

Ohio Library Levies and Fundraisers January, 2011

State Librarian's Report

Sustaining the Success of Ohio's Public Libraries

In an article published in the October-December 2010 issue of *Public Library Quarterly*, Jacqueline Courtney Klentzin reported on her efforts to identify the factors which have contributed to the collective success of Ohio's public libraries. It is not surprising that she identified "equitable state funding" as one of the factors that has helped Ohio's public libraries attain their current status as Best in the Nation. Nor is it surprising that she questions the sustainability of this model in light of the state funding reductions that have impacted all of Ohio's libraries.



This issue of our newsletter takes a look at what some Ohio libraries have done to generate additional revenue in an effort to offset reductions in state funding and maintain resources and services at a level that meets or exceeds the high standards they have set for themselves. In her *Public Library Quarterly* article, Klentzin comments on the high level of public support enjoyed by Ohio's public libraries. This level of support has contributed to the passage of local library levies in all areas of the state. Since November 2009, Ohio voters have approved just over 82% of the 104 library levies that have appeared on the ballot. That is a remarkable rate of success. The Chillicothe-Ross County Public Library and the Dr. Samuel L. Bossard Memorial Library of Gallia County, both featured in this issue, passed operating levies in November 2010.

Many libraries rely on Friends groups or library foundations to raise funds to support programs and services. The St. Clairsville Public Library has established a Library Foundation Giving Tree, which is prominently displayed in the library, to showcase the names of donors. The Foundation recently purchased several laptop computers that have allowed the library to meet the increased demand for public computing. The Westerville Public Library has a very active Friends of the Library group which has raised and donated just over a quarter million dollars to the library.

Libraries have also engaged in a number of other fundraising efforts. Many have been successful in reaching out to local civic organizations such as Rotary and Kiwanis clubs to help support library programs. The Rotary Club of Portsmouth regularly supports the Summer Reading Programs at the Portsmouth Public Library and the St. Clairsville Sunrise Rotary Club donated \$5,000 each year for five years to help renovate the children's room. Libraries have also been successful in securing financial support from the local business community. Many libraries, such as the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, use the Kroger Rewards Program to obtain additional funds. The local Panera Bread store donated furniture for the Washington-Centerville Public Library's new Teen Zones.

Fundraising efforts come in all shapes and sizes. In this issue, we learn from Teen Advisory Board members about the "Stick It to the Director Duct Tape Fundraiser," which raised \$600 for the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County and Ann Riegler-Coursey, Director of the New Madison Public Library, shares information about the library's successful "Fill Our Shelves" program, which asks community members to donate funds to help purchase library materials. The program raises about \$1,000 each year, providing a much needed boost to the library's materials budget. For information about a larger fundraiser, visit the Washington-Centerville Public Library's [website](#) to read about their "Dinner at the Trace," a fundraising event that was attended by 200 people and raised \$12,000. As an ongoing fundraiser, libraries including the Washington-Centerville Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library have started offering passport services.

In her article, Jacqueline Klentzin suggests that one reason Ohio's public libraries have been so successful is that they are not afraid to take risks and be innovative. We think some of the fundraising ideas included in this edition of our newsletter are good examples of this willingness to take risks and try new things.

State Library of Ohio Governmental Affairs Liaison Bill Morris works with libraries on boundary issues as they prepare to place operating and bond levies on the ballot. In his article, Bill provides insight into the issues associated with determining and changing library boundaries.

In the November 2010 election 85% of Ohio public libraries received voter approval for their levies and bond issues. [We have a spreadsheet with the results available for downloading on our website.](#) The levy campaign for the [Public Library of Steubenville and Jefferson County library](#) was in full swing with I visited on October 13, 2010.

David Weaver, Development Director of Ohioana Library, has a broad range of experiences in fundraising for non-profit organizations. In his article Raising Funds and Friends for Libraries, David provides an overview of five strategies for raising money.

If you have a great idea, successful story, or promotional materials about levies and fundraising I encourage you to share it on [WebJunction Ohio](#).