FEDLINK’s 7.5 percent Transfer Pay service fee as a barrier, compared to members who generally believe the fee is too high. Three out of 80 participants said that they do not expect any significant sales increase due to the fact that very few inquiries are made about FEDLINK services and they usually do not result in sales.

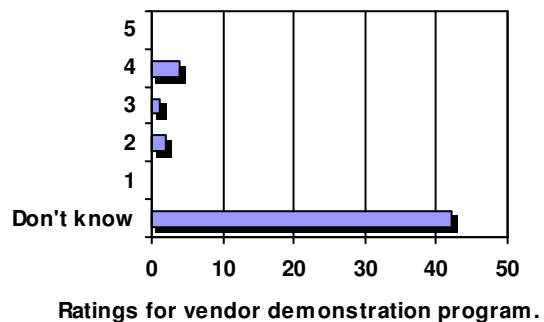
Vendor Government Sales via FEDLINK
(percent of gov't sales)



In answer to a question about the percentage of their company's overall government sales for library and information related services made by customers through FEDLINK, 43 out of 79 (54 percent) said that the services add up only between 0-10 percent of total government sales. Only two vendors reported making 75-100 percent of their total sales through FEDLINK. Most respondents reported that over the past three years sales through FEDLINK have either stayed the same (28 percent of 79 participants) or increased (28 percent of 79 participants.)

FEDLINK’s Vendor Demonstration Program

To help vendors promote their products, FEDLINK has a demonstration training room that is available to its vendors. However, according to the survey, 73 percent of the 60 respondents have never used it before and know very little about it. The Vendor Survey revealed that the majority of respondents could not rate the vendor demonstration program, with only a few responses (7 out of 49 who answered this question) that varied greatly on a 1 to 5 scale. The rest (42) said they “Don’t know” how to rate the program.



Considering these survey results it is apparent that such vendor demonstration programs need to be marketed and enhanced for the vendor community. The comments on the program mainly consisted of requests such as “make it more well known” and “advertise it.” Those who have used it expressed concerns that nobody would show up to this kind of event. One respondent reported having only one person in the entire room for a vendor demonstration. Some respondents said that now that they’ve heard about a training room, they will be planning on using it in the near future.

Vendor Webinars

According to Wikipedia, a webinar “is a seminar which is conducted over the World Wide Web. In contrast to a Webcast, which is transmission of information in one direction only, a webinar is designed to be interactive between the presenter and audience. A webinar is 'live' in the sense that information is conveyed according to an agenda, with a starting and ending time.”

When asked if vendors conducted any online product demonstrations or webinars, in order to reach their federal clients in a more timely and effective manner, 36 out of 60 respondents said they have never done it and 17 of them said that they did. More than half of the vendor representatives reported that they would be interested in reaching out to clients that reside outside of the Washington, DC area.

Product Information: Members' Preferences

The Interview Survey of stakeholders contained a section on how they like to receive information from vendors. Overall, members prefer to receive information about FEDLINK products through FEDLINK-moderated venues, although a substantial number also want to work directly with vendors when purchasing materials and services through FEDLINK.

When asked if they felt they received timely and necessary information about FEDLINK vendors, 24 out of 30 respondents said “yes,” only three people said that they were not satisfied, and three other members reported that it either depended on a particular vendor or was up to their availability times to look up that information.

Respondents like to hear about products via live vendor demos, email, the FEDLIB listserv (which allows vendor demo/training information to be distributed), the “Technical Notes” newsletter, and the FEDLINK Services Directory. For example, the majority (23 out of 30 respondents) favored “Live Vendor demonstrations at FLICC/FEDLINK.” Virtually tying for first place was “FLICC/FEDLINK email.” Other popular product communication venues include

the FEDLIB listserv (19), FEDLINK “Technical Notes” newsletter (16) and the FEDLINK Vendor Services Directory (16).

Almost two-thirds (20 out of 33) of the Interview Survey respondents do not want FEDLINK representatives to market the products and services directly to them. About 10 out of 33 people believe that it was a good idea and reported that they would like that service.

According to the survey results, over 70 percent of total stakeholder respondents (24 out of 34) would like to receive emails from FEDLINK on vendors’ products and services. Seven people do not want to receive such emails and a few respondents are not sure.

8. FLICC/FEDLINK Work Environment

Overall, FLICC/FEDLINK received positive feedback as a place to work. Five of the 15 respondents would like to see a technology-related position added to FLICC/FEDLINK. The skill sets mentioned most often for new FLICC/FEDLINK employees are technology and/or technical in nature.

Sixteen (or 47 percent) of FLICC/FEDLINK staff members believe that FLICC/FEDLINK provides a positive work environment. Three staffers said FLICC/FEDLINK does not provide a positive work environment, and two people reported that the work environment is only sometimes positive.

**“I appreciate the collegiality here, internally and with all our contacts outside the office. I also appreciate doing work we can all believe is worthwhile, which tends to keep attitude more positive.” —
FLICC/FEDLINK Staff Survey**

The following suggestions were given as ways that FLICC/FEDLINK could become a better place to work:

- Incorporate the use of technology /upgrade the systems
- Increase staff
- Give more staff the opportunity to meet with members and vendors
- Provide written training procedures for various jobs
- Increase harmony between the units; more cross unit communication
- Increase compensation; better promotion opportunities
- Conduct meetings between supervisors and employees at least once a year to share objectives and set goals
- Provide a required work ethics class
- Move to the Madison building
- Increase staff training inside and outside of FLICC/FEDLINK

“[FLICC/FEDLINK needs:]

- **[a] new Financial Management System.**
- **workforce reorganization to create a leaner, meaner, highly skilled and courteous staff**
- **more opportunities for promotion within ... Fiscal”—FLICC/FEDLINK Staff Survey**

Most staff members believe that staff relations are an advantage to working at FLICC/FEDLINK. They also cite minimum pressure from management and a relaxed supportive atmosphere as a major advantage. However, staff did complain about a lack of promotion opportunities for some staff, divisions between FLICC/FEDLINK’s various units, and heavy reliance without backups for some key functions.

Staff respondents list cross-training, the opportunity to attend ALA pre-conferences, exposure to technology, project management courses, and foreign language and training courses that are part

of a certificate or degree program as some of the training opportunities that will help them grow professionally.

Staff was also asked to list the title, skill set and major responsibilities for two potential new staff members. Five of the 15 respondents would like to see a technology-related position added to FLICC/FEDLINK. An additional three would like a position that focuses on the marketing of FLICC/FEDLINK services. Other positions included Visual Information Specialist, FNO Assistant, FNS Developer/Manager, AP Manager, Collector, Support Accounting Technician and various specialists in differing fields.

The most popular skill sets cited by the staff were web design, understanding the use of technology, systems analyst, systems developer, marketing professional, excellent customer service, library, and accounting.

Major responsibilities such as the ability to offer marketing support, web site updating, staff computer assistance and troubleshooting, FNO support, financial systems support, and computer programming were touted as important.

9. The Future of Federal Libraries and Information Centers

FLICC/FEDLINK stakeholders predict a difficult era ahead for federal libraries. They mention budget cuts, decreased staffing as more people are retiring, and a general decline in the value of their organizations, as perceived by their agencies and users. With such issues surrounding the federal library community, FLICC/FEDLINK's role as an advocate on their behalf could help promote their image, garner additional support for them, and increase the usage of federal libraries and their services.

FLICC/FEDLINK stakeholders in the Interview Survey were asked how they think federal library and information centers will change over the next five fiscal years. Thirty-six percent of those who answered believe there will be a decrease in collections and staff due to budget constraints. This predicament, they predicted, will foster an environment in which less staff will be required to do more. Another major

**“Budgets will decline, personnel will be lost due to retirement, greater [difficulty] attracting librarians to work for the federal government, greater demands to supply electronic resources, potential to become irrelevant/invisible, some libraries will make the mistake to maintain the status quo thus increasing their chances of being irrelevant.” —
FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey**

**“Libraries will have to reinvent themselves over the next five years. Librarians are going to have to be creative. I hope we have a good crop of young librarians who will be able to do that. My big fear is agencies will not see libraries as indispensable as librarians retire. We're seen increasingly as a place that can be eliminated when the philosophy is that “We can get everything over the Internet.” —
FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey**

change on the horizon will require librarians to justify the existence of libraries and the library profession. The respondents cited web competition, outsourcing and present day library closings to express their concern that libraries have the potential to become insignificant. Other changes forecasted for the

next five fiscal years include the burgeoning reliance on virtual services, increased collaboration as smaller structures combine with larger structures, and physical space reduction due to the expansion of digital resources.

We also asked the FLICC/FEDLINK Interview respondents to describe the top three issues facing federal library and information centers. Their discussion of the issues corresponds to the Outsell Report, “The Changing Role of Content Management Functions: View from the Corporate Sector.” Outsell's report cites budget constraints, staff reductions and demonstrating value as the top issues that resonate with corporate management today.

Forty-eight percent of the FLICC/FEDLINK surveyors reported budgeting as the major issue facing libraries. Twenty-seven percent think that justifying the existence of libraries is the top concern facing federal libraries. An equal number of respondents report the retirement of the baby boomers, the inability to hire replacements and the trend toward outsourcing as vital issues facing libraries today.

Recommendations for FLICC/FEDLINK

As federal libraries move ahead into an uncertain future that is likely to include less funding, a diminished stature, and decreased support for many of them, FLICC/FEDLINK's role of promoting the interests and services of federal libraries will take on a greater importance. One only needs to look at the popularity of and support for the National Library of Medicine, to name just

**“This is a critical time for government libraries and I hope that this survey provides the FLICC/FEDLINK staff with some useful information to help define their role in the coming years” —
FLICC/FEDLINK Interview Survey**

one example, to realize that federal libraries do make an immense and important contribution to the federal government and the country.

FLICC/FEDLINK's unique advantage of bringing together the federal library community can and

should be galvanized to help this important sector of the information profession transform itself to succeed over the next five years. Moreover, FLICC/FEDLINK should leverage the services and resources of its parent institution, the Library of Congress, to better meet the needs of its members and further establish the Library of Congress as a central figure within the federal library community. Specific Library of Congress resources FLICC/FEDLINK can tap into to create new or expanded services for its members include, but are not limited to, foreign language capabilities, knowledge organization/cataloging, preservation, acquisitions, and research. New FLICC/FEDLINK initiatives, described at the end of this section, include consulting, consortium pricing, digital repository development, web site redesign, portal development, a federal library directory, and more. A summary of FLICC/FEDLINK Initiatives, derived from member, vendor and staff feedback in the surveys, are listed below.

Recommended FLICC/FEDLINK Initiatives

- Create a new image for FLICC/FEDLINK, associating it even more closely with the Library of Congress and positioning it as a provider of leading-edge products, services, and information.
- Work with Library of Congress divisions and experts to develop training, information and consulting services related to member needs and interests. Library of Congress divisions FLICC/FEDLINK should investigate working more closely with include, but are not limited to, the Cataloging Directorate/Bibliographic Access Divisions, Preservation Directorate, Federal Research Division, Acquisitions Divisions, American Memory Project, Digital Programs and Collections, and foreign language experts.

- Create fee-based consulting services in the fields of preservation, digital library development, web design, space planning, content management selection, and other areas of interest to members through relationships with renowned consultants and/or Library of Congress experts.
- Work with FLICC/FEDLINK members to create a true buying consortium of federal libraries; negotiate with vendors to obtain beneficial consortium pricing; and create a payment system that allows such purchasing.
- Explore new ideas and programs to encourage members to buy more products through FEDLINK, including better promotion of vendor products, lowering FEDLINK's fee, and adding new vendors and/or types of products to FEDLINK's network, as articulated by members in the surveys.
- Invest in a state-of-the-art financial accounting/e-commerce system that allows credit card purchasing and electronic access to account information.
- Hire additional staff to work with FEDLINK members, and ensure staff members have adequate back-up and customer service training so all FEDLINK member inquiries are answered in a timely, friendly and complete manner.
- Develop web-based training, education, and information campaigns that members can access both synchronously and asynchronously to extend FLICC/FEDLINK's education programs outside of Washington, DC, and to promote new FLICC/FEDLINK services, developments, and vendor products.
- Redesign the FLICC/FEDLINK web site by incorporating state-of-the-art web technologies, such as content management, XML encoding, and more user-friendly navigation, site architecture, and search capabilities to give FLICC/FEDLINK a new 21st century look and to serve as an example for FLICC/FEDLINK web design consulting services.
- Create a FLICC/FEDLINK portal and/or digital library to serve as an example of FLICC/FEDLINK's digital library consulting services and to use as a potential template for member libraries.
- Design and distribute an e-letter with weekly information on breaking news developments and continuously updated product information.
- Create and disseminate key information resources for members on federal library developments, news, and research in a timely manner

through the web site, e-letter, and new communications media such as webcasts, videoconferences, audioconferences, RSS feeds, etc..

- Work with vendors to improve communications, promote their products more aggressively, and reverse the trend of FEDLINK members buying directly from vendors instead of through the FEDLINK network.
- Establish a data sharing network of federal librarians to leverage on their experience and lessons learned.
- Create a directory of federal libraries that includes background information, contact details, collections holdings, links to catalogs/OPACs and future plans for every federal library.
- Work with one or more federal libraries to help develop an institutional repository along the lines of PubMedCentral, e.g. work with the National Agricultural Library to develop a scientific repository.
- Develop an advocacy expert or group at FLICC that raises awareness of federal libraries within their agencies and the public at large; supports them before and during outsourcing and/or closure; and works with OPM to ensure the 1410 series receives professional status, a positive education requirement, and adequate salary levels.

Conclusions

FLICC/FEDLINK's members, vendors and staff provided valuable feedback through the four FLICC/FEDLINK surveys conducted in February 2006. A number of themes were repeated throughout the surveys and should be incorporated into FLICC/FEDLINK's upcoming five-year business plan.

Many members and vendors associate FLICC/FEDLINK closely with the Library of Congress. At the same time, the Library of Congress has many resources with which FLICC/FEDLINK can align itself to provide new and better services.

Members are increasingly buying information-related products directly from vendors for a variety of reasons, including the need to buy from vendors outside of the FEDLINK network, the desire to use credit cards, and the wish to avoid FEDLINK's Transfer Pay service fee. Members would like more and new types of services, including temporary staffing, new types of online/multimedia resources, and more. They describe such services as well as vendors they would like to see join the network. FLICC/FEDLINK could expand its sales by incorporating such products and vendors into its network.

The desire for true consortium purchasing on behalf of multiple agencies and/or user groups was also repeated by many disparate members. FLICC/FEDLINK could create a new role for itself by developing such consortium arrangements.

The need for an automated financial system that allows members to view their accounts electronically was also repeated many times in the surveys. If FLICC/FEDLINK were to invest in a modern accounting system at the same time that it improves its customer service, FEDLINK would become a more popular network for federal agencies.

Vendors, for their part, are willing to sell products through FEDLINK or directly to federal agencies. Overall, they express the need for FEDLINK to take a much more proactive role in marketing their products to encourage more sales through FEDLINK. FEDLINK needs to promote vendors products to help channel sales through the network instead of playing a passive role as the middleman of such purchases.

Members have expressed an interest in consulting services. FLICC/FEDLINK could augment its revenue stream by building a consulting arm. Such services could incorporate the rich resources available already from various divisions of the Library of Congress.

FLICC/FEDLINK also needs to project a new image associating it with online products, consortium purchasing, consulting services, etc. A redesigned web site and a new e-letter would help build a new image for FLICC/FEDLINK and position it to grow in the coming years.

The surveys are replete with compelling feedback and useful suggestions, as summarized in this report. We encourage all interested parties to view the data and answers in the surveys to get an even richer picture of the needs and suggestions FLICC/FEDLINK's core users, vendors and staff describe. By building on the expressed needs of its members, vendors and staff, FLICC/FEDLINK will be in a stronger position to capitalize on the changing information and library requirements of federal agencies and become an even more important player in the delivery of information-related resources to the federal government.