Allegheny County Libraries... Growing with its Communities

The Allegheny County Library Association (ACLA) and its Member Libraries continue to serve as a vital community resource for the 1.2 million residents of the county. With 73 locations, ACLA and its members offer a single card system, a shared catalog, online databases and a broad assortment of programs to support individuals of all ages. This report highlights just some of the valuable resources delivered throughout 2016.
OVERCOMING THE “QUIET CRISIS” 25 YEARS LATER

2016 marks the 25th year anniversary when Frank Lucchino, then Controller of Allegheny County, issued a special report – “A Quiet Crisis: Libraries in Allegheny County.” This nearly 100-page report offered an in-depth discussion on the state of the libraries in Allegheny County and the problems each of the independent institutions faced.

With the “Information Age” emerging, libraries were struggling to keep up in providing residents with quick access to research materials and critical resources. Allegheny County also was ranked at the bottom for per capita dollars spent on libraries throughout the nation.

The report included recommendations in the form of 10 steps (outlined on the next page) for better citizen access and to address several key challenges – insufficient funding, deteriorating facilities, a shift in population from the urban core, and increasing use of the independent suburban libraries.

The report concluded that Allegheny County’s libraries needed to identify a stable source of operating support and establish a broad based organization to take advantage of potential economies of scale. A Commission on the Future of Libraries in Allegheny County (CFLAC) was charged with addressing the recommendations in the report. Out of the Commission’s work, came the formation of the Allegheny County Library Association (ACLA).

Twenty-five years later, ACLA, with the cooperation of its 46 Member Libraries, has met the challenges identified in “A Quiet Crisis” in ways that couldn’t have been imagined in the early 90’s.

Allegheny County’s libraries have many more resources at their disposal and are better positioned to meet the increased demand from residents for services in education and community enhancement.

While it is important to celebrate the success over the 25 years, ACLA and its Member Libraries will continue to face challenges as we move into the future. Constant changes in technology, pressure on the Allegheny Regional Asset District (RAD) to fund a wider range of assets, the growing demands of residents for current information and new formats, and the continued need to diversify library funding are just a few issues that remain. However, the main foundation of countywide cooperation has been established, allowing ACLA and its members to reach their goals.
Recommendations: TEN STEPS for Better Citizen Access
Improvements & Actions Taken by ACLA & its Member Libraries

1. Libraries must build citizen coalitions
   Following up on “A Quiet Crisis,” citizens and supporters successfully advocated for library service to be recognized as a “regional asset.” The result – contractual funding from RAD for ACLA and the suburban libraries and for the technology infrastructure that connects the entire system.

2. County Commissioners should appoint a library director
   Under the direction of the County Library Administrator, libraries came together to establish ACLA. ACLA has employed a full time executive director to oversee its operations since 1999.

3. County should implement aid to independent libraries
   Since the establishment of RAD, nearly one-third of all RAD funds have been allocated to support libraries. Local government support has doubled since “A Quiet Crisis.” Libraries now receive proceeds from table gaming revenue. Private support from foundations and individual donors has also multiplied.

4. County should continue to support Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh as county-wide resource
   The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh serves as the District Library Center and County Library, and is also a contractual RAD asset.

5. County library federation should be initiated
   There are now 46 Member Libraries, representing service in 73 locations.

6. County should continue to expand the bookmobile program
   Now under the administration of ACLA, Mobile Services are provided to more than 100 locations, primarily preschool classrooms and senior facilities in low income communities.

7. County should promote new library technologies
   All libraries are connected through a 10Gbps fiber ring supporting 3,500 networked devices, a shared operating system, high-speed internet, and universal Wi-Fi. There is a centralized automated sorting system for movement of materials, self-check options in numerous libraries, and access to downloadable books, videos and audios for all.

8. County should open a reading center and begin rotating library program
   Knowledge Connections, first launched by CLFLAC, were operated by ACLA in public housing communities through 2011. With the availability of a single library card, all County residents have access. Materials move daily through a centralized delivery system operated by the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.

9. County should promote inter-municipal cooperation
   ACLA libraries freely share their resources countywide across municipal boundaries. A single library card makes access universal.

10. All libraries should take creative next steps
    ACLA libraries are at the epicenter of shifts in education and workforce development. Today you’ll find STEM programming throughout the system, Maker space centers, media labs, tech clinics, parenting workshops, kindergarten readiness classes, coding workshops, self-publishing support, and countless other opportunities.
FULFILLING THE NEED IN 2016
A Sampling of ACLA’s Impact

- 6,998,877 resources circulated/utilized in ACLA’s Member Libraries
- Residents accessed resources through 65,116,000 minutes of computer time
- 552,000 registered cardholders had free access to the 46 libraries and 73 locations countywide
- Initiated 4,472 summer reading programs attended by 103,771 people
- 647 individuals participated in ACLA’s continuing education events

ACLA’s continuing education events utilized in ACLA’s Member Libraries
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FUNDING REGIONAL ASSETS

Allegheny County libraries play a significant role in improving the quality of life throughout our communities. Listed to the right is a breakdown of funds ACLA receives in order to operate and maintain high-quality services and resources.

- Allegheny County Regional Asset District (RAD) $6,435,515
  - Member Libraries 92.3%
  - Mobile Services 4.8%
  - Administration 2.7%
- State Subsidy $4,118,087
  - Member Libraries 91.8%
  - Mobile Services 0.5%
  - Programs & Services 7.7%
- Table Gaming $581,671
  - Member Libraries 97%
  - Administration 3%
- Grants $567,572
  - Member Libraries 63.1%
  - Mobile Services 13.3%
  - Programs & Services 23.6%
- Earned Revenue $93,126
  - Mobile Services 44.4%
  - Programs & Services 51%
  - Administration 4.6%
- Federal $83,380
  - Programs & Services 100%
- State County Aid $50,775
  - Mobile Services 100%
- Allegheny County $35,000
  - Mobile Services 71.4%
  - County Programming 28.6%
- Contributions $14,917
  - Mobile Services 67.1%
  - Programs & Services 32.9%
- Local Government $10,815
  - Mobile Services 100%
ACLA is thankful for the more than $440,000 in grants and sponsorships to support programs and services in 2016.

- $225,000 from the Jack Buncher Foundation for local library support grants ($5,000 each)
- $110,000 from the Jack Buncher Foundation for Youth Services (year 2 of 2-year grant)
- $64,000 from Jefferson Regional Foundation for South Hills Libraries Community Engagement Project (year 2 of 3-year grant)
- $21,167 from LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) for the Digital Storytelling Project (year 2 of 3-year grant)
- $15,000 from the Laurel Foundation for financial management services
- $6,000 from Vibrant Pittsburgh

In addition, ACLA partnered with CLP on “Love Your Library”- a month-long public awareness and library support campaign in September 2016. ACLA leveraged the online donor portal (constructed with RAD support) to allow library-specific donations. Libraries collectively generated more than $530,000, plus a $.25 match per dollar from the Buncher Foundation. The donations represented nearly 5,000 donors (more than 1,000 were new donors). With such a successful effort, there are plans to repeat the program in September 2017.

ACLA’s three bookmobiles visit locations throughout the County each day serving seniors, preschools and various communities.

In 2016 the bookmobiles traveled 16,633 miles to 1,161 stops, and circulated 67,921 items. The Buncher Foundation is providing support for replacement of our preschool vehicle. The new bookmobile is currently under construction and is expected to be on the road by mid-2017.

OUT & ABOUT
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ACLA has completed the first year
of our three-year long range plan.
Here is a summary of the key
accomplishments in 2016:

**GOAL 1: Strengthen libraries and improve access to library service countywide.**

- Assembled resources for libraries to support their implementation of system standards.
- Surveyed libraries to assist in creating customized governance standards adoption plans.
- Provided direct consulting to local Boards and staff regarding standards.
- Provided education to state and local officials regarding library funding and operations.
- Partnered with CLP on a countywide public awareness and library support campaign (Love Your Library).

**GOAL 2: Leverage consortium size and resources to help local libraries thrive.**

- Increased libraries participating in accounting services program (10 in 2016, 11 in 2017).
- Negotiated discounted rates for insurances for local libraries.
- Worked with Executive Service Corps to provide HR consulting and training to libraries.
- Created a clearinghouse for library policies and best practices.
- Secured consortium membership in Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations.
- Provide access to the PANO resources, for Member Libraries.
GOAL 3: Increase positioning of libraries as essential partners in community building.

- Worked with Wellington Strategies to increase library awareness in Harrisburg.
- Presented at Allegheny League of Municipalities spring conference.
- Created informational pieces on libraries and education and library funding.
- Partnered with Allegheny County to support Live Well Allegheny initiative.
- Partnered with United Way and JCHF on “aging in place.”
- Partnered on Allegheny County’s Community Blueprint for Immigrants and Internationals.
- Partnered with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh and Commonwealth Libraries on Kindergarten Readiness programs.

GOAL 4: Re-assess existing structures and organizational system to determine how best to maximize public investment in library service.

- Supported development of countywide Cataloguing Philosophy.
- Partnered with CLP on implementing centralized cataloguing oversight and RDA accreditation process.
- Worked with eiNetwork on development of strategic plan.
- Implemented opt-in accounting services program.
COLLABORATIONS / PARTNERSHIPS:

ACLA continues to build a strong network of important organizations to help fulfill its mission of providing and promoting the highest quality public library service possible for all residents of Allegheny County through collaboration, cooperation and coordination.

- Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging - collaborated on the Caregiver Backpack project
- Allegheny County Department of Human Services - collaborated for summer programming, provided resources, and participated with the Immigrant & Internationals Community Blueprint Taskforce
- Allegheny County Health Department - participated with Live Well Allegheny and Access Work Group
- Allegheny Intermediate Unit - partnered on the Children's Choice Awards and the School & Public Library Partnership Conference
- ASSET STEM Education - collaborated on "Librarians as STEM Educators" project
- Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management and Executive Service Corps - provided training and human resources consulting for Member Libraries
- Children's Museum of Pittsburgh - provided five Maker professional development sessions and host of the Maker showcase
- Consumer Health Coalition - provided training and support for adult services staff
- Duquesne University and utilized advisors and interns for the ongoing ACLA projects
- Fred Rogers Center - collaborated to create kits for early learning and serve as the media mentor for preschools
- Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council - collaborated to identify speakers for events
- Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh - collaborated on a session for the School & Public Library Partnership Conference
- Jefferson Regional Collaborative - participated in the State of our Communities committee
- Jewish Healthcare Foundation - collaborated on the Southwest PA Community HealthChoices
- Junior Achievement - partnered for the annual KDKA career fair and on the Girls in STEM event at the Carnegie Science Center
- Light Bright Beautiful Puppetry - partnered to provide professional development across library network and funded project for STEM and preschool children
- OASIS - provided technology programming for seniors in libraries
- Passages & Prose - participated in planning and promotion of the festival
- Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Garden - partnered with libraries on a grant funded project
- Pennsylvania Association for Nonprofit Management - provided resources for libraries through an umbrella membership for ACLA libraries
- Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance - provided Mandated Reporter training for library staff
- Pittsburgh Association for Education of Young Children - provided a series of child development trainings
- Pittsburgh Botanical Garden - collaborated to provide a series of story times during the summer at the garden hosted by two county libraries
- Pittsburgh Marathon/Kids of Steel - partnered to share information during summer reading and host a booth at the Finish Line Festival
- Pittsburgh Pirates - collaborated to provide a reading contest during summer reading
- Remake Learning - collaborated to share information during Remake Learning Days and provide some libraries with additional funding for Maker/STEM events
- SWPA Food Partnership - partnered to host summer food sites and promoted library resources at the food banks
- United Way - collaborated to coordinate efforts of the Book Stop, a literacy effort targeted at various school districts
- YMCA - collaborated to connect the organization with libraries for the Y on the Fly program and to share information