

ALLEGHENY COUNTY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Highlights from 2007

- County libraries circulated 6.56 million items (1.3% increase above 2006). Nonresident use represented 29.5% of total activity.
- More than 28,000 children participated in the Summer Reading Club program countywide.
- ACLA received a final report from Olszak Management Consulting, Inc. Findings in the report recommended a comprehensive consensus-building process for redesigning the formula for distribution of RAD monies. In response to those recommendations the ACLA Members voted to award a second contract to Olszak to complete the formula process beginning in 2008 and through mid-2009.
- ACLA hosted its annual Awards Reception in October. Honorees included:
 - ✓ *State Elected Official – Matt Smith*
 - ✓ *Local Elected Official – Dave Fawcett (County Council)*
 - ✓ *Volunteer – James Jamieson (Mt. Lebanon)*
 - ✓ *Community Partner – Art Institute of Pittsburgh (for web design support for libraries)*

ACLA initiated the “Excellence Awards” in 2007. These included:

- ✓ *Excellence in Partnership with Schools – Shaler North Hills Library*
- ✓ *Excellence in Service to the Underserved – Bethel Park Library (for outreach to homeless)*
- ✓ *Excellence in Customer Service – Scott Township Library*
- Major building improvements &/or renovations:
 - ✓ *The new William E. Anderson Library of Penn Hills opened.*
 - ✓ *The new Robinson Township Library opened.*
 - ✓ *Dormont Library completed renovations to its first floor.*
 - ✓ *Braddock Carnegie Library consolidated operations to the first floor.*
 - ✓ *Lauri Ann West Memorial Library purchased a facility for relocation of its Sharpsburg Branch and moved forward with plans for a new main library facility.*
 - ✓ *Plum Borough Community Library announced plans for expansion.*
- Mobile Service operations:
 - ✓ *Bookmobiles made 1,383 stops in 2007:*
 - *516 visits to preschool classrooms,*
 - *473 visits to senior facilities, and*
 - *394 community visits.*
 - ✓ *These stops served:*
 - *46 sites (preschool),*
 - *43 sites (senior service), and*
 - *8 sites (general service).*
 - ✓ *This represented 1,376 hours of service on site.*
 - ✓ *Three libraries purchased bookmobile service: Northern Tier, Northland, and McKeesport.*
 - ✓ *Bookmobiles delivered service in 51 separate municipalities (Robinson and Kennedy now receive service from the Robinson Township Library).*

- ✓ *Mobile service circulation for 2007 was 83,281 items. Use at senior locations increased 10%. General route service (adjusted for the elimination of Robinson/Kennedy stop) increased 9%. Preschool service declined somewhat as the program was being re-tooled.*
 - ✓ *Bookmobiles traveled a combined 17,264 miles delivering service.*
 - ✓ *And in the midst of all this activity, the Mobile Services headquarters moved from its longstanding location in the West End to a new facility on the North Side.*
- In 2007, there were many enhancements to the eiNetwork in order to better serve the libraries and the Allegheny County residents. Some improvements supported library operations while others offered the opportunity to directly enhance the patron's online experience with the library.
 - ✓ *The capability to present The Catalog on hand-held devices such as PDA's and cell phones is now available.*
 - ✓ *The ability to register online for a library card is also available. A temporary library card number is provided online enabling the new patron to immediately place online requests in The Catalog. The patron may receive a permanent card when they next visit the library.*
 - ✓ *There is now the capability to pay fines and fees online using a credit card. This is both a convenience for the patrons, and has been shown to increase the fees and fines actually collected by the libraries.*
 - ✓ *An online registration system for summer reading clubs was also implemented.*
 - ✓ *A "single search" portal was piloted in 2007. The objective was to create a more intuitive or "google-like" search interface that provided quality information from library selected resources.*
 - ✓ *Public wifi capabilities were expanded and improved. Additionally, patrons have the capability to download e-audio materials using library computers.*
 - ✓ *A new technology platform was implemented for the online catalog. Additionally, patron usability tests were accomplished. These activities will provide the basis for introducing many other new web capabilities in the coming year.*
 - ✓ *A pilot project using signature pads to digitally store a patron's signature was also accomplished. This capability saves the registering library from having to store patron registration documents. The pilot project included only a few libraries; however, the eiNetwork has applied for a grant to acquire these devices for all libraries in the County.*
 - ✓ *Some libraries began use of a collection agency service that gently reminds patrons about past due materials. The use of this service is optional for libraries. It has been demonstrated to improve the libraries' ability to more frequently recover the actual materials from patrons or, alternatively, the replacement costs for lost materials.*
 - ✓ *The initiatives to improve disaster recovery measures for eiNetwork infrastructure were completed. This included upgrades to core network equipment and completion of the data center move.*
 - ✓ *Planning work began for replacement of all library PCs in 2008.*
 - Based on an outside evaluation, Knowledge Connections will be completely redesigned in 2008. Much has changed in the community landscape since the inception of the program in 1993. The new business model, rather than site-based, will be designed to "plug-in" to other community-based programs and will be characterized by the following:
 - ✓ *Strong collaborative partnerships with other community service providers (most notably, the BJWL and Youth Places programs);*
 - ✓ *Focus on library and information resources to augment established curriculum in those programs;*
 - ✓ *Flexible service model that can be readily transported and adapted to evolving needs of ACHA and participating communities;*
 - ✓ *Measurable outcomes for program participants keyed to new and improved literacy and technology skills;*
 - ✓ *Maximum impact on participant audience and greater efficiency in service delivery;*

- ✓ *Increased program sustainability.*

ACLA will seek private support for this initiative as a 2-3 year demonstration project. During that time data will be gathered on outcomes to build a long-term funding strategy.

By the end of December all sites with the exception of two were closed in anticipation of transitioning to the new model in 2008. Mooncrest and Mon View will continue to be operated as site-based programs due to the lack of other after-school and summer program options in those communities. The community hosts will be billed for full operating expenditures in 2008.

- Robinson Township Library opened in 2007 as a branch of the ACLA system. Local residents have committed 1/10th of a mil of tax revenue annually to cover operations. In addition Kennedy Township has allocated funding to support the Library. Once the Library has become established and meets state standards, it will begin to operate independently. The Library is housed in the Robinson Township municipal building in completely renovated space.
- “One Book, One Community” was conducted for the fourth year with Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls, focusing on the plight of homeless children. This year a companion book for middle school students was also introduced: Money Hungry by Sharon Flake. More than 140 programs were held in conjunction with this one-month event, and there were 6,632 circulations of the title books from ACLA libraries. The web site, www.onebookonecommunity.org, received 10,156 unique visits (a 41% increase over 2006) and a One Book blog received 1,475 hits. Sponsors and partners included:
 - ✓ *Allegheny County*
 - ✓ *Allegheny County Department of Human Services*
 - ✓ *Barnes & Noble Bookseller*
 - ✓ *Dollar Bank*
 - ✓ *Duquesne University*
 - ✓ *Highmark PALS Program*
 - ✓ *Homeless Children’s Education Fund*
 - ✓ *Oasis*
 - ✓ *Panera Bread*
 - ✓ *University of Pittsburgh*
 - ✓ *UPMC*
- Outside grant initiatives included:
 - ✓ *Board Development program for local library trustees.*
 - ✓ *Leadership Training for library directors (in collaboration with the Nonprofit Leadership Institute at Duquesne University and the Center for Creative Leadership in North Carolina).*
 - ✓ *Public service focus groups.*
 - ✓ *Mobile Service relocation.*
- Incentive Grants through State funds were awarded to member libraries to promote increased local government support, collaborative programs and services, and compliance with State standards. These included:

- ✓ *Tuition reimbursement to for directors to achieve an MLS.*
 - ✓ *Web development assistance for libraries in partnership with the Art Institute of Pittsburgh.*
 - ✓ *Shared staffing for small libraries (technical services).*
 - ✓ *Support for shared teen services position (Moon and Sewickley).*
 - ✓ *Shared children's services (Braddock, C.C.Mellor, and Swissvale).*
 - ✓ *"Grand Read" (Shaler and Hampton.)*
 - ✓ *Increased local government support (Homestead).*
- **ACLA coordinated and underwrote (from State funds and private and corporate grants):**
 - ✓ *Monthly Conversation Salons in 13 member libraries,*
 - ✓ *18 monthly PALS Book clubs,*
 - ✓ *26 arts and cultural programs in member libraries,*
 - ✓ *20 health related programs : Wise Walk (10-week program hosted in 6 libraries)*
 - ✓ *6 caregiver programs as part of LifeLinks for Family Caregivers hosted by a member library*
 - ✓ *23 re-designed library web sites and Dreamweaver training (in collaboration with AIP)*
 - ✓ *6 classes for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (University of Pittsburgh),*
 - ✓ *2 community education opportunities on the topic of "Boomers" and the second half of life*
 - ✓ *2 library staff CE programs on the topic of "Boomers" and the second half of life, and*
 - ✓ *1 mystery author event for member library staff and book groups.*

In addition ACLA provided resources at the National Fatherhood Initiative's Fast Break event for families, the Jewish Health Foundation's Working Hearts event, Oasis' annual event, and Highmark's Childhood Obesity Summit.

- **State Aid for system support funded numerous benefits for members, including:**
 - ✓ *Countywide continuing education programs,*
 - ✓ *Countywide programming (as detailed above),*
 - ✓ *Public performance rights on videos used in local libraries,*
 - ✓ *Customized reports to extract data from the eiNetwork system on behalf of county libraries and ACLA,*
 - ✓ *Access PA database participation fees for members,*
 - ✓ *Consortium licenses for web site calendars and on-line book discussion groups,*
 - ✓ *Advocacy on behalf of public library services,*
 - ✓ *Countywide marketing,*
 - ✓ *Grant funds to support the addition of high-demand nonprint items to the countywide reserve pool,*
 - ✓ *Incentive grant program outlined above.*
- **ACLA was recognized by the League of Women Voters with its "Good Governance Award" for regional collaboration.**
- **The Board implemented several changes in 2007 to improve communications across the organization.**
 - ✓ *Regional coffees with the President.*
 - ✓ *An ombudsman for member libraries.*
 - ✓ *Summaries of Action & Discussion from Board and General Membership meetings.*
 - ✓ *A wiki and blog for library directors.*
- **A narrative report of progress against the strategic plan is attached.**

**ACLA Strategic Plan
Narrative Update – Year-End 2007**

ACLA continues to make significant progress against tasks and timeline, despite various obstacles and/or set-backs encountered.

Goal 1: Elevate Library Performance to Higher Standards

A. Encourage the implementation of established library service standards.

Implementation of system standards adopted by the Membership in May 2006 was suspended by the Membership for 2007. ACLA has successfully launched Robinson Township Library as a system branch, one model for previously underserved communities. In addition F.O.R. Sto-Rox Library has contracted with ACLA to provide and supervise a trained professional to manage its operations, a position that also provides services under contract with a number of small libraries in the West and North regions. F.O.R. has also asked that consideration be given to its operation as a system branch. The Library's distressed status makes it extremely difficult to achieve independent library standards. The ACLA Direct Services Oversight Committee will consider this request in 2008. While the "library report card" is temporarily on hold pending resolution of the formula and standards issues, ACLA continues to monitor library compliance with state standards. ACLA staff continues to meet with and assist libraries in developing plans to achieve standards (helping with analysis of local financial effort, clarifying staff certification and collection expenditure requirements, discussing ways to move toward compliance).

B. Design distribution of funds to encourage continuous improvement.

Pursuant to the RAD's requirement and following an RFP process, ACLA, at the direction of the Membership, contracted with Olszak Management, Inc. for consulting services in analyzing the formula development process and to provide recommendations for a new formula. Olszak issued a report in the 3rd quarter indicating that it recommended an 18-24 month process be initiated for redesign of the formula through a consensus-building model. At the Membership's direction ACLA issued another RFP for consulting services and again Olszak was selected for the next round of consulting to commence in 2008.

C. Establish a standing committee on innovation and best practices.

This Committee was established and issued recommendations including:

- 1. recognition of libraries for collaborative efforts,*
- 2. initiation of a "savvy advocates" committee, and*
- 3. a new emphasis on Library 2.0 initiatives.*

Library Achievement Awards were designed to recognize collaborative efforts, and libraries were selected by outside committee to receive the first of these awards in the fall of 2007. ACLA Board Members made contributions to fund these awards. A

Chair was identified for the “savvy advocates” and a brainstorming session held late in 2007. This group will become organized and activated in 2008. A number of Library 2.0 initiatives were initiated in 2007 including use of new communications tools for librarians and training for library staff in Library 2.0 concepts.

D. Assess library performance from the user perspective.

Survey results were received and reported out. A LAC Committee developed recommendations for responses to the survey findings. These recommendations will be considered by the ACLA Board in 2008.

Goal 2: Promote increased collaboration for greater efficiencies and improved service

A. Develop broad-based networking and communications strategies.

Numerous electronic distribution lists have been developed and implemented. In addition a new blog for library directors and a wiki for general library information were designed and implemented. Training for using these new tools was conducted.

B. Develop, recognize, and reward models of collaboration.

As noted above at the recommendation of the Innovation & Best Practices Committee annual awards were established. The first of these awards were made at the annual Awards Reception, funded by ACLA Board member donations. The ACLA website now has a section that highlights these best-practices as well as other examples of innovative programs and ideas. The Youth Services wiki offers a range of program ideas and performers as well. There is now an ACLA “Faculty” – subject experts from across the County who are delivering programs for older adults at Pitt and CMU. These “faculty members” are highlighted on the ACLA website.

C. Strengthen and clarify partnerships with eiNetwork and District.

The strategic planning process of eiNetwork continued throughout the year, with ACLA staff involvement. The District will be developing a new strategic plan over the next year and ACLA staff will also be participating in that effort.

D. Assist local libraries with change management.

An extensive curriculum for leadership development was designed for ACLA member library directors. This entails 4 day-long sessions over 10 months followed by a 2-day retreat in the spring of 2008. This training has been underwritten by private foundations and is being produced in conjunction with the Nonprofit Leadership Institute of Duquesne University and the Center for Creative Leadership based in North Carolina. The first 3 sessions have been completed and feedback from participants has been extremely positive.

E. Promote local library Board development.

ACLA completed three years of board development training. We are now working with the Nonprofit Leadership Institute to design and implement mini-workshops to orient new board members to best governance practices.

Goal 3: Pursue increased and diversified sources of funding to benefit the delivery of library services

A. Educate government decision makers regarding the priority of effective library funding.

An informational session for aides to state elected officials was held in May. Based on recommendations from the Innovation & Best Practices Committee, the “savvy advocates” are being organized and will be “launched” in 2008. In addition ACLA staff has begun work on informational pieces that can be used by the system as a whole, as well as by local libraries.

B. Develop new corporate, foundation, and individual funding.

A draft of a development plan case statement was prepared in 2007 and will be finalized in 2008. This plan, to be funded by outside grant funds, would incorporate a staff position for development initiatives including generating new funds for countywide library programs and services and assisting local libraries in their own development initiatives through training and consulting.

Goal 4: Expand access to quality library service throughout Allegheny County

An evaluation of Knowledge Connection operations was completed and the Board authorized a complete redesign of the program. The site-based model has been eliminated in favor of services delivered in a mobile model, plugged into existing neighborhood programs. Private funding for a 3-year demonstration project is being identified. The new model will be launched in 2008.

Goal 5: Increase awareness of the value of library services and the countywide system to all stakeholders.

A. Quantify and communicate the return on taxpayer investment in library service.

A “Return on Investment” report was issued by Commonwealth Libraries mid-year. ACLA staff participated in editorial board discussions of this report with the Post-Gazette. The savvy advocates will be briefed on the findings in conjunction with developing other advocacy materials in 2008. ACLA will also be designing presentation materials for use by local libraries.

B. Communicate to stakeholders the benefits of the system’s regional collaboration.

Work with an outside agency on a comprehensive public campaign detailing ACLA's success as a model of regional collaboration is nearly complete. Private grant support has been identified to support printing costs. Materials will begin to be made available in 2008. This will include a re-design of the ACLA website to be consistent with the new messaging materials.