

Budget Support Testimony FY2026 – FY2027

Given by Mandy Knapp, State Librarian, on May 6, 2025, before the
Senate Education Committee

Chairman Brenner, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Committee, I am your State Librarian, Mandy Knapp, and I am here today to provide testimony regarding the State Library's proposed budget for Fiscal Years 2026 and 2027.

[The State Library of Ohio](https://www.library.ohio.gov/) provides access to millions of print and digital materials, expert research assistance, and serves as the official depository for state and federal government documents. When researchers want to know how and why an Ohio law was made, they turn to the State Library's collection. For example, one researcher told me that the only place he could find out how and why a 1960s Ohio tax levy was created was by using the resources at the State Library. Indeed, your legacy, all the laws you have worked so hard to create, all the deliberation and thoughtful consideration that went in to making those laws, those documents are likely to end up in the State Library one day.

Twenty-four years ago, the State Library was required to move into its current facility, a rented space. In that time, the neighborhood surrounding the building has changed dramatically. What was fields and empty factory buildings is now luxury housing and boutique restaurants. With that, the property values in the area have changed dramatically. We are concerned that we may be priced out. The State Library is evaluating its current space to maximize state funding while providing services to better fit the needs of the modern day. We hope this will include relocating to a more suitable space.

Our current facility is no longer suitable. Systems like the specialized HVAC units that climate control the space for irreplaceable items in the collection, items like a letter signed by George Washington himself, have fallen into disrepair. In the past calendar year, over 100 tickets have been submitted to the landlord to remediate issues, many of which have not yet been addressed. Our collection includes many one-of-a-kind and rare materials including medieval manuscripts, books and letters from the personal libraries of Ohio political leaders, and rare federal and state documents that preserve Ohio's history. Due to the condition of our facility, we are unable to correctly preserve and care for these materials. Please see the accompanying materials for photos of mold, mildew, flooding, holes in the roof, live animals, and other facility issues in the State Library building.

I am asking you today for a **one-time increase of \$525,000** in State Library's FY2026 operating budget to assist with moving the State Library to a new location. These one-time funds will be used for the physical relocation of half the books and materials to secure storage in a state-owned building, to create plans to better preserve the collection—a collection which includes the legacy of past, present and future legislators—and technology to broaden access to those materials. With a one-time increase in funding, the State Library would be able to work towards making these important documents accessible to all and ensure that Ohio's history is not lost to future generations.

At a casual glance, it may seem like the State Library has more than enough funds to move to a new facility. However, several outside organizations are funded as line items in the State Library's budget. These organizations include [OPLIN](#), [the Ohio Library for the Blind and Print Disabled](#), Ohio's four [Regional Library Systems](#), and the [Ohioana Library](#). Unfortunately, it can be easily misperceived by some that these pass-through funds are part of the State Library's operating budget. It may look like we have \$24 million dollars in FY2026, but in actuality the State Library's budget is less than half of that in that year. In fact, the portion of the State Library's operating budget that comes from state revenue (General Revenue Funds) is only \$4.5 million.

The State Library of Ohio takes that \$4.5 million and stretches it as far as we can. The State Library administers programs and services that generate an **annual savings of more than \$1 billion dollars** for state agencies, libraries, and ultimately Ohio taxpayers.

The State Library is constantly looking for ways to provide services that enhance libraries, literacy, and our communities while also saving money for Ohio taxpayers. This January, we launched a new pilot program in the Guernsey County District Public Library to provide information technology (IT) as a managed service. This new initiative will help provide necessary support to critical systems and protect personally identifiable information in library systems from cyber-attacks and other threats. With today's technology, our staff experts can manage many IT systems centrally from our Service Center. Although this service is new, we estimate significant cost savings for participating libraries. That's money that libraries can put back into serving their communities through early literacy, job readiness, and so much more.

Many of the State Library's current efforts are aligned with the priorities of the 136th General Assembly leadership including **Early Childhood Education and Literacy** as well as **Workforce Development and Digital Inclusion**.

Early Childhood Education and Literacy:

- [Ohio Ready to Read](#) 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. In 2024, trainers presented **8 Early Literacy 101 workshops** with a total of 172 attendees and a 1-day Storytime Foundations conference with 98 attendees.
- [Summer Library Program](#) provides Ohio libraries with high-quality materials for summer reading programs that encourage children and young adults to maintain and/or increase their literacy skills during the summer. Total summer program and event attendance for libraries in 2024 was over **1 million Ohioans**.
- **Specialized Grants for Summer Reading** provide federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds to support libraries in the production of summer reading programs that engage and benefit their communities. For example, **Brown Memorial Library in Preble County** used the grant to bring together children in grades K-5 with a reading group for adults with developmental disabilities. After a member of the reading group read *It's Okay to Ask*, a children's book about respectfully acknowledging and inquiring about disabilities, all participants made a craft.
- **Literacy Grants**, funded with federal LSTA dollars, 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. One recent grant was awarded to Stark County District Library to deliver weekly activity kits and library materials to families living in Stark Metropolitan Housing and other neighborhoods.

Workforce Development and Digital Inclusion:

- [Guiding Ohio Online](#), a workforce development initiative which helps public libraries in rural Ohio, libraries like **Columbiana Public Library**, to hire a dedicated **technology trainer** for the public. In state fiscal year 2023-2024, 349,798 attendees were trained in digital skills necessary for today's workforce.

- **LSTA Grants**, funded with federal dollars, include grants for **makerspaces**, which are spaces equipped with **3D printers**, **laser cutters** and other modern technology. These innovative environments not only teach the public digital literacy skills but also foster entrepreneurship and assist small businesses in creating prototypes for new products. In 2024 grants were awarded to **Cleveland Public Library**, **Milton Union Public Library**, and **Wornstaff Memorial Library**, among many others.
- **Northstar Digital Literacy**: Assessments and curricula to meet the needs of job seekers who may lack the digital literacy skills needed to seek, obtain, and retain employment, as well as to perform other tasks in daily life. In 2024, Ohioans spent over 3,500 hours in training on this platform.
- [Libraries Connect Ohio](#), a longstanding partnership of the State Library, the Ohio Public Library Information Network (OPLIN), OhioLINK, and INFOhio, provides a core collection of resources to support education, workforce development, business growth, and lifelong learning, and saves over \$1.3 million dollars annually.

Cost-savings to the taxpayer

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 programs that include:

- [The Serving Every Ohioan \(SEO\) Library Consortium](#) is a resource-sharing network of 103 public libraries across 52 counties, facilitating an annual circulation of approximately 15 million items. Its shared library catalog provides access to 8.3 million resources, serving over one million registered users. The system delivers **significant savings**, including **\$6.2 million annually** in software licensing and **\$63 million** through shared resource lending. Members include **Clark County Public Library** (Springfield), **Coshocton County District Library**, and **Leetonia Community Public Library**.
- [The Statewide Delivery System](#) supports statewide physical resource sharing among Ohio's public libraries and college and university libraries by **delivering over 6.2 million books** and other library materials between Ohio libraries for their users each year.

- [The Ohio Digital Library](#) provides downloadable ebooks, audiobooks, magazines, and other digital content to library customers and saw a 12% increase in circulation in 2024. This is **over 10 million items annually** checked out. There are over 180 member libraries, including **Centerburg Public Library, East Palestine Public Library, MidPointe Library** and many more.

The State Library **requires a one-time increase in funding** in order to continue these important operations from a new facility. In subsequent years, funding at the governor's recommendation will enable the State Library to maintain critical services at a minimum level. Since Fiscal Year 2022, we have had a 29% decrease in our library materials budget. At the same time, the costs for the Statewide Delivery System were \$1,873,400 in FY21 and \$4,249,102 in FY24. That's more than double for a service which **saves taxpayers \$13,058,109 yearly**.

Thank you for considering the State Library's budget proposal, which has been carefully developed to maximize limited state resources to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of critical information resources and services to Ohio government, libraries of all types, and Ohio residents. I will be happy to answer any questions that you have. Thank you.