

State Library of Ohio Testimony before the Subcommittee of Higher Education of the  
House of Representatives

Chairman Webster, members of the Committee, I am Jo Budler, State Librarian of Ohio. I am pleased to be with you tonight to provide testimony on the State Library of Ohio's proposed budget for fiscal years 2008 and 2009.

I want to thank you and the Strickland administration for supporting the State Library. I know that these are difficult fiscal times in Ohio. I can assure you that we appreciate this support and that we are committed to strengthening our state through the programs and services that we provide to state government, libraries, and residents of Ohio.

The State Library serves state government by providing access to information, answering reference questions, developing customized research aides and delivering material directly to you. It is our goal to help you and every state employee to do the best job possible, to assist in decision making by providing information, and to anticipate needs so we can be proactive in our service.

In your packet you will find a list of resources our librarians prepared for you. It includes references to websites, articles, and book titles that you might find of interest, specifically about state funding issues.

The State Library serves librarians across the state through continuing education opportunities and consulting. In this way we assist them in improving library service to all Ohioans.

We also reach Ohio residents in our statewide programs such as a resource sharing system that enables a resident to borrow books and materials from libraries throughout the state, access to a core set of electronic resources, and a 24 hour, 7 days a week virtual reference and homework help service called KnowItNow. These programs allow all of us to do things in the most cost-effective and efficient manner possible.

Providing 24/7 reference service is simply not possible for individual libraries. No one has enough staff or funding to do this alone. Yet together we are able to provide this service.

KnowItNow is the busiest service of its kind in the nation, answering more than 15,000 questions a month. A majority of the users are school age children and their parents who are asking for help in finding reliable and accurate sources of information – certainly something we want to encourage. We know that our youngest residents turn to the Internet for answers – and we know that we need to reach out to them on the Internet if we are going to contribute in a meaningful way to their learning. In your packet you will find a brochure about this service which includes some of the testimonials we have received.

While we are very pleased with the success of KnowItNow, we are looking for ways to improve it. Over the next twelve months we will work with Cleveland Public Library to explore options with open source software. We hope to be able to replace the off-the-shelf software with software more responsive to our needs.

The State Library is committed to bringing agencies and organizations together to work toward greater service with greater savings and efficiencies. Under the name of Libraries Connect Ohio, we have partnered with OhioLINK, the academic network, INFOhio, the K-12 network, and OPLIN, our public library network. Together we have made a core set of electronic resources available to all Ohioans since Fiscal Year 2004. These are most heavily used, again, by our youngest residents – our school aged children. In your packet you will find a description of Libraries Connect Ohio and the Ohio Web Library service with some of our users' comments.

We have very rich library collections in our state and excellent library service. But no library can expect to have all of the material or information that is produced. At the same time when a customer wants material, we want to be able to provide it. Resource sharing allows us to do this.

Ohio has a strong history of resource sharing – OCLC of Dublin began with a consortium of academic libraries in our state and is now a worldwide resource sharing model.

OhioLINK is another example of strong resource sharing.

In your packet you will find a set of maps which illustrate the richness and complexity of our resource sharing mechanisms. The bottom map shows the location of the OhioLINK libraries. You will note that the State Library is included in this system. On top of this map you will find two more transparencies.

The transparency labeled “Consortia in Ohio” shows the libraries in the various library consortia across Ohio. Each consortium is represented by a different color. While all libraries in each group or consortium can communicate with one another and share resources, it is not possible for the various groups to speak to one another because they are using different software systems.

The top transparency labeled Ohio Libraries Share: MORE illustrates the State Library funded program which attempts to allow communication across different systems. We have over 130 libraries in this system. Our dream is to someday have a mechanism which allows communication between all libraries so that all of the library collections in Ohio are accessible to all Ohioans.

But even in its current, less-than-perfect state, resource sharing is a very cost-effective and valued service to our residents. Last week I visited Washington Court House Public Library in Fayette County. Director Susan McDaniel told me that her library collection is 71,000 in number. Last year that is the exact same number of items she brought into her building through Interlibrary Loan from other libraries across the state of Ohio in response to requests from her library users. In effect, by participating in resource sharing through the SEO consortium, she was able to double the number of resources available to her community without adding a single item to her own library shelves. This is an incredible savings and an incredible service.

The State Library is committed to ensuring equity of access. Another collaborative effort which is funded in part with our General Revenue Funds is Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. The State Library provides Talking Book reading machines and the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County and Cleveland Public Library provide the reading material to more than 20,000 Ohioans. Thank you for providing the funding that allows us to continue this service.

In addition, I want to show you another product – a new form of the book – which we have added to our collections. This is a PlayAway book. It is player and content all in one and was created and trademarked by a company named Findaway which is located in Chagrin Falls. These devices are available for checkout through the Services for the Blind at Cleveland Public Library.

Last summer there were very long waiting lists for several of the PlayAway titles. We decided to purchase a number of these titles and “lend” them to Cleveland so their blind customers did not have to wait to listen to these books. When the waiting lists were satisfied, these items were added to the SEO consortium so that these items could be shared with all libraries across the state. Some of these devices may very well have been amongst those 71,000 items that found their way to Washington Court House Public Library.

Earlier I spoke about the continuing education which the State Library provides to librarians. One of our many partners in this venture are the Regional Library Systems (RLS). They receive their funding through the State Library and on their behalf, I again want to thank you for your support.

Nearly two years ago we began work on a plan to reduce the number of Regionals from seven to four. In defining the boundaries of the new Regionals, we made certain that all areas and all types of libraries were included. Now I am pleased to tell you that all types of libraries benefit from training that the State Library provides through the Regional

Library Systems. In addition, any library may pay a fee to a Regional and receive additional training and services.

Ohio has strong libraries and our residents enjoy excellent library service. But I know we can do better: by working across all types of libraries we can realize additional savings and provide additional services. This is a role that the State Library has embraced. In the summer of 2005, we initiated an Ohio eBook project, forming a consortium for purchasing audio and text electronic books. These can be shared via the Internet and are downloadable to a handheld reading or listening device. In some instances, the books may be burned to CDs and played on a CD player.

Since its inception, the Ohio eBook Project membership has grown from 17 to 23 – a modest growth. But there is nothing modest about the \$952,000 in fees which the libraries have avoided paying because they chose to be part of this consortium. The fees would have been required of these libraries had they purchased ebooks individually rather than as a group under the State Library.

On a smaller scale, we coordinated a group purchase for public libraries to obtain motion picture licenses. Often libraries show movies as part of a summer reading program to encourage use of the library and reading while children are out of school or as part of a teen program. 116 library outlets took advantage of this coordinated effort and were able to save nearly \$16,000.

We recently announced the beginning of a program entitled the Ohio Ready to Read Initiative. Through this program we will teach librarians across Ohio about the importance of early literacy. They will then be able to present workshops on this to parents and caregivers. We must involve these “first teachers” of our children if we want these children to be ready to read before they begin kindergarten. Only then will they become lifelong learners and able to compete in the global market.

We are joined in this partnership by the Ohio Library Council, the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio Department of Health, and the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services.

I am convinced that partnerships can only make Ohio stronger. On May 21st the State Library is partnering with other library organizations across Ohio to host the first Library Partnership Summit. We are inviting the directors of all types of libraries to come together to reflect on what we have achieved through our collaborative efforts, what we need to do to meet FUTURE information needs, and how we can work together – as a library community – to become the library of the future.

We have begun to create this in the form of the Ohio Web Library but we are only at the beginning. It must become more robust and be capable of including new services as these services become available if we hope to support the lifelong education of all Ohioans.

Thank you. I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.