

## **Library Systems and Services**

### **Who we are and what we do**

Library Systems and Services is a privately-owned company that partners with local governments to operate public libraries and library systems. Founded in 1981 and relied on by 83 libraries across the US, LS&S is the nation's only company focused on library management. Like all library professionals, LS&S employees are committed to providing the best possible service to library patrons.

Leveraging insight into the most effective and patron-centric methods to run libraries—honed over three decades—has resulted in increased operating hours, more public programs and materials and reduced operating cost, all while increasing patron usage, at every LS&S library.

While LS&S and public-private partnership for library operations are not new, misconceptions continue to abound. Public libraries are too important to let disinformation get in the way of library vitality and service; the Q&A below provides facts about LS&S.

#### **How is public-private partnership different from privatization?**

Privatization is the transfer of ownership of all the library's assets to a privately held company. When local government contracts with LS&S, all buildings, materials, collections, computers, furnishings and other property continue to be community owned. LS&S provides operations and administrative services.

#### **Can a private company focused on profit also serve the common good—the mission at the heart of the public library?**

Three decades ago, LS&S introduced a new set of operational methods that enhanced library ability to serve patrons. LS&S continues to innovate and keeps partner libraries on the leading edge of information science. Over time, the demand for public library services has shifted and patrons' expectations have grown and changed. LS&S rises to meet this challenge every day, channeling insight and expertise to create a new paradigm for libraries—resources not just for literacy education and enrichment but springboards for neighborhood unity and economic and workforce development.

This work, innovation and insight contribute to the purpose of the public library—the common good. Many private companies seek to improve the lives of people and contribute to the benefit of society. For services from hospital care to transportation to water treatment, many government entities rely on private companies. In fact, a spirit of collaboration and giving back is often essential to long term success.

#### **Is LS&S publicly traded? Is information about LS&S libraries publicly available the same as government operated libraries?**

LS&S is not a publicly traded company. LS&S answers to all stakeholders, including citizens and library patrons of the communities we serve.

LS&S promotes full transparency, providing extensive analytics to customers with measurable key performance indicators to highlight library performance and community engagement. Some of this

information is on each library's website; additional information is available from local and state governments and the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services.

An overwhelming percentage of the funds paid to LS&S for any library contract is allocated to paying the salaries and benefits of local staff employed by the library and to materials acquisition. LS&S is the third largest library system in the country, and as a result is able to offer volume discounts on collections, modern technology and efficient administration. LS&S is the only private company operating libraries and has the unique and valuable ability to invest money in innovation and new products to help libraries evolve and better serve patrons now and in the future.

**How can LS&S provide more services for less cost?**

LS&S got its start as a technology provider for libraries. LS&S's economies of scale and ability to affordably provide excellent operational and public access technology are unmatched. These benefits turn into real savings for local governments, and allow library staff to focus on core services instead of fixing computers or other back office tasks.

**Is contracting with LS&S only for local governments in financial trouble or “broken” library systems?**

No. LS&S is relied on by community leaders and library staff who want to help improve patron experience and bring optimal practices to ensure library growth and vitality. LS&S supports libraries as they evolve into community anchors for learning, technology and enrichment.

Many communities engage LS&S simply to provide equal or enhanced services while improving cost efficiencies. Municipal governments throughout the United States rely on private companies to provide transportation planning, technology design and other services; library operation is comparable. LS&S is the only company operating public libraries, and though partnerships with municipal governments, has a proven track record of measurably improved library service. Healthy systems including Camarillo, Santa Clarita, Simi Valley and Moorpark, California; Germantown and Collegedale, Tennessee and Sumter County and Osceola, Florida all chose LS&S to improve efficiency and service.

Partnering with LS&S ensures local government maintains local library control. LS&S clients describe their experiences in the video linked below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjbKgsuNOpE>

**Are LS&S-operated libraries different from other public libraries?**

LS&S libraries offer the same access and services as any public library; anyone can visit to check out books and materials, use computers and technology and participate in programs—all for free. LS&S looks to make a positive difference and help local libraries provide better service. This may be through additional offerings, more hours or lower costs. Branch closings or reduced hours are at the discretion of local government officials.

**Our library has a long history in the community. Will LS&S protect our local focus, values and legacy?**

In cooperation with the City/County, elected and appointed local officials, other community stakeholders and library staff, LS&S develops a strategic plan for each library system. This plan, when approved by local government, helps govern the direction and focus of LS&S staff as they provide

excellent and efficient library service to meet the personal, professional and lifelong learning needs of library patrons.

See the video linked below for more information on LS&S stewardship of local libraries:

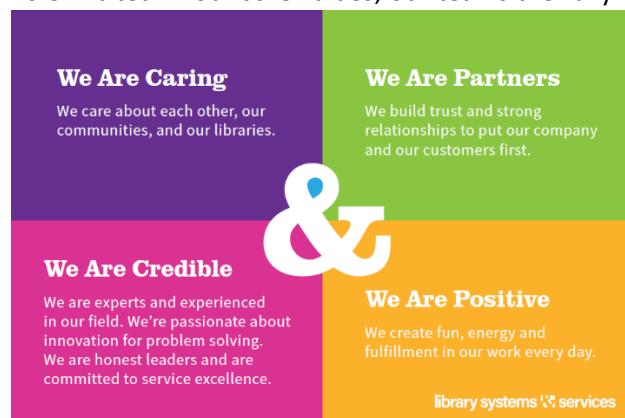
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyHyMuGWpv0>

**What happens to the current employees of the library when LS&S assumes management?**

Staff continuity is essential for the library to remain connected to the community, and for the community to support the library for years to come. LS&S retains the existing staff upon execution of the agreement and hires qualified staff that meet the needs of the library and are invested in the success of the library and community.

Employee respect and recognition is a large part of LS&S culture. LS&S hosts a variety of employee events and recognition activities. In many communities, library employees also continue to participate in City or County employee activities and remain connected to those networks. LS&S library employees live in and contribute to their communities. They are your neighbors. LS&S believes in giving back to our communities and looks for ways in which employees can volunteer and support local organizations and charities.

As exhibited in our core values, our teams are fully committed to the community.



This video was created by LS&S employees:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wncWkrK\\_zE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wncWkrK_zE)

**Are LS&S wages and benefits comparable to that of other libraries?**

LS&S pays competitive wages to retain and attract highly qualified individuals within the community. LS&S wages are consistent with industry standards. LS&S also offers generous benefits including vacation, sick, and holiday time off, medical, dental, vision, life, short term and long-term disability insurance and a 401k retirement plan. And thanks to LS&S's national scope, employees have the opportunity to gain experience and career advancement in many library systems.

Simply put, LS&S would not be able to attract and retain the expert professional staff that makes our libraries successful without offering competitive wages and benefits.

**What are LS&S staff qualifications?**

All LS&S Library Directors are professionals with master's degrees in library science or library information services. They are supported by a senior team of MLS degreed librarians including Regional Directors and a Chief Library Officer. LS&S places high value on the commitment and knowledge an advanced library degree represents; more than 140 MLS/MLIS degreed librarians work in LS&S libraries. Library staff are supported by resources with expertise in library operations, accounting, human resources and marketing. All staff have the opportunity to take advantage of a tuition reimbursement program to continue personal and professional growth. LS&S optimizes the correct balance of professional and paraprofessional staff to serve the ever-changing public library and its patrons.

LS&S staff also have extensive experience in operating special services including a museum, genealogy library, joint-use facilities and special collections.

**Is turnover higher at LS&S libraries than other libraries?**

Employee retention at LS&S libraries is healthy and stable. To best serve library patrons, LS&S works to hire and retain individuals that seek to perform at the highest levels. LS&S has a strong track record of employee retention with the average service tenure equal to or better than industry standards.

**Does LS&S use library volunteers in lieu of paid staff?**

No. Like libraries across the country, LS&S welcomes the contributions of volunteers and provides opportunities for dedicated volunteers. Volunteers supplement special projects or help with general tasks such as shelving books, collection maintenance, or greeting the public. Volunteers do not have access to confidential information. LS&S library staff recruit, orient, and train volunteers and provide vibrant recognition and appreciation programs. Volunteer participation has increased at all LS&S libraries.

**Does collection management stay locally-focused in LS&S libraries?**

The LS&S Collection Support Unit uses real-time technology to assess current collections and make adjustments based on demand. Purchases of best-sellers, adult and children's titles, audio-visual and reference materials are based on community needs, preferences and usage. Collections expertise is enhanced by access to library cooperatives through which libraries share materials for patrons to check out in other library systems. As manager of 83 libraries, LS&S has access to volume discounts for many books and materials. Local staff has final approval on all materials and drive acquisition of locally-focused materials.

**What happens to local government library policies when LS&S begins management? Is local government still the access point for patron complaints and other problems?**

Local government and/or Library Boards continue to set the budget, make policy decisions and determine operating hours in LS&S-operated library systems. LS&S works closely with local leaders to implement their plan for the library with enhanced services, technology and collections as cost efficiently as possible. LS&S professionals maintain strong relationships with Library Boards of Trustees and work for them to support library policy.

**What happens with Friends of the Library groups?**

LS&S has strong relationships with Friends groups and supports them in their work and maintenance of non-profit status. Used book sales and other activities are all part of the partnership. Proceeds from book sales and other contributions go directly to the libraries, not LS&S.

**What happens with fines and fees collected by LS&S?**

All money collected for overdue materials is accounted for and returned to the City/County.

**An LS&S official is quoted in a 2010 *New York Times* article. That quote does not seem very respectful of library employees.**

Mr. Frank Pezzanite's seven-year-old comment does not reflect LS&S philosophy regarding public library employees. LS&S employs more than 140 MLS/MLIS degreed librarians and 1,000 library staff members, many of whom bring public sector experience. LS&S people have always been and continue to be fully committed to the mission of the public library. LS&S deeply respects and relies on the skill and of local library staff to deliver the best possible service to patrons every day.