

The SCLS Partnership Program

South Central Library System; last revised November 23, 2010

Introduction

2011 will bring many significant changes to the technology services provided by SCLS. Many of these changes have been requested by member libraries, including a request for a more permissive culture when it comes to libraries and their PCs on the SCLS Network. In order to provide libraries the ability to manage aspects of their Staff and Patron PCs, SCLS will introduce a new service called the Partnership Program, starting in 2011.

This document will detail our plans for introducing the partnership program for interested libraries, a program that will allow library staff members the opportunity to make changes to individual PCs connected to the SCLS network.

The Partnership Program Survey

In late September 2010, SCLS asked member library staff several questions regarding their interest in such a partnership program. Of the 22 respondents, almost 82% indicated that they were somewhat or very likely to participate in a partnership program.

Most respondents saw the library director or a member of the technology staff as the most likely staff member to participate and most indicated that they would put in the necessary time—"whatever it takes"—to train staff to utilize the Partnership Program.

The vast majority of respondents indicated that they would be willing to document the changes they make to the PCs and although the timeframe varied widely (Immediately to one month or more), respondents said that if SCLS were to make it easy to report changes—such as an online form—they would report changes in a timely manner. About half of the respondents said they currently had a way of tracking licenses and software media such as CDs and floppy disks and most used a paper file to store the licenses and media.

When asked what changes would participants like to make to both Patron and Staff PCs, the installation of additional software and software upgrades were most often mentioned. Other changes included installing fonts, browser toolbars and videoconferencing software.

Partnership Optional

We want to stress up front that we view the partnership program as an optional service for libraries. SCLS will continue to fully support both Staff and Patron PCs on the SCLS network at our current service level. Moreover, participating libraries can continue to utilize Help Desk services as needed.

Our goal is to create a service that contains the best elements of South Central Technical Support along with the flexibility that member libraries have requested.

Staff PCs

Since Staff PCs are by nature easier to manage and maintain than Patron PCs due to security concerns, we will be offering the Partnership Program Service initially for SCLS Staff workstations. Moreover, Staff PCs that are running Windows XP as well as those that will be running Windows 7 in the near future will be eligible for the participation in the Partnership Program. This means we will be able to offer this service sooner than expected.

Each participating library staff member will be provided with a unique username and password that library staff members can use to install additional software or make changes to the PC interface. This is the method used internally by SCLS staff on SCLS Headquarters workstations, providing a high level of security yet flexible enough for day-to-day use.

Patron PCs

Due to the complexity of the security schema used on Patron PCs to protect Patron data, as well as protect the Network from malicious security breaches, opening up Patron PCs in the same manner we propose for Staff PCs is not feasible. Unlike Staff machines, the combination of disc locking software, Windows security settings, and the vast array of software applications that are vulnerable to cyber-attacks creates a complex situation that does not easily conform to customization.

However, SCLS is conducting numerous tests utilizing both Windows-based and third party solutions in order to allow access to the Patron PC by member libraries while simultaneously providing a secure environment for patrons. We do know that in order to offer the Partnership Program on Patron machines, we will need to utilize various features of Windows 7, the operating system we will start supporting in 2011. Also, our hope is that the new vision for Patron PCs—one that provides library patrons with a vast array of software applications and services—will help to address many of the requests for additional Patron PC software.

The Memorandum of Understanding

Each staff member participating in the Partnership Program would agree to a memorandum of understanding, balancing technology privileges with responsibilities. At this time, the memorandum of understanding is not yet complete, but would most likely include sections and topics such as:

- Prohibitions against the installation of illegal, unlicensed, or malicious software

- The need for participating libraries to utilize the disc locking software correctly and consistently on Patron PCs
- Participants as good PC citizens, realizing the impact some software applications can have on user security and data privacy, especially in environments where many staff members share one workstation
- The need for participating libraries to inform SCLS of any additional network equipment needs in advance—such as printers—so that SCLS can continue to support networked equipment at the level we do now
- The need for participating libraries to document changes made to the PCs in order to assist SCLS Help Desk staff in troubleshooting problems
- SCLS’s responsibilities for providing instruction on software installation best practices
- SCLS providing training on the disc locking software solution for Patron PCs
- SCLS to continue to provide technical support via the Help Desk for all PCs on the SCLS network

Software Upgrades

As indicated in the survey, many libraries would like to use the features of the Partnership Program to upgrade SCLS-supported software like Internet Explorer, Firefox, and Adobe Reader. We acknowledge that the current manner and speed in which software updates have been applied to SCLS computers is not working for member libraries. However, decentralizing patching and updates would cause significant patch management issues for all PCs on the Network.

Instead, we plan on making software updates a priority for the Technology Team. We will start exploring third party patch/update management tools for use with SCLS workstations. We will also create a system in which patches and updates are identified, tested, and applied to SCLS workstations in a much timelier manner.

Support from SCLS

Our hope is that the Partnership Program is truly a partnership, with an understanding and contribution from both participants. With that in mind, here are some of the ways that SCLS will be providing support:

- Software Keeper
 SCLS will provide each Partnership Program library with a folder containing pockets for software licenses, documentation, and media (CDs). This unified storage and inventory method will allow the SCLS Help Desk to easily assist libraries in installing library-specific software in the event of a PC breakdown. After piloting the Software Keeper solution within the Partnership Program, we will offer this solution to all our member libraries.
- Disc Locking Solution
 The security of a Patron PC is fundamental to the Patron PC experience. The easiest way to achieve this level of security is to lock down the PC and not allow any changes to be made. However, this approach runs counter to the needs of Partnership Program participants. SCLS will provide a disc locking solution, loaded on the Patron PCs, that will allow both SCLS staff and member libraries to make changes to the PCs while still providing a high level of security to the patron.
- Software installation training
 SCLS will provide training to participating libraries on software installation best practices.
- Disc Locking Solution Training
 SCLS will provide training to participating libraries on the use of the disc locking solution.
- Software Documentation
 SCLS will provide documentation and training materials available online to participants.
- Continued PC technical support
 SCLS will continue to provide technical support to libraries, regardless of their participation in the Partnership Program. If a PC is in need of hardware repair, SCLS will continue to repair PCs and will deliver the PCs back to member libraries loaded with the full array of software SCLS provides. The SCLS Help Desk will continue to load custom software on Staff PCs as we do now, if so desired by the library.
- PC changes reporting mechanism
 South Central will develop a way for participating libraries to report any changes made to workstations back to SCLS, most likely an online form. The intent for this reporting is to provide the SCLS Help Desk with as much information about the PCs as possible so that troubleshooting is accurate and swift.