# NLLS ANNUAL SURVEY

## 2022 FINDINGS

**NORTHERNLIGHTS**
**LIBRARY SYSTEM**
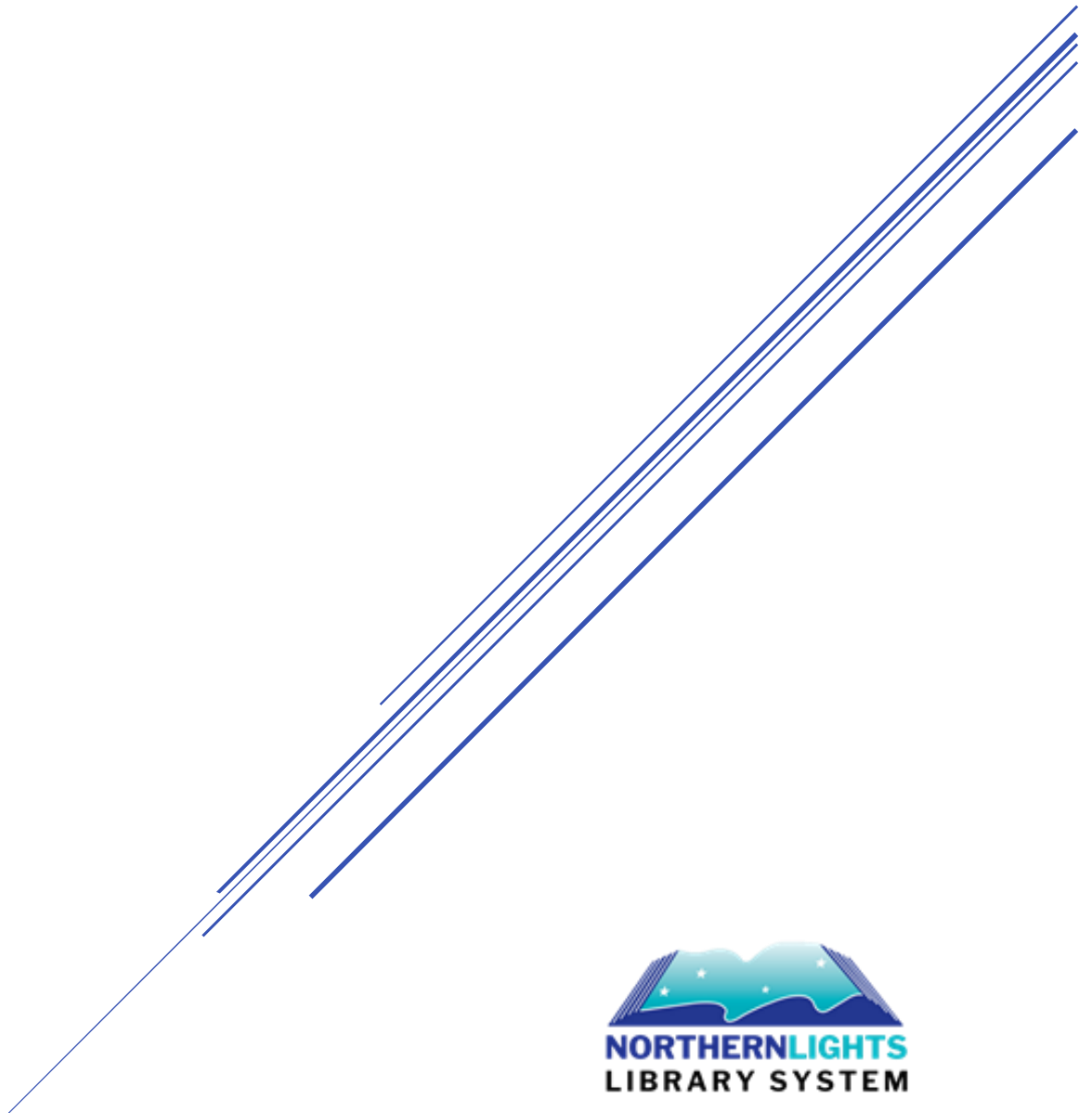
# INTRODUCTION

This is the first annual survey conducted of Northern Lights Library System's services. The primary target of the survey is library managers and staff at member libraries. The survey is also open to local board members. The goal of the survey is to better understand the needs of member libraries and how effective services provided by NLLS are meeting those needs. The survey was developed with feedback from member library managers, and the Board.

The survey was distributed in two ways: 1) by open link allowing participants to respond anonymously, and 2) by direct email to library managers. From October 24th to December 1st reminders were sent to library managers to participate in the survey. The message:

> Good day library managers and directors,
>
> Thank you for helping us develop this survey. As promised, I'm going to ask you to do it one more time. This survey should take 8-10 minutes.
>
> Please complete the survey from this custom email in order to be entered into our survey incentive draw! Which is, a $500 credit at CDW (https://www.cdw.com/) for your library. As you know this is the place to go for computers, printers, and all things tech.
>
> We have created a separate link to share the survey with staff and board members, as well as for any comments you didn't feel comfortable sharing with your name attached. This link will be sent out via GroupsIO and can be shared as needed. All answers submitted through this second link will be anonymous.
>
> We want to hear from all our members.
>
> ~James

Thirty-two (32) library managers chose to participate through the email link, sharing their name with their response. In total thirty-nine (39) participants indicated they were library managers. It is not possible to know exactly how many library managers participated in the survey as some

may have chosen to fill out the survey with and without anonymity. As a result, the response rate of library managers to this survey ranges between 65 and 80 percent.

In total, the survey had 71 one participants. However, only 55 of these included complete responses. All responses were included in the analysis. However, for consistency in presenting statistical data numbers in this report are from the 55 complete responses only.
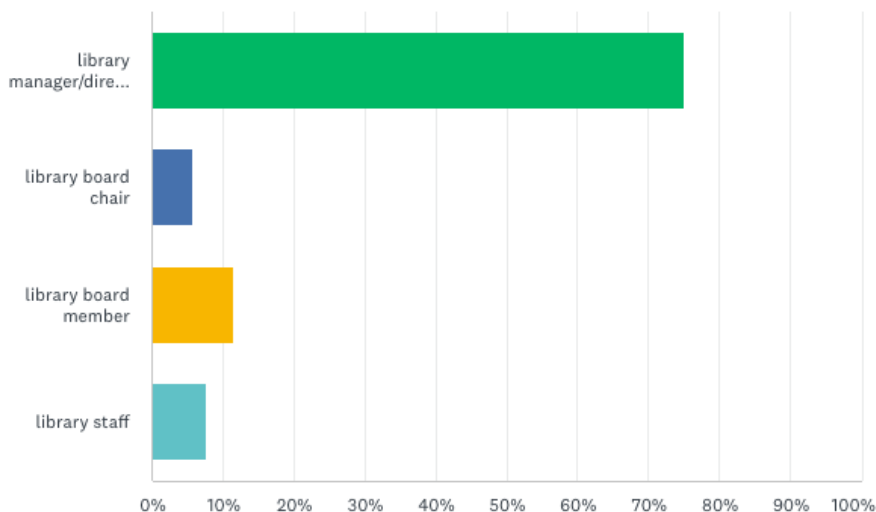


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| library manager/director | 75.00% | 39 |
| library board chair | 5.77% | 3 |
| library board member | 11.54% | 6 |
| library staff | 7.69% | 4 |
| TOTAL | | 52 |

The response rate is reasonable. Northern Lights is regularly querying member libraries on specific services. It should be expected that there is some survey fatigue amongst library managers. Ideally, we'd have participation from every member library. In future years **consideration to shifting the primary audience of the survey from library managers to library boards should be given.** Sending the survey directly to board chairs to be completed

during a board meeting, with their library manager participating, might increase the value of responses and generate excellent discussion at the local level.

The survey was comprised of 5 sections: Governance, Administration, Operations, Member Library Services (MLS), and Technology Services and Infrastructure (TSI). These are the same 5 areas reflected in our strategic plans, budget, implementation plans, and our service catalogue. This report strives to balance a thorough analysis and transparency with the need to focus on crucial findings. Overall, we find that members are positive about the services provided by NLLS. Nonetheless, there are exciting opportunities for improvement in every area.

# GOVERNANCE

The Board had a 75% turnover 1 year ago. It should not be surprising that there would be some communication issues. It is encouraging that the feedback is generally positive, and that nearly all respondents know who their representative is.

Do you know who your NLLS Board representative OR Executive zone representative is?

Answered: 55    Skipped: 0
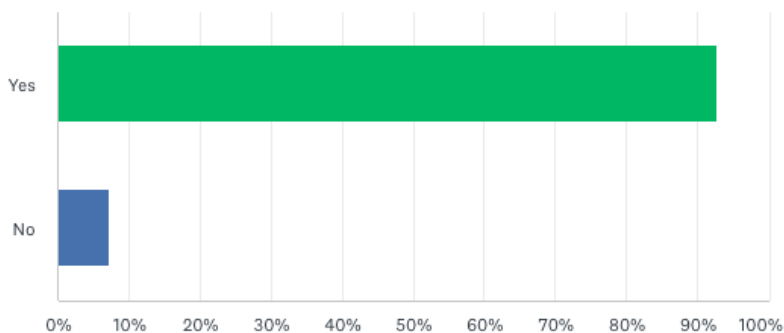


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 92.73% | 51 |
| No | 7.27% | 4 |
| TOTAL | | 55 |

However, 18 library managers (21 participants) are "somewhat" or "not confident" that the Board will hear and answer their concerns or questions. This is a clear indication that the Board has some work to do to invite greater participation and confidence from local libraries.

## How confident are you that any questions or concerns you have will be heard and addressed by the Board or Executive Committee?

Answered: 55    Skipped: 0
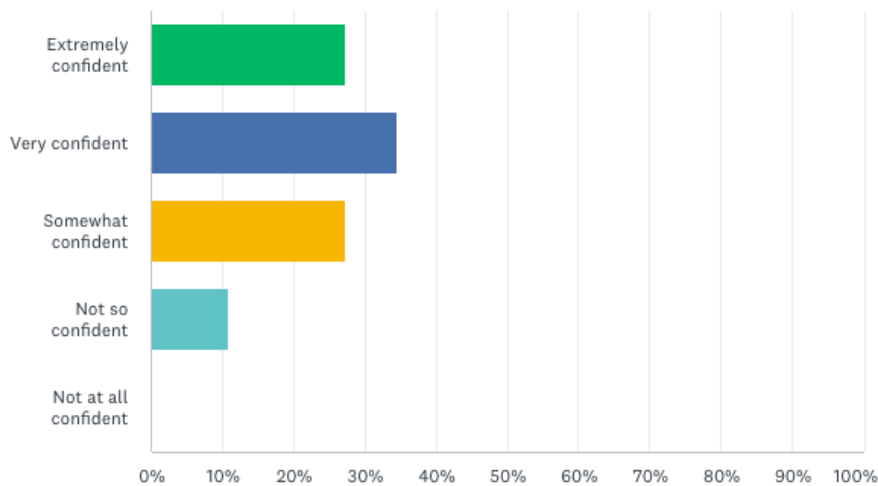


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Extremely confident | 27.27% | 15 |
| Very confident | 34.55% | 19 |
| Somewhat confident | 27.27% | 15 |
| Not so confident | 10.91% | 6 |
| Not at all confident | 0.00% | 0 |
| TOTAL | | 55 |

The primary link between our library managers and the Board is the Library Manager's Council (LMC). We include the Chair of the LMC in Executive and Board Meetings as an official representative. The LMC Chair is invited to report to the Board regularly. Those reports are an excellent way of helping the Board understand the work of our libraries. We may consider ways

to better leverage this position to bring concerns from library managers to the Board table and communicate the work of the Board to member libraries. The LMC Chair might consider:

- seeking feedback from managers on their Board report before it goes to the Board.
- including a section in their report that highlights current questions or concerns from members.
- reporting back to Library Managers after each Executive and Board meeting to share their reflections on the meetings.

The Board should consider ways to encourage local board attendance at the General Board meetings. One participant suggested:

> *...to NOT have Town Councilors be the default option for serving on the NLLS board. Recognizing that the levy to NLLS is a two-part payment from the library and municipality. I think there should be greater representation from the local library boards who have much more at stake than disengaged town councilors.*

While it is not within Northern Lights power to select local board members, we can encourage councils to follow best practices. Anecdotally, we've heard from library managers that NLLS representatives from council that also sit on the local library board can be very effective. A councilor with a passion for, or belief in the value of public library services that is appointed locally and at the system level, can open communication between all three levels of governance: local boards, the system board, and municipal council.

These findings also support the practice of Executive representatives and the Executive Director reporting directly to local library boards annually and an annual Local Board Chair's meeting. Further, moving our Executive meetings out to local libraries will increase the Board's availability to members. As we continue these practices, I expect the number of respondents reporting confidence in the Board will rise.

*There has been 100% improvement over the years. Continued communication is the key.*

This Board should be pleased with the work they have done this past year. There is clear opportunity for improvement, but the survey clearly shows a positive trajectory.

## Recommendations:

1. Strengthen the role of Chair of the Library Manager's Council.
2. Continue the recent practice of visiting local boards annually.
3. Continue the recently formed annual Local Board Chair's meeting.
4. Hold Executive meetings at member library facilities.
5. Develop clear recommendations and guidelines for municipal councils to consider when appointing NLLS representatives.

## ADMINISTRATION

Respondents are generally positive in this section as they are throughout the survey. The system's trajectory is positive. Forty-five percent (45%) of respondents believe that the overall performance of NLLS is better than the year before. And fifty-one percent (51%) believe we are doing about the same. Of course, if about the same is "terrible" this is not a great metric. In future surveys we'll broaden this question slightly to provide greater nuance.

## Compared to last year, how would you rate the overall performance of Northern Lights Library System?

Answered: 55    Skipped: 0
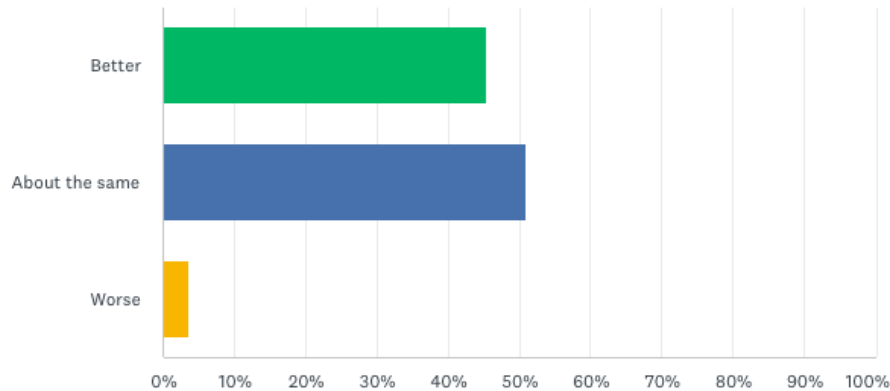


| ANSWER CHOICES ▾ | RESPONSES ▾ | |
|---|---|---|
| ▾ Better | 45.45% | 25 |
| ▾ About the same | 50.91% | 28 |
| ▾ Worse | 3.64% | 2 |
| TOTAL | | 55 |

The word "continue" appears often in the comments. This is encouraging. Our members are seeing NLLS efforts to increase communication and advocate on their behalf.

*Continue to... nurture relationships*
*Continue to lobby the provincial government*
*Continue to keep communication open*

Continued improvements in how, when, and what we communicate to our members is necessary. Efforts over the past years to improve communication through: weekly reports, the service catalogue,

value statements, digital tools, and site visits, is reflected in the strong positive response to the question, **"How informed do you feel about the services the system provides your library?"**
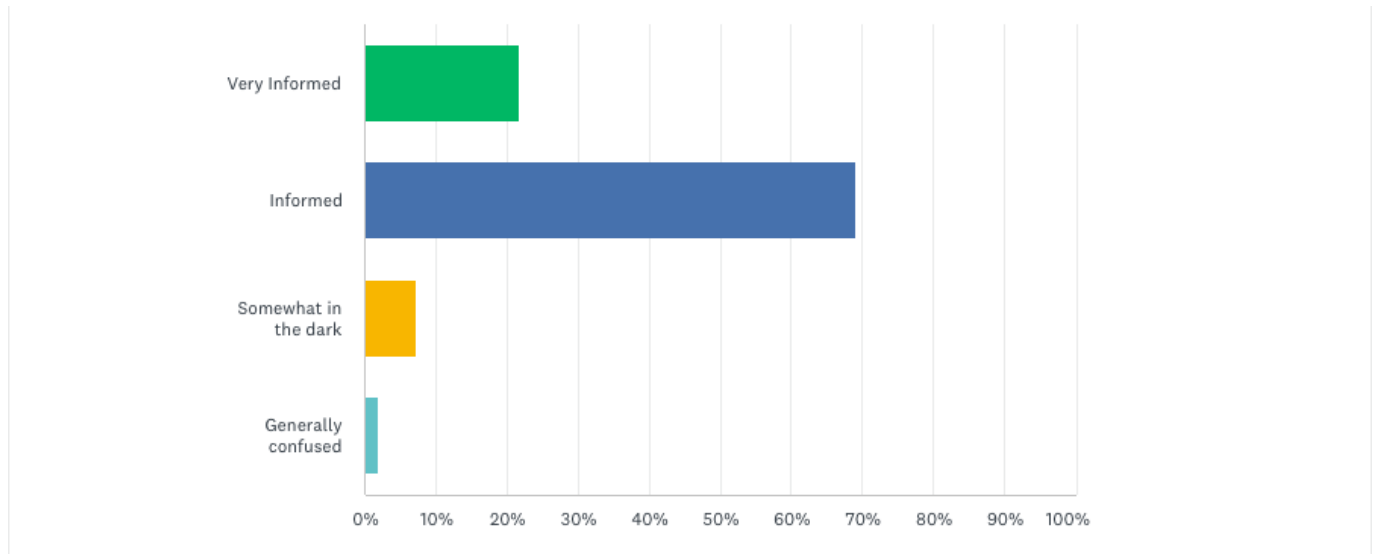


More than 90% of respondents feel they are "informed" or "very informed" about the services we provide. Furthermore, the final closed response question in this section is overwhelmingly positive. Respondents to this question could select all that apply.

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| ▾ I feel comfortable contributing my thoughts and ideas toward the overall direction of NLLS | 47.27% | 26 |
| ▾ I avoid reaching out to NLLS or making positive suggestions for change | 5.45% | 3 |
| ▾ I believe that overall NLLS takes an interest in the challenges and needs of my library. | 67.27% | 37 |
| ▾ I am confident in the leadership capabilities of the Executive Director. | 58.18% | 32 |
| ▾ I am NOT confident in the leadership capabilities of the Executive Director | 1.82% | 1 |
| Total Respondents: 55 | | |

The open comments in this section are particularly enlightening. See Appendix 2 for all comments. There are several themes that arise from the comments, including an emphasis on greater and more customized support for small libraries, and the timeliness and consistency of NLLS responses to member queries.

*If you call with a concern, you are told to put in a ticket. We are the customer and its off putting to have to have our requests depersonalized to a ticket.*

We continue to take steps to improving the timeliness of NLLS response to member issues and tickets. We recently instituted a [protocol for answering the main phone](#) line and ensuring member concerns are logged and addressed as promptly as possible.

We have developed a protocol for managers to regularly check on the status of open tickets. We've created views in the ticket system that allow department managers easy access to a list of all open tickets for their department. A protocol for posting internal notes is under development and includes best practices for when contact is made outside the ticket system, checking on ticket progress, and for keeping members updated on their tickets.

We are taking steps to improve our ticket response time and ensure that nothing gets lost by working with staff to codify our procedures and communicate expectations to members. Developing a culture that encourages members to reach out when we are not living up to those expectations is a priority.

Our coming training plan for the year pays particular attention to the needs of our smaller libraries. Northern Lights should be seen as a service and not a burden. This can be a juggling act where local boards are not able to provide enough administrative hours to their staff. Running a small library is complicated and requires significant administrative time. Advocating for our library managers to receive adequate time to administer as well as run the library with local boards would be worth the effort. Small libraries with few hours and limited budgets benefit tremendously from participation in the system but the scale of services is difficult to right size to meet the needs of our largest as well as smallest municipalities.

# Recommendations

1. Establish a protocol for answering the NLLS main phone line and routing member queries.
2. Establish protocols to increase the timeliness of ticket responses.
3. Communicate best practices around administrative time for library managers to local boards where necessary.
4. Have the ED meet with a number of local library managers one-on-one throughout the year to better understand local needs and concerns.

# OPERATIONS

Unfortunately, we missed adding an open-ended text response in this section. This dilutes these results as participants were unable to help contextualize their answers. In future years we will need to add a text response. Nonetheless, the answers we received were largely positive and even surprising in this area. The big surprise was the response to turnaround time for materials ordering. Anecdotally, concerns about the time it takes from order to delivery abound. However, **only three (3)** respondents indicated that "It takes way too long to receive the items I've ordered." While **forty-one (41)** respondents agreed that "I am generally satisfied with the turnaround time for items I order." This may indicate that changes in processing over the past several years have worked to alleviate problems that once existed. Maintaining satisfaction with the turnaround time of book orders and the quality of the processing is a top priority as we seek to continue to reduce outside purchases.

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| I OFTEN find errors in the items cataloged for my library | 11.11% | 6 |
| I RARELY find errors in the items cataloged for my library | 55.56% | 30 |
| I am generally satisfied with turn around time for items I order | 75.93% | 41 |
| It takes way to long to receive the items I've ordered | 5.56% | 3 |
| Total Respondents: 54 | | |

NLLS staff in the Operations department should be proud of the work they do. Our members see and appreciate their efforts. The answers to the final question in this area provide four (4) affirming statements and three (3) improvement statements. Respondents could select all statements that apply.

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| I feel comfortable reaching out to NLLS about delivery, cataloging or processing problems or questions. | 75.47% | 40 |
| I avoid reaching out to NLLS when I notice errors or problems | 1.89% | 1 |
| I believe that NLLS takes an interest in the challenges and needs of my library. | 71.70% | 38 |
| I feel that many of the standards are arbitrary or unnecessary red tape. | 3.77% | 2 |
| I feel that the standards for processing and delivery manage the many competing needs of libraries well | 47.17% | 25 |
| I am confident in the leadership capabilities of the Manager of Operations and Delivery Services. | 52.83% | 28 |
| I am NOT confident in the leadership capabilities of the Manager of Operations and Delivery Services. | 3.77% | 2 |
| Total Respondents: 53 | | |

Better communication with libraries throughout the order, processing, and delivery workflow will help us maintain appreciation of our services. It is important to note that libraries increased their order expenditures by eight percent (8%) this year. This positive response is impressive in the face of increasing volume. One reason leading to the maintenance of positive turnaround times may be attributed to the increase in the price point for applying Mactac to books (a time intensive process). We are currently reviewing our order to delivery processes with all staff. We will continue that effort.

## Recommendations

1. Review and document current processing practices to ensure we can meet the demands of an increasing volume of orders

# MEMBER LIBRARY SERVICES (MLS)

MLS has made great progress with enhancing the services provided by the system and the relationships built with member libraries. One thing that comes out in the feedback in this survey is that many (but not all) of our member libraries face one or two related challenges: they lack the administrative time to take advantage of all that we offer for training and support, or they

lack an understanding of what we do or can do for them. Nonetheless, most members feel "informed" or "very informed" about our services.

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Communication is FREQUENTLY relevant to my needs and professional interests. | 50.00% | 27 |
| Communication is RARELY relevant to my needs and professional interests. | 7.41% | 4 |
| I have access to information related to NLLS services and offerings. | 74.07% | 40 |
| I have difficulty finding information and often don't know what is being offered. | 11.11% | 6 |
| Total Respondents: 54 | | |

For library managers and staff that have restricted budgets and time, the significant number of service offerings from NLLS can be overwhelming. We have several communication channels, and this can lead to confusion if library managers are not interacting with those channels regularly. Continued refinement of channels of communication will mitigate against this over time.

The relationship between MLS staff and member library staff is a top priority for this department. Further development and nurturing of these relationships will support the overall mission to deliver services and training that meets the needs of our libraries. To that end, MLS will continue to develop a clear understanding of the needs of member libraries through direct communication and site visits. Site visits will include a final report which will outline topics covered, training offered, and optional next steps that member libraries can initiate when they have capacity to do so.

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| When I request assistance I receive a relevant response from my consultant or someone else capable of helping me. | 56.60% | 30 |
| When I request assistance I don't receive a relevant response, or the response takes too long to be helpful to me. | 13.21% | 7 |
| I feel confident that when I ask for help I will get what I need. | 64.15% | 34 |
| I don't feel confident that I will get the help I need when I ask. | 5.66% | 3 |
| Total Respondents: 53 | | |

By and large, the MLS team is developing solid relationships of trust with our members. This can only be accomplished through an understanding of the needs of libraries and following through on promised help in a timely manner. The survey clearly shows that this is the experience of our members. However, about twelve to fifteen percent **(12-15%)** of respondents indicate some concerns communicating with their consultants. This is hardly surprising. Historically, the average turnover for professional consultants in the system is about 18 months. We've kept the current MLS team together for 2 years. It takes time to build positive relationships especially where previous relationships were strained. Participants could select all answers that apply to this question about member's experience with us:

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| ▼ I feel comfortable reaching out to my assigned consultant. | 72.22% | 39 |
| ▼ I avoid reaching out to my assigned consultant unless I absolutely need to. | 11.11% | 6 |
| ▼ I believe that MLS takes an interest in the challenges and needs of my library. | 51.85% | 28 |
| ▼ I feel that MLS hasn't taken the time to get to know me or my library... yet. | 7.41% | 4 |
| ▼ I am confident in the leadership capabilities of the Manager of MLS. | 48.15% | 26 |
| ▼ I am NOT confident in the leadership capabilities of the Manager of MLS. | 7.41% | 4 |
| Total Respondents: 54 | | |

As part of their annual professional development goals, the MLS team has adopted a "Philosophy of 100% Accountability." This means that in every situation they ask, "Have I done everything in my power to ensure *this situation* is successful?" This does not mean doing the work for others. Instead, it focuses on infrastructure, follow-up, follow-through, and acknowledgment of mistakes. Where mistakes are found, intentional reparation to preserve and strengthen relationships are made.

MLS will strive to provide greater transparency for the work that the department does. One-way we'll accomplish this is through the formal written reports after site-visits that can be shared with department managers, library managers, and local boards. We anticipate this will help all involved develop a better understanding of what we do, how we do it, and why we do it that way. Greater transparency will support change management across the system, along with better understanding between consultants and member library staff.

The comments in this section were informative for all areas of the system. See Appendix 3 for all comments. Several of the recommendations in other sections were partially inspired by the comments here. MLS is the face of the system to the frontline staff of our member libraries. Significant accolades need to be given to the work of our consultants as they juggle the sometimes-competing needs of 49 libraries in a range of unique contexts.

> *I am grateful that MLS staff have begun seconding at libraries in our area to understand rural library service.*
>
> *We have had the privilege of using the consulting services while we were transitioning to a new library manager. It made the process from hiring to training flawless.*

The degree of complexity of the work MLS engages with is significant. The bar to entry is a graduate degree in library studies, but to be effective in this environment requires years of experience both varied and specific. As consultants are immersed in what it takes to run a small rural library their ability to assist our members is strengthened. The comments and the responses to this survey reflect this complexity.

## Recommendations

1. Produce site-visit reports that can be shared with department managers, library managers, and boards.
2. Continue seconding library managers where appropriate.
3. Continue to refine communication channels accessed by member library staff.
4. Adopt a philosophy of 100% accountability.

# TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE (TSI)

The trajectory of TSI is very positive. As with MLS, we can better utilize the tools we have, especially the helpdesk. Faster response times and better follow-up are achievable. (TSI) aims to communicate clearly on technology changes, updates, and upgrades. Please indicate all statements that reflect your experience with us:

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Communication is FREQUENTLY timely and helps me understand what changes are being made and why. | 78.18% | 43 |
| Communication is RARELY helpful, too technical, or confusing. | 3.64% | 2 |
| I have access to helpful documentation and resources which allows me to make the most of the technology in my library. | 63.64% | 35 |
| I have difficulty finding information or documentation that clearly explains the technologies and software in my library. | 9.09% | 5 |
| **Total Respondents: 55** | | |

This response shows that communication coming out of the TSI department is largely accessible and timely. Continued refinement of our communication channels (Teams, knowledgebase, website) will help reach those final few that struggle to find the help they need when they need it.

The answers to the next questions about member's experience with TSI are encouraging.

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| I feel comfortable reaching out for technical help. | 83.33% | 45 |
| I avoid reaching out for technical help unless I absolutely need to. | 9.26% | 5 |
| I feel I know when it is appropriate to put in a ticket through ask@nlls.ab.ca OR when I should call someone. | 55.56% | 30 |
| I believe TSI understands the technical needs and abilities at our library and works at the level of our understanding. | 57.41% | 31 |
| I feel that TSI hasn't taken the time to get to know the technical issues at our library. | 3.70% | 2 |
| I am confident in the leadership capabilities of the Manager of TSI. | 66.67% | 36 |
| I am NOT confident in the leadership capabilities of the Manager of TSI. | 0.00% | 0 |
| **Total Respondents: 54** | | |

Unfortunately, our question regarding the hardware, network, and software experience of staff and patrons was unbalanced. We offered respondents three (3) affirmative and one (1) improvement statement to choose from. Like our other questions, they could select all that apply. The spread of responses is relatively even. The number of respondents reporting an unstable or slow network connection, twenty **(20)**, is less than encouraging but confirms what we already knew.

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| The computing hardware in the library meets the needs of patrons and staff. | 69.09% | 38 |
| The internet connection in the library is reliable. | 54.55% | 30 |
| The internet connection is slow or unstable. | 36.36% | 20 |
| I feel confident about my ability to use the various software provided by NLLS | 41.82% | 23 |
| **Total Respondents: 55** | | |

The open comments in conjunction with this response make it clear that bandwidth and network stability must remain a top priority for this department. Since the survey 30 of our libraries have seen significant bandwidth increases. We'll continue to monitor network speeds and work to identify other improvements that can be made.

The open-ended comments in this section strongly point to the need for faster response time to tickets. This is partially the nature of technical issues. When you need help, you need help now!

> ## *I feel tech tickets need to be answered within the hour.*

With a small team of tech support and a very large number of members a balance between response time and capacity must be found. The survey recommendations already point to better helpdesk procedures to help with the timeliness of response. However, TSI needs to put technologies in place that will proactively forestall issues, provide consistent experience, and simplify complexity. The best way to increase response times to tickets is to reduce the number

of trouble tickets coming into the system. We do this by adopting technologies and structures that need less maintenance and by providing appropriate training on those technologies.

## Recommendations

1. Monitor recent improvements to bandwidth and pursue options for increasing network stability and performance (continue with the network enhancement plan).
2. Pursue endpoint standardization and simplify our complex computing environment.
3. Slow down the pace of improvements to allow member libraries to adjust to changes.
4. Work with the MLS team to provide appropriate training on new technologies.

# CONCLUSION

The survey itself had several problems despite consultation with member libraries and boards. There was no open-ended response to the Operations section, the final question in the TSI section did not include corollary improvement answers to affirmation answers. Some of the questions might have been better formulated for greater nuance in responses. Nonetheless, the value of the survey is significant. The survey suggests several improvements the system can make to better services. It is also largely affirming of the great work system staff are doing. The trajectory of Northern Lights is positive in all areas.

## Recommendations

1. Consideration of engaging professional survey design services should be given. The ability to compare responses year-of-year will greatly enhance the utility of the survey.
2. Consider changing the primary target audience of the survey to boards with managers and encourage boards to complete the survey together each year.

# APPENDIX 1: ALL OPEN RESPONSES TO GOVERNANCE

**How might the Board better address the needs of our libraries?**

1. Continued Lobbying of the provincial government for continued and increased supports
2. More consulting support
3. Videos or recordings on skills such as HR, planning, communicating with your board, small library specific training.
4. There has been 100% improvement over the years. Continued communication is the key.
5. The chain of communication seems to be working well; haven't encountered glitches so far, so if any have occurred, they've been dealt with before trickling to my level.
6. I think they are doing a pretty good job
7. IT - faster response. Most libraries don't ask for assistance until they have tried everything so the longer NLLS takes, the longer our staff cannot work properly.
8. They are doing a good job.
9. Listen to members & what they would like from library
10. I feel that the Board is doing a great job in support our library so don't have any suggestions at this time.
11. I think you're doing well. Continue investigating resource sharing options that don't cost our libraries additional monies, include as much as possible with the funds that are appropriated.
12. Good to see that we now have the same member sitting on our board as the NLLS board. This has not happened for us previously and communication between the two boards suffered as a result.
13. Information regarding increases in the NLLS Levy would be appreciated before it actually is approved & why the increase is necessary. Ask the member libraries what programs and services are really important & what is not used effectively. We are not receiving increases from the government or municipalities so how long before we cannot afford to be open.

14. Applying for more need funding and passing onto the libraries, please. That is if able to apply to the government as a Library Board.

15. Unsure

16. By actually reaching out and talking with their libraries.

17. Lobbying the government for much needed additional funding.

18. I am not confident that NLLS trustees navigate the role of councillor versus NLLS board member properly. Given the historical pattern of NLLS board members not engaging properly with member libraries in the past (please note this has never been the case with Vermilion) it seems the best solution is to NOT have Town Councillors be the default option for serving on the NLLS board. Recognizing that the levy to NLLS is a two part payment from the library and municipality I think there should be greater representation from the local library boards who have much more at stake than disengaged town councillors. Although it is helpful to have a councillor on this board for advocacy purposes since it the municipality must also approve the levy purchase, I think we would be best served by having more "library people" in the room. I recognize that some jurisdictions have done this before, but the overwhelming practice seems to be for council to nominate a member instead who may or may not be on the local library board.

19. Contact the library directed and inquire.

20. Finding a way to speed up up the process of removing withdrawn items from Polaris's search (to reduce the amount of false positives when searching for books)

21. consistency, showing up to the meetings.

22. They should be on a local library Board or at the very least come to one local library board meeting quarterly so they can be knowledgeable about issues the libraries they represent have. Also, they should NOT be wearing their councillors' hat at the NLLS table.

23. How about board members reach out to their libraries?

24. Library Manager's should be able to directly address the board and executive with any concerns that they have.

25. none they are doing good

26. Our NLLS rep is very good at listening to our concerns and addressing them.

27. Let me know who is my board rep. Have the village assign a board rep. Have the rep contact me so we can have arrange a time before board meetings to address any concerns that I may be having.

# APPENDIX 2: ALL OPEN RESPONSES TO ADMINISTRATION

**Where should the System's administration focus its energy in the coming year? Or any other thoughts?**

1. Small libraries need better/more help. Not enough time or resources to figure out complicated programming or rarely used features of Windows, Polaris, Power BI, Simply Reports, etc.
2. How to do a membership campaign. How to promote eservices to non-library members.
3. The site visits are great. There is so much discussion when they are here, that when they get back to NLLS, nothing that was discussed was done in a timely manner or not done at all.
4. Continue to lobby the provincial government for funding. Get to know the new minister. Continue to work on fiscal responsibilities.
5. No suggestions at this time.
6. I think they are doing a pretty good job
7. None - you know the library needs better than I.
8. Keep on doing a great job.
9. Be pro active
10. Continue to keep communication open between library managers.
11. Keep doing what your doing. Providing services and assistance to our libraries. Having the consultants have more facetime with their libraries.
12. Library support. I sometimes feel like it takes a really long time to hear back from my tickets
13. The NLLS presentation to our Town Council was not received positively in 2021. In the first time in more than a decade we had a 50/50 vote split which needed the mayor to step in and vote in favour of the motion. This is shocking since we have historically received tremendous support for library issues at the municipal level. It was reported to me that Council was frustrated with how the numbers were presented. Our relationship

with regional government partners has also deteriorated in recent years because there is misunderstanding over where the NLLS levy money actually goes. I would prefer to see administration refine the presentation of numbers so that laymen can adequately see the cash flow and budget in a way that makes sense to them. If marketing consultants are needed to polish the pitch I think it would be worth the effort.

14. The reason I said worse are a few things have happened this year that have never happened before: 1) Appointment set up that was forgotten by NLLS. 2) Promises made via phone that were not honored by NLLS. I was told a help ticket should have been made. I had made a help ticket. The consultant called me to discuss it. She then promised to send items to help with our programming. The items never arrived after waiting three weeks. I contacted my consultant and I was told to make another "help" ticket. I felt that if a promise was made on the phone, that promise should have been honored without a "help" ticket. 3) Help tickets not returned in a timely fashion, once a tech item was forgotten. I ended up telephoning to get the needed attention after waiting for 4 hours to get my printer fixed. I was told he had forgot and he was sorry. (all tech items should be dealt with within the hour.) Mistakes happen but tech items should be priority. Also, does NLLS own a Tesla vehicle? There is a rumor circulating around that they do. Is this not a highly expensive vehicle? Perhaps NLLS needs to be more transparent on their spending as libraries pay ever increasing fees to NLLS.

15. I would like the focus to be on the little libraries that have small about of hours in a week . We already have our plate full with patrons, admin. It is frustrating when NLLS give us more thing we have to do. with little hours we have. where in previous years NLLS would help us little libraries out.

16. focus on helping small libraries with one staff member update their websites and social media accounts. Make more shareable content that is generic to all Alberta libraries, so it is quick and simple to share.

17. Meeting the needs of the libraries should be priority, providing service to the libraries. The worst thing to do is dangle services and then take them away.

18. I would like to see a more library focused approach where libraries are consulted in a timely manner for possible changes. There was a lot of things this past year where no notice or very little notice was given.
19. Looking at resources that can be bought in bulk and given to Libraries ie...Radon Detector Kits such as Marigold has.
20. Continue to nurture the relationships that have been developed and make new relationships with those that are beneficial to the partnership of the libraries and NLLS. Continue to listen to the member libraries and help them find solutions or give direction to find solutions to their issues.
21. IT and e-resources

# APPENDIX 3: ALL OPEN RESPONSES TO MLS

**What have we missed regarding consulting services? How can we improve?**

1. Requests for help are forgotten or put on back burner. Knowledge of Polaris seems lacking. Needs to be more organized. Showed up half hour early for site visit and proceeded to leave rather than have school secretary contact me. I was coming in on my time off to meet because she had indicated this time would work best for her so I was not happy.

2. You are all do a great job. Site visit consults and what ideas come of it, do not get done in a timely manner. I guess I have to email everything that was discussed and send reminders.

3. We have had the privilege of using the consulting services while we were transitioning to a new library manager. It made the process from hiring to training flawless. In addition, the new library manager will feel much more comfortable in reaching out to the consultant when the need arises.

4. I cannot think of anything right now

5. N/A

6. Nothing

7. I appreciate your team and their efforts. Limitations on what we receive are more a condition of my efforts than theirs

8. They are out of touch with what really happens at the public library level. They have no idea the challenges we face or time we have available. We need them to reach out to us.

9. It would be nice to have more facetime with our consultant. I feel like by the time they get here we barely scratch the surface of what we want to achieve.

10. I do think that the consultants have a lot (too much) on their plates and therefore response time is longer than what I would like. But when my consultant does respond she is very helpful and knowledgeable.

11. I am grateful that MLS staff have begun seconding at libraries in our area to understand rural library service. Historically this department has been staffed by candidates from abroad or urban centers without any real experience in the day to day operations of the

one man show or limited service libraries that reside in the our region. This has always been frustrating because of a former disconnect between the top down ideas originating from NLLS bucking up against the reality of front line service. Hearing about seconding efforts in Tofield, Vegreville, etc. had me puzzled at first, but now I think it makes perfect sense to further understand the realities of library service in our area. The NLLS service plan calls for a distinct effort to match mentors and partners to strengthen growth. I wait for some concrete development in this area for managers but am happy to see NLLS made the effort to know our libraries and strengthen our connections through partnerships when a manager leaves their role and a vacancy arises.

12. I have answered this previously. There have been mistakes and oversights made and apologizes made.

13. This was hard because there are so many different ways I could answer. Most of the time they are awesome. But there are times they give us more than we can handle. The ideas are great . How you can improve? Thinking about the little libraries, in how NLLS can help with the work load. Trying to figure out, how to do thing that we don't do very often takes time out of operation hours. Which it would take NLLS 5 minutes to do and it would takes the little library 1/2 hour to figure it out. Because the little libraries don't have the hours to get things done on the hours they have. which I don't think we should volunteer our time. Please help us out.

14. Not sure if this comment should be here or in another section. I would like to see less new things thrown our way without a solid instruction/training in place beforehand. It would be nice to be able to confidently and efficiently use all the tools at our disposal without having to figure them out on our own.

15. Sometimes it feels like we are being told how things should be done according to the Manager of MLS rather than her asking what we need. With the exception of the Reading Programs planning committee, I am finding that the ball seems to be dropped on stuff lately. For example, they announce that a training session is going to be happening and then it gets canceled for whatever reason (sickness, emergency, etc.) but the training is never rescheduled. I also find it difficult to find information on some things. Is it on Teams, the Website, the ask knowledge base, groups.io, etc. It doesn't seem very

organized. The Reading Programs Committee is awesome in the plans that they have come up with, the organization of the material and the timeliness. This is a great addition to our libraries.

16. The help ticket resource has its advantages for NLLS, I really miss just being able to pick up the phone and talk to someone immediately about our issue. I feel that the decision to use this system exclusively is not user friendly or service based for member libraries...If you call with a concern you are told to put in a ticket. We are the customer and its off putting to have to have our requests depersonalized to a ticket. We operate in a service based field, we would never have our patrons be told....oh just send us a message.

17. I get very frustrated with the time it takes to get a question answered as well as rarely speaking to someone. It is difficult to explain the questions in an email at times. Often I just need a quick response and end up calling a member library to get the answer. To improve this perhaps we need one person who will always answer the phone who has the knowledge of general information on how polaris works. That person can then answer the question or at least tell us if that is something we need to go through our consultant with.

# APPENDIX 4: ALL OPEN RESPONSES TO TSI

**What have we missed regarding Technology Services? How can we improve?**

1. Having the internet bandwidth increased will hopefully make a big difference. Certain times of day Polaris was so slow it would take about a minute to check in a book!
2. I have difficulties in the use of some recent software provided by NLLS. eg. Teams, Canva
3. Can not think of thing right now
4. Response to requests are sometimes very slow.
5. Nothing
6. More emphasis on our websites & a video of the basics we could always go back to for help. Sometimes our staff changes & we need help with training.
7. I know what our software is but could use a little more help in step by step instructions on how to go from user name and password to actually implementing the action that I want. (this might be more consultant based)
8. The internet isn't slow per se, but it does tend to be unreliable and not meet my needs so I will likely be moving to the town provided fiber internet in the future for eligible workstations and screens subject to consultation with TSI. I have seen no observable improvement in bandwidth and still get frequent complaints from patrons trying to host a zoom meeting on public wifi in our after hours space. I am happy to see the ambitious overhaul of TSI and projects meant to improve the efficiency of our system. Change is good. My only qualm so far has been that overall I think the tenant migration was a bit rushed by the contractor. The contractor had everything working for a while on our site but within a week we started having a few issues that I could no longer resolve. As a result I am not very confident in the reliability of our email services. The general mailbox in particular has had at least 4-5 separate helpdesk tickets over the past couple months. Some staff members needed to reset the mail profile on their accounts at least once a week because of the lack of stability. Recently Brandon identified that FortiEDR was causing an issue so hopefully we have the matter resolved, but it did take more than a

month to get some resolution. This is not the fault of Brandon, but likely that we had too much overlap between migration, FortiEDR, and other things going on all at once.

9. I'm looking forward to the bandwidth upgrade as our wi-fi has been increasingly sloe the last couple of years.

10. At times my internet is slow. Ticket items need to be answered in a timely fashion. There are times, I have had no response and I needed to make the phone call. I feel tech tickets need to be answered within the hour.

11. Explanations are often provided. I need to be able to print the instructions, not just read them, so that I have the information necessary to locate whatever is being suggested when I'm in a new window.

12. The TSI are wonderful. very help full. Keep up the great work

13. I guess my previous comment can go here. Provide adequate training for new software BEFORE we have to use it.

14. I feel that this department could be faster at answering ask tickets. Many times, I am waiting a week to get a reply or an answer.