



## **Budget Support Testimony FY2022 – FY2023**

Given by Wendy Knapp, State Librarian, on April 21, 2021 before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee

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Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Committee, I am Agency Director and State Librarian Wendy Knapp, and I am here today to provide testimony regarding the State Library's proposed budget for Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023. More in-depth information about the programs and initiatives mentioned can be found in your packets.

[The State Library of Ohio](#) functions as both a state agency and a specialized library. We provide a wide range of library services including access to millions of print and digital materials; provide expert reference and research assistance to other state agencies, other libraries, and individual Ohioans; serve as the officially-designated depository for state and federal government documents; and make five meeting rooms and a computer lab available at no cost for use by state agencies and libraries.

The Governor's Executive Budget for FY 2022 and FY 2023 and the latest version of House Bill 110 both recommended reducing the General Revenue Fund (GRF) for the State Library of Ohio below the original FY 2021 level. Though the proposed amount would be greater than the amount we received in 2021, it will not begin to address the significant reductions to staff, programs, and resources that we have made over the past decade of funding reductions.

The critical programs the State Library of Ohio supports with federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds are at risk due to the continued erosion of GRF funding for the State Library. This compounded reduction could make it impossible to meet federal match and Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements necessary to maintain Ohio's current level of LSTA funding.

Since the introduction of this budget, the State Library of Ohio has seen an appropriation from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of approximately \$4.5 million; however, that funding must support libraries of all types across the state and cannot be a replacement for our own operating expenses or the operating expenses of the more than 1000 individual libraries of all types we support with our programs and services.

The ARPA funds will support library programs and services that benefit Ohioans, including strengthened resource sharing amongst libraries, outreach services, and increasing digital literacy through digital inclusion efforts. We recognize that there are several programs that improve broadband infrastructure in other sections of the Act, and libraries will be a vital part of the long-term adoption.



The State Library's proposed GRF Operating Expenses Budget represents a 5.5% reduction from our original FY 2021 appropriation. The State Library has experienced cuts in funding every year since 2010 which have resulted in reductions in staff, library materials and subscriptions, and services. Our GRF Operating Expenses budget (ALI 350321) has been reduced by 21% since FY 2010.

The State Library currently has a staff of just 53 positions. This represents a 12% reduction from the last biennium, a reduction of 24% over the past 10 years, and an overall reduction of 57% since FY 2002. While some reductions bring opportunities to restructure and refine priorities, in this case it has reached the point where we are at risk of not being able to provide basic services if a staff member is on leave for more than one or two days.

The collections budget for the State Library was reduced by 34% in Fiscal Year 2021 over Fiscal Year 2020. This reflects an overall collections budget reduction of 56% over the past ten years. This is the budget that covers not only physical materials, but ebooks and subscriptions as well.

Many of the State Library's current endeavors are aligned with the priorities of the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly leadership and Governor DeWine, including digital inclusion; workforce development; early childhood education and literacy; health literacy; and diversity, equity, and inclusion. When you walk into a library today, and by library I include public, school, academic, and special libraries, you will see Ohioans developing digital literacy skills, job skills, literacy at every age, and connecting to the resources and services vital to this digital age. Many of these programs and services began with grants from the State Library.

### **Digital Inclusion and Workforce Development initiatives include:**

- [Guiding Ohio Online](#) (GOO), a workforce development initiative which provides digital literacy training to adults living in rural areas. Madison Public Library was recently in the news for the pivot made to utilize this resource to assist in COVID-19 vaccine distribution. There have been over 50 libraries (some with multiple locations) who have participated in GOO since the beginning. Many of those libraries have created a permanent position based the work generated from the GOO grant.
- **Wi-Fi hot spots for check out** was already a service offered to numerous communities struggling to address the digital divide before COVID-19. When the pandemic closed schools and almost all community Wi-Fi locations, libraries immediately shifted to ensure these resources were widely available by applying for LSTA CARES Act funding provided by the State Library to expand the service. Grants totaling \$966,000 were distributed to libraries of all types, including school libraries, to address the pandemic. Almost 50 libraries applied for grants to purchase Wi-Fi hot spots. Over 60% of the public libraries in Ohio circulated hot spots in 2020 (up from 50% in 2019).



- **Libraries Connect Ohio** is a partnership of all types of Ohio libraries and library organizations that work together to build and provide the [Ohio Web Library](#) core collection of digital information resources.
- [Ohio Digital Library](#) (ODL) provides downloadable ebooks and other digital content to library customers. After a record-breaking year, ODL is now the fourth-largest e-content library consortia in the country based on circulation. Requests for ebook usage have doubled in the last year while costs for libraries to lease ebooks remains 3-5 times higher than the cost to purchase the same titles by a consumer.
- [Ohio Digital Network](#) (Ohio's service hub for the [Digital Public Library of America](#)), is working to make digital collections from all Ohio Digital Network Cultural Heritage Institutions freely accessible to the world.

#### **Early Childhood Education and Literacy initiatives include:**

- A **73% increase** in the usage of children's ebooks in 2020 over 2019.
- [Ohio Ready to Read](#), the ongoing collaboration of the State Library and the Ohio Library Council that helps public librarians educate Ohio's families on the importance of early childhood literacy and to help them learn how to ensure their children enter kindergarten ready to read and ready to learn.
- [The Children's Summer Library Program](#) provides Ohio libraries with high-quality materials for summer reading programs that encourage Ohio's children and young adults to maintain and/or increase their literacy skills during the summer. This program has long been a lifeline to students who began to fall behind in a school year and will be an essential program for Ohioans as we recover from the pandemic.
- [Day By Day Ohio](#) provides families, caregivers, educators, and librarians a family literacy calendar at home, the library, the classroom, or on the go. With a perpetual calendar featuring songs, activities, book suggestions, and videos, Day By Day Ohio supports early literacy skills and helps young children get ready for school.

#### **Health Literacy initiatives include:**

- **Addressing the opioid crisis.** In 2017, NPR's Scott Simon told listeners, "As this nation's opioid crisis has exploded, the staff at the public library ... have become first responders." This crisis has not gone away, and library staff remain committed to assisting their communities through it.



- Leading the way in **virtual programming** to ensure ongoing connections with communities through the worst of the pandemic. The State Library provided a centralized calendar of activities for libraries to share during the worst weeks of the pandemic.
- The State Library of Ohio staff and staff at the Regional Library Systems have hosted regularly scheduled meetings for counterpart colleagues from all types of libraries since the beginning of the pandemic.
- In partnership with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the State Library continued the work of the previous biennium to expand the Mental Health First Aid Training designed to instruct librarian, school personnel, and community members on how to help a person who is experiencing a mental health or addiction challenge.
- In an effort to help reduce **food insecurity** among Ohio's children and teens, the State Library has worked with the Ohio Department of Education and Ohio public libraries to provide information and to expand the number of public libraries serving as feeding sites for the **Summer Food Service Program**. On average over 100 libraries participate in the program annually.

The State Library strives to provide equity of access to information to all Ohioans. Examples of key initiatives in the area of **diversity, equity, and inclusion** are:

- [Library Services for the Blind and Print Disabled](#), which ensure equity of access to state residents who are blind or print disabled, including over 1,200 military veterans and 402 children with vision impairments, through the LSTA-supported **Ohio Talking Books Program**. The State Library serves over 200 nursing homes in addition to many individuals who are living in those nursing homes, rehab centers, or assisted living facilities. During the past year, the State Library has heard from many staff and patrons in these nursing homes about how the Talking Book service gave them some sense of normalcy and connection to the outside world during the time of COVID.
- [The Ohio Deaf Culture and American Sign Language \(ASL\) Collection](#) in the Ohio Digital Library includes fiction and non-fiction ebooks and videos for children and adults.
- [The State Library's Deafness and Outreach Collection](#) is a collection of print and other materials targeted toward interpreters, American Sign Language students, parents, and professionals working within the Deaf community.



- **The State Library's Critical Conversations Series** is a series of community-led discussions which provide the opportunity to learn more about the critical needs of marginalized communities throughout the state.

**The State Library plays a unique and vital role in providing services to Ohio libraries and maximizes the use of public funds** by facilitating resource and information sharing among Ohio's public libraries through infrastructure programs that include:

- [The Serving Every Ohioan \(SEO\) Library Consortium](#), administered by the State Library, is one of the largest library consortia in the country, serving over one million registered borrowers through 97 library systems across 258 service point locations in 49 Ohio counties. This resource-sharing system generates a savings of \$5.7 million annually in integrated library management software costs for its members.
- The State Library of Ohio provides services to the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction libraries and Ohio's incarcerated population. We accept book donations from public libraries around the state for the correctional libraries, provide reference service to the correctional library staff, and offer Talking Books to inmates who qualify for the program.
- **Regional Library Systems** are located in each quadrant of the state, and each serves a quarter of the state (by county) providing centralized training, resources, and communication to libraries of every type. When libraries and the communities they serve are struggling to meet increased demands with fewer resources, it is even more imperative that the Regional Library Systems are positioned to provide affordable and effective training and development opportunities for library staff.
- [The Statewide Delivery System](#) supports statewide resource sharing among Ohio's public libraries and college and university libraries by delivering millions of books and other library materials to Ohio library users each year. This is a vital resource to ensure continued service through the pandemic.

**The administration of federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds** from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is a primary responsibility of the State Library. LSTA dollars are used to fund competitive grants, which are awarded to all types of libraries for a wide variety of projects, and to support several statewide programs including:

- The American Rescue Plan Act recently appropriated approximately \$4.5 million in one-time funds to buttress the programs and services that benefit Ohioans and enhance connectivity and outreach to Ohio libraries' communities.
- [CARES Act Mini-Grants to libraries](#), which provided 322 grants of \$3,000 to libraries of all types, including school libraries, from 80 of Ohio's 88 counties.



- **Data management and analytics** create strong libraries and communities by defining outcomes, developing assessments, drawing conclusions from data, data visualizations, and/or managing and using data to make better decisions.
- **Literacy grants** support the library's role in the learning experience where literacy is defined as the ability to read, write, and interact across a range of platforms and tools, and encompasses early literacy, digital literacy, functional literacy, and more.
- **Outreach and partnerships** assist libraries in providing new and innovative ways of providing services to users and potential users and in reaching individuals at a range of locations and through a variety of methods.
- **STEM/STEAM grants** assist libraries in preparing youth to be active learners and provide youth with a competitive edge as they prepare to join the workforce of tomorrow in a globalized, high-tech marketplace.

Several library-related organizations are funded as line items in the State Library's budget. These organizations include [OPLIN](#), [the Ohio Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled](#), Ohio's four [Regional Library Systems](#), and the Ohioana Library. My colleague, David Weaver, has submitted written testimony for the Ohioana Library so I will not address that here. Funds made available for OPLIN and the Ohio Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled through the Public Library Fund have remained stable, so while neither has benefitted from any growth in funding, each has been able to continue funding critical services for Ohioans.

However, the four Regional Library Systems have experienced ongoing reductions in funding, including a reduction of 8% for the current biennium, that have made it increasingly difficult to provide essential and targeted training and technology support for Ohio's libraries. Rapidly changing technology, evolving community needs, and global changes affecting every industry have made ongoing training for library staff more important than ever. Each of the Regional Library Systems has undertaken cost-savings measures, even to the point of not paying mileage for directors and staff as they travel to member libraries, and all have united to leverage greater returns on investment by sharing resources. A restoration of funding will allow them to grow these shared resources.

In closing, I respectfully request that the GRF Operating Expenses (ALI 350321) proposed in the budget of \$4,293,122 be increased by 5.5% or \$250,000 for total appropriations of \$4,543,122 and that GRF funding for the Regional Library Systems be increased by 8%, or \$20,000, for each year of the biennium.

Thank you for considering the State Library's budget proposal, which has been carefully developed in an effort to maximize limited state resources to ensure the restoration of critical information resources and services to Ohio government, libraries of all types, and Ohio residents. With the support of the General Assembly, we can improve digital literacy and access for all Ohioans. I will be happy to answer any questions that you have. Thank you.