Results of TRAC (The Regional Automation Consortium): Needs Assessment Survey

May 22, 2012
Executive Summary
Results of TRAC (The Regional Automation Consortium): Needs Assessment Survey

This document provides an analysis of the TRAC Needs Assessment Survey. The Survey was designed to provide TRAC Directors with input and insight from stakeholders. The survey asked stakeholders for input on what they value most about TRAC, trends, challenges, future directions and priorities for TRAC. The Survey was electronic and used the Survey Monkey platform. The Survey was distributed to member libraries in all four systems that are TRAC partners (Yellowhead, Peace, Northern Lights and Marigold). Stakeholders had just over two weeks to complete the Survey (April 13 2012 to May 1, 2012). Three hundred and three individuals responded to the Survey. However, it should be noted that not every respondent answered every question on the Survey. The majority of Survey respondents are library managers, staff members or Board members.

An overview for each Survey topic is provided below. The detailed discussion of each question is provided in the full report.

What Do You Value Most About TRAC?

Respondents provided very consistent answers to the question about what they value most about TRAC. Seven major themes emerged from their responses. These themes are:

- Sharing of resources across libraries,
- Access to library material and resources,
- Depth and diversity of the collection,
- Design and ease of use of the TRAC system,
- TRAC as an organization,
- Affordability of TRAC, and
- Effective service to patrons.

What Are The Changes/Improvements You Would Like To See To TRAC?

Respondents identified five major areas for change and improvement for TRAC. These areas are:

- Specific refinements to current services,
➢ Expansion and growth of TRAC,
➢ Consistent content and application of policies and procedures,
➢ Communication and information sharing, and
➢ Training.

In addition several comments were made that respondents were not sure, had no change or improvement to suggest or were pleased with TRAC services, as they now exist.

**What Trends Do You See In The Library Community Or In Your Community That Will Impact TRAC?**

Respondents identified five major trends that will have an impact on TRAC. These trends are:

➢ Technology,
➢ Borrowing and Library Use,
➢ Community Engagement,
➢ Resources, and
➢ Demographics.

The majority of respondents identified trends related to technology and borrowing/library use. Many respondents addressed the impact they believe these trends will have on TRAC. All of these trends are interconnected and suggest that TRAC faces a dynamic and challenging environment for service delivery.

**What Do You Think Are The Biggest Challenges Facing TRAC?**

Respondents identified eight key areas of challenge for TRAC. The following five challenge areas were mentioned the most frequently:

➢ Responding and adapting to technological change,
➢ Funding and effective management of resources,
➢ Developing and Sustaining the TRAC organization,
➢ Addressing delivery challenges and
➢ Ensuring relevance and responding to patron demand.

Three other challenge areas were identified to a lesser degree these are:

➢ Adapting to change,
Implementing the provincial “One Card”, and
Marketing and promotion of TRAC and of libraries.

Where Would You Like To See TRAC In 5 To 10 Years?

Respondents identified five key areas for results for TRAC over the next 5 to 10 years. All responses were future oriented but few respondents spoke to the time frame. When the timeframe was mentioned respondents indicate they would like to see these results within 5 years rather than 10. The five result areas results are areas that respondents would like to see are:

- TRAC is in place: used and valued,
- Expansion of TRAC members. Programs and users,
- Improvement and refinement of TRAC services,
- Adaptation and effective use of technology, and
- Innovation and on-going relevance.

What Are Your Priorities for TRAC?

Respondents were asked to rank seven service responses from 1 (most important) to 7 (least important): These service areas are:

- Resource sharing support (e.g., intralibrary loans)
- Online TRACpac catalogue and My account
- E-resources, downloadable media (e-books)
- Polaris support and upgrades
- New product development
- TRAC-wide standards coordination
- Training and documentation

The results of this exercise indicate that no one item is seen as vastly more important than another. It appears all these service functions are important. Respondent scores are quite varied and the exercise does not suggest a clear priority service area. “Resource sharing support” and “online TRAC catalogue” were viewed as most important. However, there is only a 7% difference between these service areas and “training and documentation” the service that was ranked as the least important.


Additional Comments

Seventy-three respondents provided an additional comment. Several of these comments were to thank TRAC or to indicate they had no further comments. Seven respondents addressed Question 7. These respondents indicated they found the question difficult, explained their ranking or indicated they did not have the knowledge to respond to the question. The remaining responses can be clustered under two categories:

- Appreciation for the TRAC model, and
- The desire to continue to improve and refine the TRAC.

Conclusions

This document provides an analysis of the TRAC Needs Assessment Survey. The Survey was designed to provide TRAC Directors with input and insight from stakeholders. The results of the Survey indicate that TRAC users are very satisfied with the services that TRAC provides. No one service area emerges as priority. All TRAC services are valued and viewed as important. Many respondents mentioned the importance and value TRAC brings to smaller libraries.

Survey respondents input indicates TRAC is functioning well and doing its job. However TRAC users have a vision for TRAC that requires more. Respondents want to see:

- Greater cooperation among members and increased membership
- Service improvements
- Organizational improvements
- Responses to key trends and challenges particularly those related to technology, funding and the effective use of resources and patron borrowing/library use.

Respondents see change as constant. The “One Card” and technology allow for and will drive the development of a virtual provincial library system with seamless access. TRAC is well placed to respond and lead this change. However, TRAC must not lose sight of the fact that community and patron needs are diverse and that finding of a balanced and responsive approach to these needs is essential if TRAC is to remain relevant and valued.
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Results of TRAC (The Regional Automation Consortium): Needs Assessment Survey

A. Introduction

This document provides an analysis of the TRAC Needs Assessment Survey. The Survey was designed to provide TRAC Directors with input and insight from stakeholders. This information will assist Directors ensure that TRAC’s mission and values reflect members perspectives, assess whether TRAC is meeting the expectations of its members and identify and respond to environmental trends. The Survey asked stakeholders for input on what they value most about TRAC and trends, challenges, future directions and priorities for TRAC.

The Survey was electronic and used the Survey Monkey platform. The Survey was distributed to member libraries in all four systems that are TRAC partners (Yellowhead, Peace, Northern Lights and Marigold). Stakeholders had just over two weeks to complete the Survey (April 13, 2012 to May 1, 2012). Three hundred and three individuals responded to the Survey. However, it should be noted that not every respondent answered every question on the Survey.

The Survey consisted of eight questions and the majority of these questions were open-ended questions. The method of analysis was to review the responses to each question and to identify the themes/key concepts raised within these responses. The results of the Survey are presented by question.

B. Survey Respondents Relationship With TRAC (Question #1)

The following table identifies the relationship of respondents to TRAC and the number of respondents/percentage of respondents that fall into each of these categories. The majority of Survey respondents are library managers, staff members or Board members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library manager</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library staff member</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Board member</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library volunteer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library HQ staff member</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vendor staff member</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. What Do You Value Most About TRAC? (Question #2)

Respondents provided very consistent answers to the question about what they value most about TRAC. Seven major themes emerged from their responses. These themes are:

- Sharing of resources across libraries,
- Access to library material and resources,
- Depth and diversity of the collection,
- Design and ease of use of the TRAC system,
- TRAC as an organization,
- Affordability of TRAC, and
- Effective service to patrons.

Sharing of resources, access to library materials and resources, the depth and diversity of the collection and the design and ease of use of the TRAC system are the themes most frequently identified. TRAC as an organization, affordability and effective service to patrons were far less frequently cited but were identified by several respondents.

A description of each of these themes and examples of the responses is provided below:

**Sharing of Resources Across Libraries**

Respondents identified that the sharing of resources and the connections across libraries is highly valued. Several respondents commented on the cooperative nature of TRAC and the number of libraries involved. In addition, many respondents emphasized that this sharing of resources was of particular value and benefit to smaller libraries.

Examples of responses are:

- The ability to share library resources with over 160 libraries across TRAC.
- The association with the other library systems and the collective sharing.
- Being connected to the rest of the libraries. The availability of items and being able to see what other libraries have.
- I love how the TRAC system shares resources and I can borrow something no matter where it’s located within the system.
Having the collections of all of the partner libraries available.

TRAC partners work really well together. The organization is democratic and inclusive with great participation at all levels (Directors, public service, bibliographic service and system administrator levels). Input is actively pursued and welcomed from our member libraries.

**Access To Library Material And Resources**

Respondents identified that easy access to a wide range of material and resources was highly valued. On-line access as well as access through libraries was referenced. Many respondents stressed the value and benefit of the access TRAC provides to smaller communities.

Examples of responses are:

- Being a member of TRAC empowers any library no matter what size and with what constraints - to have access to so many items to share, and to so much information for support and advice.
- Being able to access books that my library does not have.
- The immense access to library materials.
- The ability to access resources from any of the four regions. I love the fact that you can use your TRAC card anywhere with no restrictions.
- Easy access and patrons ease of use and because of that universality, many patrons use it.
- Small library has access to large collection of material.

**Depth And Diversity Of The Collection**

Respondents not only value that they can access library materials through TRAC but they also value the range, diversity and quality of these materials. This includes not only the diversity of subject matter but also the range of formats.

Examples of responses are:

- Small library has access to large collection of material. The fact that patrons can get just about any information, entertainment, etc. that they want. All the different resources that you can access through it. Such as books, Mango Language Learning, E-resources and more.
- The size of the collection at my fingertips is far greater than the size of the collection at my local library!
The wide range of material available. The variety and amount of material that is available through the cooperation of the regional systems involved.

The selection.

The ability to view the catalogues of so many libraries; the access to data bases and Polaris.

Being able to order tons of different media items at affordable membership cost.

The e-resources available.

The ability to order pretty much any library material from numerous Alberta libraries. If we can’t find it there we have the capability of going outside Alberta. Fantastic system!

**Design And Ease Of Use Of The TRAC System**

Many respondents identified that they value the design and ease of use of the TRAC System. TRAC is:

- Easy to use,
- Welcoming and friendly,
- Quick, and
- Reliable.

Respondents identified that they valued TRAC’s search capacity, the ability to track and check your account (arrivals, holds, notification of material that is due) and the integrated nature of the services that are provided by TRAC.

Examples of responses are:

- The availability of materials and how easy it is to place orders (both for staff and for patrons).
- The ability to search the catalogues from home.
- The ability to view the catalogues of so many libraries; the access to data bases and Polaris.
- Polaris, ILL’s, TRACPac catalogue (including online search, holds, notifications, etc), Overdrive e-books, Mobile website, iPhone app.
- ‘How simple it is to use.
- The fact that we can track our books and renew/search etc.
- I appreciate being able to access the combined catalogues of the 4 systems at my leisure, and have materials delivered to my home library.
- The speed with which I can find my items and the descriptions of the items.
- Access to so many different books and movies in one search. The ability to access a vast number of materials quickly and easily using an intuitive public access platform.

**TRAC As An Organization**

As well as the services provided by TRAC, several respondents identified that they value TRAC as an organization. Board members, staff, partnerships/collaborations and the organization as a whole are all valued.

Examples of responses are:

- TRAC partners work really well together. The organization is democratic and inclusive with great participation at all levels (Directors, public service, bibliographic service and system administrator levels).
- The brand and the connection our patrons feel towards it.
- The collaboration and camaraderie between the TRAC partners is very apparent as the consortium seems to run smoothly is able to make decisions (in a timely fashion) based on library staff feedback and/or concerns. It’s really great to see all levels of staff involved in the decision making process.
- The partnership, leadership and understanding of libraries with the other systems.
- I value that we are able to provide cutting edge library services to our member libraries through our partnership in TRAC.

**Affordability of TRAC**

Some respondents identified that they value the affordability and value for money that TRAC provides to member libraries.

Examples of responses are:

- The cost to sustain TRAC is very affordable considering all of the resources and infrastructure that is provided through the consortium.
- The costs involved with certain important electronic resources like Overdrive.
- Stretching budgets.
- The partnership between regions allows us to cost share and make effective use of our budgets.
- The pooling of financial resources to sustain the multi-system ILS and library resources for seamless patron access.
Effective Service To Patrons.

Some respondents identified they value the positive impact of TRAC on services for patrons. The quality and effectiveness of the library experience by patrons is enhanced by TRAC.

Examples of responses are:

- TRAC’s impact is mighty in Alberta because of its large geography, large number of libraries (165 or so), large collection of circulating items (3 million) that are available to fill requests promptly, large number of skilled staff and committed board members, and our capacity to be innovative.
- Resource sharing is, in my opinion, the most valuable part of TRAC. It enables us to better serve our patrons.
- The access to a wide range of material type and the large selection, which helps to make small communities more valuable as a resource for library patron.
- Being in a consortium is really beneficial to our patrons and to the participating regional library systems. Not only do patrons have access to millions of items they also have access to online resources.
- The ability for patrons to avail of new materials that are not in our library, such as new authors, new e-books etc. As recently one patron made a comment, that without TRAC he would have never come into the library.
- The ability to find and borrow items throughout Alberta to better serve our patrons.

D. What Are The Changes/Improvements You Would Like To See To TRAC? (Question #3)

Respondents identified five major areas for change and improvement for TRAC. These areas are:

- Specific refinements to current services,
- Expansion and growth of TRAC,
- Consistent content and application of policies and procedures,
- Communication and information sharing, and
- Training.

In addition several comments were made by respondents that they were not sure, had no change or improvement to suggest or were pleased with TRAC services, as they now exist.
Specific Refinements to Current Services

Refinements to current services was the category that received the largest number of responses. This category can be further subdivided into suggestions for improvement and change related to:

- Borrowing
- Collections
- Access to materials and accounts,
- Search capacity and design,
- Effectiveness of TRAC, and
- Technology.

A brief description and some examples of what respondents hope to see are provided below. Despite the number of responses many of the suggestions are unique. It strongly suggested that TRAC Directors review the raw data for this question.

**Borrowing**

Respondents suggest that longer times for borrowing, consistent borrowing times, improvement in tracking and notification of whether or not material is available/out of the library, better synopsis information about material and the ability to renew books on-line would be helpful. Several respondents identified that borrowing of DVD’s can be frustrating. Some libraries lend by individual DVD and some by the series. Respondents would like to see the DVD series rather than the individual DVD provided to patrons.

Examples of responses are:

- If it is listed in TRAC and it is not reference, one should be able to place a hold on the item. If you don’t want to share it, don’t put it in the catalog.
- I think when patrons order a complete series on DVD, TRAC should ensure the complete series is ordered. Since some libraries have broken their series into individual discs the patron ends up only with part of the series which frustrates them.
- I would like to see more info on each item; for instance some items are not even clear if they are DVD or audio.
- Decrease waits times for customers on ordered items.
Some consistent loan periods between libraries.

**Collections**

Respondents would like to see both increased volume and increased range in collections. For example: more downloadable –e-books, more current/popular books, more international material, access to material from other Canadian libraries and more movies and DVD’s. Note, one respondent identified they would like to see audio/visual material not loaned through TRAC.

Examples of responses are:

- I would like it if Audio/Visual materials were not loaned. I’m sure I’m not the only Library Manager who feels this way. It’s nice for people to be able to borrow these items, however, A/V materials were not made to be handled by that many people.
- More items available to patrons
- More –e-books.
- More international titles.
- Receive best sellers more.

**Access To Materials and Accounts**

Respondents had suggestions for both the ease of access to TRAC and the information that they would like to be able to track or have on their own accounts. For example, some respondents identified that they would like to see the due date for the material they have put a hold on when it is being used by another patron.

Examples of responses are:

- When placing a hold, it would be helpful if it showed the due date of the book that is currently out by another patron.
- I would like to sign in once and not have to re-sign in every time I go to a different e-resource.
- Being able to link family records together, so library can keep track of accrued charges by family members.
- Including publication date in results list when searching by item records.
- I think if we go with the “One Card”, that this will be a great change.
**Search Capacity and Design**

Respondents suggest that the ease of search, some search features and the range and depth of search capabilities could be refined and improved. For example, there are suggestions for adding data bases, refining search features (for example, showing local library results separately) and the streamlining of the search process were all suggested.

Examples of responses are:

- When searching a topic, it would be useful to have your local library results shown separately.
- Would like searching to be easier within the catalog. It would be nice if you could search just by library instead of going through each item to see if your home library has a copy.
- I would like to see book covers and synopsis to be included with a book as it is difficult for some patrons to determine if they would like the book without having to do research about it outside of TRAC.
- Better, more unified database.
- Addition of homework help database, digital periodical data bases.

**Effectiveness of TRAC**

Respondents identified that improvements could be made in the effectiveness of the service provided by TRAC. Faster arrival of material, reduced wait times, training for patrons so they can use the TRAC site with ease, increase in the use friendly nature of the system, investment in a DVD repair machine, more central purchasing of supplies and increased innovation were all suggested.

Examples of responses are:

- Faster arrivals of holds.
- Faster shipping times.
- Quicker service.
- More innovation, less fear in moving forward on exciting projects.
Technology.

Respondents identified areas for improving and increasing the use of technology and technological applications. Patrons would like to see greater assistance for using E-resources, the development of an application for the Blackberry and a shared off site IT centre. Addressing compatibility issues with E-readers and increased use and access to E-books were also identified as important areas for action.

Examples of responses are:

- I would like to see the kindle reader be compatible
- The digital media (e-books) is clearly early in its development. OverDrive has a fairly grotesque interface on my iPad
- Easier access and assistance with EResources
- I would like to see a shared off-site IT centre to incorporate other functions, such as electronic resource and possibly website support. An offsite support centre would also be a model for a province-wide ILS, and it would put all four members on the same level with regard to decisions and initiatives. I would also like to see all four RISE partners with a direct link into RISE.

Expansion: Growth of TRAC Consortium

Many respondents want to see a strong commitment by all members to TRAC and identified that they would like to see a growth in the TRAC consortium in terms of the number of library systems and libraries that are part of TRAC. For some this is an increase in library members, for others it is that all Alberta libraries become part of TRAC. Respondents also want to see growth in terms of function. For example, developing a direct link to RISE partners.

Examples of responses are:

- I would like to grow this consortium with participation of other library systems. I believe TRAC is a good model for Alberta wide borrowing. Covering the whole province would be nice -merging of TRAC and TAL.
- Seamless cooperation with library systems.
- Should include the entire province.
- Would like to have the other library systems join.
- Expansion to the other regional systems so the province would have a uniform library system with access for all.
**Consistent Content And Application of Policies And Procedures**

Several respondents identified issues related to the content and application of TRAC policies and procedures. Some respondents would like to see greater consistency in policies across libraries and library systems, others would like to see the consistent application of existing policies by all and some referenced both issues. An area that was also raised was the need for quicker decisions by TRAC.

Examples of responses are:

- Consistency in policies and procedures amongst the libraries.
- It would be good to do things more uniformly. There are times that this is done, but it could be done better. If a decision is made on how something should be done (for example on the catalog), then everyone needs to abide by it.
- Libraries are frustrated with supporting those libraries who do not contribute proportionately for their use. Specifically downloadable materials.
- More seamless service, guidelines that are adhered by all member libraries.
- Quicker decision process: 2.5 years of discussing the best way to package ILL AV materials is unacceptable.
- I would like to see TRAC-wide standards in regards to cataloguing and circulation.
- More consistency in the records.
- More standardization of processes (too many people appear to want things THEIR way) and faster decision making processes. The committee structure allows for input but is complicated and ponderous.

**Communication/Information Sharing Across Libraries**

Several respondents indicated they would like to see increased communication and information exchange among TRAC members and libraries. One key area for communication is the benefit and results TRAC achieves. Participation in TRAC should not be viewed as a benefit not a burden.

Examples of responses are:

- Better communication amongst the TRAC partners.
- I would like to see a greater sense of community within the TRAC member libraries and an increased appreciation for the ability to share and access resources.
While cost sharing is nice, it would also be nice to see additional sharing of ideas between the regions.

Better communication amongst the TRAC partners.

I would like to see more sharing of information, etc between the systems and libraries.

At the very least, I think we need to actively blow our own horn to tell people that Alberta wide borrowing is possible and we have the proof.

**Training**

Some respondents identified training and skill development issues. Skill development is needed for patrons so that they can use TRAC effectively and for staff so that they understand all the features of TRAC especially the guidelines and procedures that are in place.

Examples of responses are:

- More use of collaborative education opportunities. As an example the bibliographic teams are going to all be needing some training in RDA (Resource Description and Access) and if we could arrange for all the cataloguers to take the same courses there might be some cost savings for each region.
- More instruction to down load e-readers of all types
- Guide/tutorial for patrons who really don’t know very much about computers or the Internet, but who are interested in using the TRACpac site.

**E. What Trends Do You See In The Library Community Or In Your Community That Will Impact TRAC? (Question #4)**

Respondents identified five major trends that will have an impact on TRAC. These trends are:

- Technology,
- Borrowing and library use,
- Community engagement
- Resources
- Demographics
The majority of respondents identified trends related to technology and borrowing/library use. Many respondents addressed the impact they believe these trends will have on TRAC. All of these trends are interconnected and suggest that TRAC faces a dynamic and challenging environment for service delivery. Each of these trends is described below.

**Technology**

A wide array of issues was raised by respondents related to how technology has and will continue to have a direct impact on library operations and the services they provide. This is true for TRAC as well as for individual libraries and library systems.

Key trends that were identified by respondents are:

- The increasing ability to access a wide array of material on line.
- The e–book.
- The range of technological devices that can be used to access information from almost anywhere and the increased reliance on these devices.
- The increased comfort and use of technology by patrons.
- The increased need for both staff and patrons to develop the skills needed to effectively use new technologies.
- The need to plan in a comprehensive approach to technological change and adaptation (Some respondents identified the Provincial Technology Plan as a trend).
- The use of social media.
- Video conferencing.
- The expectation by library patrons that libraries can keep pace with technology.

Technology is directly related to the second trend that was most frequently referenced by respondents: borrowing and library use trends. A key impact, respondents identified, as a result of both these trends is for TRAC to continue to assess and adapt the way it undertakes its operations.

Examples of responses related to the technology trend are:

- The trend toward using more e-books.
- See greater demand for e-Books and greater use of downloadable media (mainly music & movies/TV).
- More interaction with the catalogue (social media). All in one / federated search results.
- Larger push towards electronic resources and media.
More interest in e-books, e-magazines with an increasing desire for faster, broader band Internet access.

As we get more technologically advanced the library community needs to stay abreast of all changes. This will mean better access for patrons. Also it will mean that TRAC will have to keep up with the changes and maybe provide more training for staff and patrons.

**Borrowing and Library Use**

Borrowing and library use was the second trend that dominated respondent’s answers to this question. Respondents see key trends in what library materials are being borrowed and how and from where patrons access library services.

Changing demographics, population decreases in rural communities, community growth and resources were referenced, as some of the causes for this trend but by far, technological change was referenced as the most transformative factor. On line access to libraries resources and programs are changing libraries.

Key trends in borrowing and library use are:

- **Province wide borrowing** and the increased demand for TRAC. The one card is identified as a key sign of this trend. Patrons will be able to access library material from across the province.

- **A continued and increased demand in e-books.** There is concern that libraries cannot keep pace with this demand. The cost of e-books, the impact the e-book has on collections and the challenges with licensing agreements were identified as impacts that need to be explored.

- **Demand for other on-line materials** such as DVDs, audio visual material and on line streaming of movies. This trend combined with the demand for the e-book is changing the nature of library collections.

- **Access of library services from home and other locations.** On-line access means that individuals can access library resources without coming to the library itself. A provincial virtual library system is the anticipated end result. This may transform the look and feel of the library. Some anticipate less patrons while others anticipate a growth in patrons.

- **Increased costs for inter-library loans.** Given the anticipated trend to increased use and demand for TRAC services some see corresponding increases in the cost of transportation and in the wear and tear on materials which will then need to be replaced.
Higher expectations by patrons about what they can access, the speed of access and how they will access materials. Patrons have invested in various forms of technology and want to use them. Respondents identified that clients expect immediate access and reduced wait times. Some feel that TRAC must enhance the user-friendly nature of its system as libraries compete with other sources of online materials such as Amazon.

Responding to diversity. Despite the trend of online access some patrons will not wish to use these services and will want to access service from the physical library. A challenge for libraries will be to respond to the diversity of interests and needs of patrons.

Respondents suggest the trend related to borrowing and library use require that TRAC partners work together to share resources and that TRAC must change the way it does business to respond to these trends. Examples of responses are:

- People are expecting to have different types of media available to them in the library.
- Patrons are using online material i.e. e-books, databases, so I wonder if small library will be necessary in the future.
- More patrons are “borrowing” virtually, instead of coming in for physical books. Those patrons that use our physical space are doing so to use the computers, read newspapers, attend programs, study, etc. and are not necessarily borrowing materials.
- Going to a “one card” system will probably have the biggest impact on TRAC.
- There will be more and more at home use for certain. Changes in technology will probably require adaptations to delivery of information systems.
- E-Books are gaining popularity faster than we can build the e-Book collection. This is frustrating to some of our patrons.

Community Engagement

Some respondents expressed concern that the trend towards e-books online access will result in less community engagement with their local library. In contrast, other respondents identified that their libraries are increasingly being viewed and used by their community as a hub for community activity.
Other respondents identified the need to ensure that in an environment of change, particularly technological change, the relevance and importance of the library be promoted. Libraries need to reach out and engage their communities. Libraries and the services they provide need to be promoted to ensure they are understood, used and financially supported.

Examples of responses are:

- Greater use of downloadable media means that we should look into ways of providing this kind of content, especially to patrons that would otherwise not have access however, it also removes the human element from library services.
- I think library staff will have to work harder to entice users into the library for other purposes than just picking up ILLs and renewing memberships.
- More usage and interest generated by those who use the library.
- Our library is increasingly becoming a community gathering place.

**Resources**

Respondents also identified trends related to costs and resources. Some identified cost drivers such as keeping pace with e-books, the cost of maintaining the inter-library loan system and the cost of maintaining qualified staff in a very competitive labour market. Others expressed concern about funding levels and support. The trend many see is government support that simply does not keep pace with cost.

Examples of responses are:

- Funding continues to be a desperate problem. We are a very small library. We get small amounts of funding from many sources, including donations and fund raising.
- Tightening of budgets depending on changes in government provincially.
- Provincial public library initiatives through the PLSB and APLEN, the costs of ILL, RDA (which will affect cataloguing), the changing nature of what constitutes a library material, the costs of government courier and the future of ILL traffic, and the cost of e-books.
- Library funding
Demographics

Respondents also identified demographic trends as having an impact on library services and TRAC. Demographic trends that were identified include:

- The aging population and the increased need to ensure library services respond to the needs of older patrons.
- Declining rural populations and the challenges this creates for keeping smaller libraries open.
- The increased multi-cultural nature of Alberta and the need to respond to the English, as second language needs and the needs of foreign workers.
- Growing communities and thus increased demand for library service.

Respondents identified that these changing demographic trends will change both the nature of the services libraries should provide and how these services are delivered.

Examples of responses are:

- More seniors with vision difficulties so need more audio books on CD MP3, or downloadable copies.
- With an ever greater demand for skilled labour more people will come to Alberta with the potential for more ethnic backgrounds which will place a demand on our local libraries for a more culturally diverse materials.
- As Alberta’s baby boomers age and leave the workplace they are going to be wanting more services provided by libraries - interest in videoconferencing will increase as our baby boomer’s are looking for opportunities to learn new skill sets.
- The growth in our community and the changing demographics with the variety needs requirements i.e. the use of e-readers, technology, and the need for services beyond what we are able to offer currently.

F. What Do You Think Are The Biggest Challenges Facing TRAC? (Question 5)

Respondents identified eight key areas of challenge for TRAC. The following five challenge areas with greatest frequently:

- Responding and adapting to technological change,
- Funding and effective management of resources,
- Developing and sustaining the TRAC organization,
- Addressing delivery challenges, and
- Ensuring relevance and responding to patron demand.
Three other challenge areas were identified to a lesser degree these are:

- Adapting to change,
- Implementing the provincial “One Card”, and
- Marketing and promotion of both TRAC and of libraries

Each challenge area is described below.

**Responding And Adapting To Technological Change**

Respondents identified adaptation to technology, the pace technological change and the e-book as one of major areas of challenge facing TRAC. Aspects of many of the other challenges are triggered by technology. For example, the cost of e-books, keeping pace with patron demand for e-books, staff and patron training to use technology effectively, responding to new technological devices and designing on line access and systems that are user friendly are all challenges driven by technology. In Question 4, respondents identified that trends in technology were transforming libraries, library systems and TRAC. Identifying how to respond technological change and implementing smooth transitions on many fronts is and will be a major challenge for TRAC.

Examples of responses are:

- As we make more and more services available online, we need to ensure that ALL of our patrons have access to them, which means continuing to ensure free computer access.
- Technology is also a huge challenge: how do we stay current so as not to look outdated.
- Ability to keep digital content easily accessible.
- Probably keeping up with the changes that occur so quickly now with technology. We deal with a lot of older patrons and seniors who are very challenged when it comes to using technology, so we need to be prepared and comfortable with new things ourselves in order to be able to teach our patrons.

**Ensuring Relevance And Responding To Patron Demand**

Respondents see changes in patron borrowing patterns and library use as a key trend. Responding to this trend also creates major challenges for TRAC. TRAC must respond to the growing and rapid demand for e-books, patrons demand for current material such as best sellers and their expectation of short to no waiting times for material. TRAC and libraries must respond to patron demand or patrons will not use the library and/or TRAC.
Patron interests and demands, however, are diverse. Respondents’ input suggests that TRAC and individual libraries must find the right balance between the demand for online services and the demand for more traditional library services and access. TRAC can not assume everyone has a computer or is computer savvy.

Another key area for responding to patrons need is a user friendly system that is easy to use. This includes not only search engines but also the ease and location of material pick-up. It was noted that TRAC has introduced many changes and that some patrons have had difficulty adapting to these changes.

Examples of responses are:

- Too many people wanting the same book/dvd at the same time. Small libraries are not going to have multiple copies of an item and the wait time for an item can be several months.
- Keeping up with e-books
- Reaching library users who are not computer users
- The demand on it’s system for popular titles as well not having the cover and synopsis of a book or movie included with the information as patrons are always saying how hard it is to choose books off of TRAC unless they knew about the book beforehand.
- The variety of demands for greater accessibility to materials and their own accounts i.e., renewing memberships on-line or taking out a membership on line.
- People not knowing about TRAC or how to use it.

**Funding And Effective Management Of Resources**

Respondents identified several challenges related to funding and efficient management of resources. Respondents identified:

- The costs related to TRAC are increasing (for example, the cost of e-books, costs related to transportation, and cost related to technological change)
- Funding for libraries is decreasing and/or not keeping pace with what is needed (for example, the lost of CAP funding and concern about decreasing provincial support) and
- The more effective management of financial, staff and capital resources (for example, maintaining and updating infrastructure and equipment in a timely way and ensuring that staff are trained and able to use TRAC and technology effectively).
Another key resource mentioned was librarian time. Staff time is a limited resource and this too creates challenges for TRAC. The resource issues raised by respondents suggest that the sustainability of TRAC over time is a major challenge. Examples of responses are:

- Staff training is so important now when it comes to keeping up with all the new things that keep coming out.
- I think the increasing costs of transportation could have a severe effect on the ability to share materials between libraries.
- I also think the loss of CAP funding will have a negative impact on the ability to provide computer access to TRAC patrons, especially those whose libraries have small budgets.
- Ensuring that we husband enough funding and resources to upgrade our infrastructure at the optimum time and not well past the “best before” date.
- Alberta government and funding.

**Developing and Sustaining the TRAC Organization**

Respondents identified several factors that suggest major challenges for maintaining TRAC as a healthy organization. Respondents identified that sharing resources and cooperation between all TRAC members, urban, rural and isolated, is key. Some respondents suggest that the degree of cooperation and sharing currently in place needs to be improved upon. Improvements can be made in terms of the clarity of TRAC’s role, the speed of decision-making and follow-through on decisions and communication.

TRAC needs to understand and manage the expectations of member libraries. Respondents identified that it a challenge to keep things simple. Consistency of policy guidelines is also a key issue for TRAC as an organization. TRAC needs to operate as system. It is important for all members to follow TRAC guidelines and work together. A key issue for consistent delivery of TRAC is that staff members are informed about TRAC and follow the rules.

Examples of responses are:

- If libraries want to flourish in the future with all the technology movements then the fact that they collaborate will be one of the biggest selling features.
Ensuring that our organization is robust enough to attract involvement from other library systems I think that everybody’s individual opinions gets in the way. Sometimes libraries do not follow the TRAC guidelines because of whatever reason and that attitude needs to change.

We are operating a system not an individual library and as a system we are so much stronger.

Lack of understanding as to what its role is, lack of understanding about what libraries are and can do and the unwillingness to cooperate.

Keeping current with the rapid changes

The ability to make decisions in a timely fashion.

Addressing Delivery Challenges

Respondents also identified several delivery issues that create major challenges for TRAC. These include:

- The large geographic area covered by TRAC
- The cost related to the delivery of materials: transportation and postage.
- The efficiency of material delivery: wait times and delivery locations.
- Damaged items and material. This can be frustrating for patrons and make some member libraries less willing to share.
- Issues related to the ease of using TRAC search engines.
- Ensuring coordination and currency of catalogues
- Communication the sending and receiving of information between libraries.
- Responding to the on the increased demands being placed on the TRAC system.

Examples of responses are:

- Problems in sending and receiving materials to and from other libraries.
- Some of the older materials are catalogued poorly, sometimes even the newer ones have spelling errors in the title; resulting in members not finding what they were looking for, sometimes ordering materials too old, or not what the catalogue advertised.
- Solving the delivery conundrum! How can we share without losing so much shelf-life for our items due to damage done in transit?
- Managing Interlibrary Loans of physical materials to reduce reliance on courier or regional library van run dependence.
Adapting to Change

Given the change in technology, patron demands and changes in how patrons access libraries, some respondents identified adapting to change as a major challenge. Adaptation and innovation are essential for TRAC.

Examples of responses are:

- Moving forward with new invention/innovation of the future, and how will we keep up.
- Being willing to innovate: with such a large consortium it’s often easiest to listen to the people who want the status quo.

Implementing the Provincial “One Card”

The development of a province wide borrowing system (the One Card) was raised by some respondents as a major challenge for TRAC. Details on the precise impact for TRAC were not identified.

Examples of responses are:

- Province wide one card. I think that while working with all libraries in the province is very important, I see it creating its own set of difficulties.
- Leading the way with the Any Card. We have the most experience with sharing throughout the province, so we need to be a leader in how this can work the best.

Marketing and Promotion of TRAC and of Libraries

Although only referenced by a few respondents, the challenge of promoting both TRAC and libraries was raised. Respondents identified that it is important that patrons are aware of TRAC and know how to use it. Other respondents identified the importance of promoting libraries. Concern was raised that public perceptions about the library could be limited to thinking about books and there may be a lack of awareness of the innovation and technical adaptation that has taken place.
Examples of responses are:

- It would be helpful to have a region-wide marketing campaign to help people realize what is available. I know I don’t use it to its capacity.
- I feel the databases are underutilized but highly worthwhile once the user becomes acquainted with them. Many of our users are not aware of them (besides Overdrive, of course).

G. Where Would You Like To See TRAC In 5 To 10 Years? (Question 6)

Respondents identified 5 key areas for results for TRAC over the next 5 to 10 years. All responses were future oriented but few respondents spoke to the time frame. When the timeframe was mentioned respondents indicated they would like to see these results within 5 years rather than 10 years. The five-result areas that respondents would like to see are:

- TRAC is in place: used and valued,
- Expansion of TRAC members: programs and users,
- Improvement and refinement of TRAC services,
- Adaptation and effective use of technology, and
- Innovation and on-going relevance.

Each of these results areas is described below.

**TRAC Is In Place: Used and Valued**

Many participants identified that five to ten years from now they hope that TRAC continues to exist, is known and appreciated. Many respondents identified the high level of service provided by TRAC and want this quality service to continue. Several respondents gave a descriptor of the type of service they would like TRAC to maintain and/or obtain in the future. These descriptors include:

- Financially stable,
- Strong leadership,
- Well promoted,
- 101% sharing by all members,
- Common standards and practices are in place,
Seamless access for users,
Overarching catalogue in place,
Less rules,
Responsive to all needs of members not just the largest libraries,
All members are fully informed about TRAC,
The TRAC brand is well known: a household name,
Patron and communities benefit from TRAC,
Balance between e-book and more traditional material particularly the book, and
TRAC staff in place not associated with any library.

Examples of responses are:
- TRAC reputation known, appreciated and even better than it is now.
- Would like to see it still around and well-funded.
- Hope it will continue to link the library systems together and provide quick and easy access to any needed materials.
- Still providing the great service it now provides.
- TRAC reputation known, appreciated and even better than it is now.

**Expansion of TRAC: Members. Programs and Users**

Many participants had a vision for TRAC 5 to 10 year from now that involves expansion. Expansion of both patrons and programs/services were referenced on occasion. However the expansion that the majority of respondents identified was expansion of TRAC membership. For some respondent’s expansion included the hope for an additional library system joining TRAC and for others it is a vision of all Alberta library systems being part of TRAC. A few respondents have a vision that is even more ambitious and included links with university libraries and/or link with libraries across Canada. Several respondents referenced the "One Card" and some identified the hope for the integration of TRAC and TAL. One provincial library system that creates connection and partnerships but also respects autonomy is viewed as creating tremendous benefit for communities and patrons. Seamless access is key term used by many respondents.

Examples of responses are:
TRAC across the province - all seven regional library systems
Would like to see all of Alberta a part of TRAC!
Would like to see TRAC right across the province so that everyone is able to use materials from libraries wherever they are.
Would like to see TRAC expand to encompass all the other regions - Parkland, Shortgrass, Chinook Arch. There really is power in numbers and if all public libraries with the exception of the very large urban libraries were part of one huge consortium there would be enormous political power, buying power, better quality of bibliographic services etc.
Seamless access to ALL Alberta libraries and ALL their resources. I don’t mean some either. I mean ALL!!
Ideally in ten years I would like to see TRAC include all seven regional library systems. This would allow for greater access to library services for all Albertans. A coordinated effort in providing library services will allow us to advocate in an effective manner for library funding from the Government of Alberta.

Improvement and Refinement of TRAC Services

Many respondents also have particular hopes for TRAC service improvements or expansions over the next 5 to 10 years. A variety of specific action was put forward. These actions include:
- Linked catalogues across Alberta and with other provinces,
- Improved catalogues/cataloging,
- Better layout of catalogues,
- Expansion of collections: more e-books, more best sellers, more material for children teens and adults, more academic titles,
- Faster service,
- Ability to accept payments,
- Responsive services for seniors,
- Greater access to electronic materials,
- Enhanced accessibility: make more user friendly,
- Training for patrons,
- Reduced wait times,
- More on-line video conferencing for patrons,
- Enhanced information network,
Additional media capabilities,
Increased and faster shipping,
Reduction of barriers to access,
Balance between the purchase of books and e-books,
Community engagement, and
Self service for patrons.

Examples of responses are:

- More user-friendly access to e-books, should just be one step not multiple steps when you go into E-resources, overdrive and adobe digital editions. Patrons are saying there are to many steps.
- Being able to renew e-books and longer loaning dates should be a priority for TRAC in the near future.
- I’d love to see TRAC linked with catalogs in other provinces.
- I would like to see more bestsellers and award winning books available----the wait times are frustrating.
- Increase e-resources and an easier way to access the e-resources. Patrons find it difficult to determine what some of the e-resources are just from their titles. If this was better laid out more people would use these resources.
- More e books available.
- Improved cataloguing, ease of use. Easier flow between hard copy and digitized materials.

**Adaptation and Effective Use of Technology**

Several respondents also identified the importance of TRAC using and adapting to technology. They anticipate that TRAC will undertake continuous technological adaptation over time. A few respondents have a vision for TRAC that will see it almost completely electronic. One respondent suggests an off site TRAC IT centre is needed.

Examples of responses are:

- Apps available for a variety of technology platforms.
- Off-site TRAC IT support centre with more services.
- Leading the way in new technology and providing the best service to our communities and patrons.
Innovation and On Going Relevance

A few respondents also identified that over the next 5 to 10 years they will see TRAC following trends, keeping pace with change and responding to the interests and needs of patrons. This will ensure TRAC remains relevant over time. One respondent identified that it hard to anticipate change and service demands but they see TRAC being able to respond and adapt over the next 5 to 10 years.

Examples of responses are:

- I would like TRAC to be innovative and be relevant for libraries and residents in the TRAC communities. Keep developing and making available resources that are appreciated and used - TRACpac APP, etc
- Keeping pace with current trends
- I have a lot of difficulty with these kinds of questions. The changes that **really** matter, can’t be predicted or planned for, or when in hindsight they were predicted, the timing was very wrong.

H. Priorities for TRAC? (Question 7)

Respondents were asked to rank seven service responses from 1 (most important) to 7 (least important). Two hundred and twenty two respondents answered this question. To analyze the results of this priority exercise the rankings each item received were added together to create a score for the item. For example, if there were three responses for Polaris support and upgrade and it received a #1 ranking, a #2 ranking and a #7 ranking the total score it would receive would is 10 (1+2+7). As a result of this method, the lower the score an item receives the more importance respondents assigned to it. The following chart shows the score each of the TRAC service areas received.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
<th>% of 5847</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resource sharing support (e.g., intralibrary loans)</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online TRACpac catalogue and my account</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-resources, downloadable media (e-books)</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polaris support and upgrades</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New product development</td>
<td>1,012</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRAC-wide standards coordination</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and documentation</td>
<td>1,035</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following chart shows these results in a bar chart format.
The results of this exercise indicate that no one item is seen as vastly more important than another. It appears all these service functions are important. Respondent scores are quite varied and the exercise does not suggest a clear priority service area. “Resource sharing support” and “on line TRAC catalogue” were viewed as most important. However, there is only a 7% difference between these service areas and “training and documentation” the service that was ranked as the least important.

I. Additional Comments (Question #8)

Seventy-three respondents provided an additional comment. Several of these comments were to thank TRAC or to indicate they had no further comments. Seven respondents addressed Question 7. These respondents indicated they found the question difficult, explained their ranking or indicated they did not have the knowledge to respond to the question. The remaining responses can be clustered under two categories:

- Appreciation for the TRAC model, and
- The desire to continue to improve and refine the TRAC.

With respect to appreciation of the TRAC model respondents identified their appreciation for:

- The consortium,
- The tools TRAC provides, and
- The services TRAC provides to patrons.

Some respondents expressed the hope that TRAC would grow in size.

In terms of improvements respondents indicated that TRAC should:

- Keep moving forward with change,
- Provide increased opportunities for patron training,
- Improve the transparency of TRAC decision making and action,
- Increase the sharing of ideas across TRAC members,
- Provide greater opportunity for staff training,
- Move to action faster,
- Focus on priorities and what TRAC does best. Do some things well rather than trying to please everybody,
Promote TRAC,
- Make TRAC more user friendly and less confusing,
- Increase the effectiveness of TRAC delivery,
- Keep TRAC affordable,
- Be fiscally responsive, and
- Build public support for libraries.

J. Conclusions

This document provides an analysis of the TRAC Needs Assessment Survey. The Survey was designed to provide TRAC Directors with input and insight from stakeholders. The results of the Survey indicate that TRAC users are very satisfied with the services that TRAC provides and no one service area emerges as priority. All TRAC services are valued and viewed as important. Many respondents mentioned the importance and value TRAC brings to smaller libraries.

Survey respondents input indicates TRAC is functioning well and doing its job. However, TRAC users have a vision for TRAC that requires more. Respondents want to see:
- Greater cooperation among members and increased membership
- Service improvements
- Organizational improvements
- Responses to key trends and challenges particularly those related to technology, funding and the effective use of resources and patron borrowing/library use.

Respondents see change as constant. The “One Card” and technology allow for and will drive the development of a virtual provincial library system with seamless access. TRAC is well placed to respond and lead this change. However TRAC must not lose sight of the fact that community and patron needs are diverse and that finding of a balanced and responsive approach to these needs is essential if TRAC is to remain relevant and valued.