

## Games, Gardens, Talking Books and Ohio Books: All About LSTA Special Grants

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January 1, 2010 was the beginning date for LSTA-funded VictorReader Stream projects and Choose to Read Ohio projects. These were the first grants awarded as "special grants" by the State Library. These successful grant programs were followed by Growing Community, Introducing Gaming to the Library, and another round of Choose to Read Ohio.

These special grant cycles were each initiated because a unique and specific need or opportunity, which could be addressed with LSTA dollars, was identified in the library community. Special grant applications are short, relatively simple applications with a small dollar amount. Recently funded special grant projects ranged from \$278 to \$9980 in LSTA dollars. Each grant recipient must provide a 25% local cash match, as with all LSTA programs. The items for which funds can be requested are very specific.

Most special grants are one-time opportunities.



The [VictorReader Stream](#) is an ultra-compact digital talking book player for people who are blind and those with visual impairments. It allows users to download a wide variety of books. Perhaps most importantly, it is compatible with the National Library Service's digital talking books. The State Library offered an LSTA special grant opportunity, in partnership with Universal Low Vision Aids (ULVA), to provide VictorReader Stream units to libraries to benefit their patrons with visual impairments. Five public and academic libraries received VictorReader Stream units through this grant program.

[Choose to Read Ohio](#) (CTRO) is a statewide initiative supporting Ohio authors and encouraging all Ohioans to read, share, and enjoy books together. Any library, community, class, family, or other group can participate by simply selecting and sharing a CTRO book. More elaborate CTRO programs can be built for the price of some creativity and good partnerships. However, the State Library has made an LSTA special grant opportunity available for libraries to produce a larger-scale CTRO community event or project than local resources might allow. Thirteen academic, public, and school libraries received CTRO grants in the first round, and a second round of grant recipients will be announced in December 2010.



The CTRO grant recipients developed highly creative, high-impact programming featuring Ohio literature. Licking Valley Schools assigned Sharon Draper titles for all high school students' summer reading, followed by a learning festival entitled, "A Day With Ms. Draper." Besides Sharon Draper's visit, break-out sessions addressed mental health, teen parenthood, and the history of slavery, extending the themes of CTRO title [Copper Sun](#) and the other Sharon Draper books. Cleveland Elementary School and Lane Public Library collaborated on activities featuring Andrea Cheng's [Where the Steps Were](#). Students participated in poetry writing and printmaking projects coordinated by Andrea Cheng. Student poetry and prints were bound and published. Clark State Community College partnered with arts outreach initiative Project Jericho and the Clark County Juvenile Detention Center to host [The Death of Jayson Porter](#) author Jaime Adoff, who worked with at-risk teens and incarcerated teens on their original poetry and a poetry slam. A public reading and events at the local high school engaged the entire community.

## [Growing Community: The Library Food Garden](#)



was an innovative, unusual program to help libraries build partnerships and enhance their status as centers of community life. Libraries applied for LSTA funds to develop and install community gardens and to provide related programming in collaboration with local partners. Sixteen public and school libraries received funding for 2010 garden projects, and are responsible for sustaining their gardens through at least 2012.

Wornstaff Memorial Library installed gardens in Ashley, Ohio with participation from a huge number of groups including 4-H, OSU Extension, scouting troops, assisted living and child care facilities, and Delaware County Master Gardeners. Produce donations were made to the local food pantry, and local residents were introduced or re-introduced to gardening as a step toward self-sufficiency, even in an agricultural community. Andover Public Library discovered that its new Learning Garden generated tremendous and very welcome excitement

in the community. As Library Director Susan Hill noted, "The Learning Garden Project has been outstanding in its effectiveness; a bright spot of something being created in a village which has not had anything new built in it for a long time."

The [Introducing Gaming to the Library](#) grant program acknowledged the increasing value of gaming to literacy improvement. It was developed with the hope of providing a successful grant writing experience to small, under-resourced libraries, including first-time grant applicants. The program helped libraries to reach new and underserved audiences and build community connections by developing partnerships, bringing different patron groups together around the enjoyment of games. Several of the libraries seeking gaming grants developed intergenerational programming using the Wii or other highly interactive gaming systems. Thirteen public and school libraries were awarded gaming grants in June 2010. As an unannounced bonus, each of the grant recipients also received a box of assorted tabletop games, which had coincidentally been donated to the State Library by the Game Manufacturers Association to distribute to libraries.



The State Library has been very pleased with the outcomes of the special grants to date, and that applications are being received from a broad range of libraries. New special grant opportunities are being developed and will be announced in 2011. For more information about the special grant program, please see [/lpd/special-grants](#) or contact Missy Lodge at [mlodge@library.ohio.gov](mailto:mlodge@library.ohio.gov).