

**21st Century Library Service in Allegheny County
Report of the County-City Library Service Panel**

July 2014

Panel Members:

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Tom Herward

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Rick Pierchalski

Carol Robinson

Claire Shubik-Richards

Marcia Taylor

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Executive Summary
21st Century Library Service in Allegheny County
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Public libraries are important and valued institutions in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. Within the county, public libraries have a long history of cooperation and collaboration working together in an effort to provide strong, seamless service to all. Yet local and societal shifts present significant challenges to the current service delivery model, including major deficits looming for both the countywide library services that are centrally provided as well as for all local libraries collectively.

The County-City Library Service Panel

In July 2013, the Boards of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP) and the Allegheny County Library Association (ACLA) unanimously adopted resolutions to establish a County-City Library Service Panel that would assist in developing an overall vision for library service to best meet the needs of the public and consider how comprehensive 21st Century library service throughout the county should be structured and funded. This is the report of that Panel.

The local and societal shifts that precipitated this study include:

- Increased competition for public funding at all levels;
- Changes to technology influencing the library service model;
- Changes to State Library Regulations; and
- Increased/ongoing need for library service from underserved areas of the County.

Library Service in Allegheny County

Allegheny County is home to 1.28 million residents. Forty-five (45) separate, independent state-aided public libraries operate within Allegheny County in a total of 70 locations plus mobile service delivery to preschools and older adult facilities. Allegheny County's libraries offer a collection of over four million catalogued items and provide reference services, access to computers, the Internet, research databases and e-resources, and programming for people of all ages. Over 8 million visits were made to county libraries and 10 million items circulated in 2013.

Both CLP and ACLA have State-designated responsibility for the oversight of coordinated library services in Allegheny County. Together, CLP and ACLA operate the eiNetwork (eiN) which supports the technology infrastructure that connects all county libraries, including a shared catalog.

The Panel focused on these critical areas for 21st Century library service in Allegheny County:

- Providing equitable access to library services for all residents;
- Standardizing the service delivery system to ensure consistent quality among libraries;

- Leveraging existing and new resources;
- Collectively advocating more effectively for funding;
- Ensuring library service design and delivery decisions are based on data; and
- Maximizing collective resources of libraries while responding to unique local needs.

Findings

- Public libraries are important and highly valued by the people of Allegheny County.
- 21st Century library service should reflect societal shifts in technology, user behavior and educational priorities.
- The State Library Code mandates standards for public library service in Pennsylvania; not all Allegheny County libraries currently meet those standards.
- Differing governance structures for libraries in Allegheny County have a range of funding streams; local funding is inconsistent.
- Funding for priority central services such as delivery of library materials among local libraries and the eiNetwork are not keeping pace with costs on an annual basis.
- Municipal funding for libraries may be at risk due to increased demands on local budgets.
- Some municipalities provide no direct support for library service within their community or to a neighboring community.

Conclusions

There is inherent tension within the culture surrounding libraries in Allegheny County:

1. There is a demand for more and better library services, but less funding is available to support these services.
2. There is a desire for more resources to support library service, but additional resources are unlikely unless libraries can show that collectively they are operating as effectively and efficiently as possible.
3. There is a desire for strong central services to support all libraries but reluctance to release any local control of library service.

Recommendations:

The County-City Library Service Panel makes the recommendations listed below for consideration by the CLP and ACLA Boards. These recommendations, taken as a whole, constitute an action plan for the most effective provision of library service in the 21st Century within Allegheny County.

1. Establish mandatory standards for library service in Allegheny County.
 - a. Identify the improvements needed to raise service levels to meet mandatory standards countywide.
 - b. Through an independent consultant, project the additional funding necessary for the delivery of mandatory service levels at every library countywide while ensuring no community experiences a decline in service.

2. In order to maximize the efficiencies of centralized services, combine Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh-District Services, the Allegheny County Library Association, and eiNetwork into one integrated entity responsible for the provision of agreed upon required centralized services for all public libraries in Allegheny County, and for supporting compliance with mandatory service standards.
 - a. Model financial benefits and implications as well as the optimal organizational structure of a single, combined entity
3. Establish the conditions that permit interested local libraries to opt into certain additional non-mandatory, centralized services or to become members of the central integrated system while permitting libraries that wish to remain autonomous the ability to do so.
4. Allocate Regional Asset District funds and applicable funds from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to support required centralized services provided through the integrated entity.
5. Identify and secure new funding sources for library service in Allegheny County that ensure mandatory levels of service are provided countywide while, at the same time, ensure that local municipal funding is equitable and fair.

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Introduction

The public library still matters greatly in the 21st Century. Demand for the free and varied services libraries provide continues to grow in spite of a constant struggle to sustain financial support from government and other sources. Recent national research from the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project indicates that 94% of Americans say that the public library improves the quality of life in a community. The library promotes literacy and a love of reading. It gives everyone a chance to succeed. People value the public library most for its role in providing books and materials, expert assistance from librarians, and access to technology. Locally, that value is seen in the 10 million items circulated, 8 million visits and 800,000 people participating in programs each year at libraries in Allegheny County.

Libraries in Allegheny County have a strong history of cooperation and collaboration, long working in an environment where they have consistently attempted to move library service forward with changing times. Yet, the 21st Century is posing new challenges to how library service is delivered in Allegheny County, and services are now at risk. A cumulative deficit totaling \$7.8 million by 2018 looms for the countywide library services that are centrally provided as well as for all local libraries collectively. At the same time, many libraries in Allegheny County are struggling to meet specific service standards, which has the potential to further jeopardize funding levels for the system as a whole. These challenges, coupled with new technologies, new ways of accessing information and a need to focus on library service from the user's experience, demand a fresh look at current service delivery models and funding structures in Allegheny County.

With urging from the Allegheny Regional Asset District (RAD) for Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP) and the Allegheny County Library Association (ACLA) to work together to address any duplication in service (See Appendix A), this 21st Century Library Service process was launched to develop a countywide vision for library services in Allegheny County – one that will provide the best customer experience to the people of Allegheny County through consistent, higher quality library services and the most effective, efficient use of available resources.

This report provides an overview of the current organizational structure and impact of library services in Allegheny County, information about the County-City Library Service Panel Members and its process, and specific findings about what people in Allegheny County expect from their public libraries and what a 21st Century library system demands. Several recommendations have been made in order to protect and enhance what we know to be a critical investment in the people and communities of Allegheny County.

Scope of Current Library Services in Allegheny County

Allegheny County is home to 1.28 million residents. Forty-five (45) separate, independent state-aided public libraries operate within Allegheny County with a commitment to delivering outstanding service in a total of 70 locations plus mobile service delivery to preschools and older adult facilities. Library services across the county are generally well utilized, and many communities provide strong support. Of 130 communities in Allegheny County, approximately 30 do not provide any direct library service to their residents except through the services provided by libraries in other communities (See Appendix B). Allegheny County's libraries offer a collection of over four million catalogued items that includes books, magazines, music CDs and scores, and educational and entertainment DVDs. They also provide reference services; access to computers, the Internet, research databases and e-resources; and special programming for people of all ages – especially children. In 2013, more than 1.1 million hours were logged on the 1,260 public computers available in libraries across the county. An additional 795,000 hours of network/Internet usage were logged by patrons using their own mobile devices via the open wireless network. Patrons remotely requested more than 1.48 million library items using the web-based Library Catalog. Additional measures of use are included in the chart below.

2013 Countywide Statistics	
Circulations	10,060,020
Visits	8,010,264
Catalogued Items in Countywide Collection	4,289,131
Program Attendees	799,594

About the County-City Library Service Panel

Clearly, libraries are important assets to communities throughout Allegheny County; yet, a number of important shifts are happening that are influencing the future of local libraries, including:

- Increased competition for public funding at all levels;
- Changes to technology influencing the library service model;
- Changes to State Library Regulations; and
- Increased/ongoing need for library service from underserved areas of the County.

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP) and the Allegheny County Library Association (ACLA) are the two organizations with responsibilities that require they consider library service from a countywide perspective. Because of these responsibilities, CLP and ACLA initiated a process to consider and discuss these shifts and to help discern an optimal path forward for countywide library service. In 2013, the Boards of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and the Allegheny County Library Association unanimously adopted resolutions to establish a County-City Library Service Panel that would assist in developing an overall vision for library service in Allegheny County and the City of Pittsburgh to best meet the needs of the public and consider how comprehensive

21st Century library service throughout the County should be structured and funded. Board resolutions and the charge to the Panel are included as Appendices C and D.

The Panel focused on these critical areas for 21st Century library service in Allegheny County:

- Providing equitable access to library services for all residents of the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County;
- Standardizing the service delivery system (or elements of it) and ensuring consistent quality among libraries;
- Leveraging existing and new resources;
- Collectively advocating more effectively for funding;
- Ensuring library service design and delivery decisions are based on data; and
- Maximizing collective resources of libraries while responding to unique neighborhood needs.

Panel Members

The County-City Library Service Panel was chaired by Fred Thieman, President of the Buhl Foundation, and comprised four representatives appointed by Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and four representatives appointed by the Allegheny County Library Association.

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Representatives:

Patrick Dowd, Current CLP Board Member

Lafe Metz, Current CLP Board Member

Rick Pierchalski, Former County Appointee to the Regional Asset District Board

Carol Robinson, Current CLP Board Member

Allegheny County Library Association Representatives:

Leslie Britton Dozier, Former ACLA Board Member

Tom Herward, Current ACLA Board Chair

Claire Shubik-Richards, Current ACLA Board Member

Marcia Taylor, Former ACLA Board Member

Panel members were selected for a combination of skills and expertise as well as first-hand knowledge of library operations. Brief bios of the Panel members are included as Appendix E. The Panel was appointed for a period of eight months, from December 2013 to July 2014. During this time, members met monthly holding six meetings as a whole, with several additional meetings as sub-committees focusing on specific issues. In addition, many Panel members attended each of the three ACLA General Membership meetings to help inform their discussions. At the request of the ACLA Member Libraries, Panel meetings were open for observation beginning with the April meeting. Summaries of Panel meetings are included as Appendix F.

The Boards of CLP and ACLA tasked the Panel with preparing a written report with recommendations for their consideration at the conclusion of the Panel's work.

Organizational Responsibility for Countywide Library Services

Libraries in Allegheny County have been cooperating and collaborating in various ways for many years. Each of the 45 independent libraries is uniquely structured, has a unique relationship with its local municipality/ies and operates under a unique funding arrangement. In addition, three independent, yet connected, administrative entities are responsible for providing an array of services to the 45 libraries in the county.

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP)

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh has been serving the residents of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County since it was established as a public trust by Andrew Carnegie in 1895. It has a distinguished history of leadership among the country's great public libraries and has become the region's most visited asset with over 2.8 million visits annually. CLP operates 19 neighborhood locations within the City of Pittsburgh, including its Main Library in Oakland, the Downtown & Business Library and the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh holds State and County designation as the County Library for Allegheny County. The State also designates Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh as the District Library Center for Allegheny County and as one of four Statewide Resource Centers for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh is a contractual asset of the Allegheny Regional Asset District (RAD) and receives its funding directly from RAD as the designated County Library for Allegheny County by virtue of the depth and breadth of its collections and services available to all county residents.

Allegheny County Library Association (ACLA)

The Allegheny County Library Association was established and registered as a 501(c)3 corporation in 1994. Its mission is to pursue, provide and promote the highest quality public library service possible for all residents of Allegheny County through collaboration, cooperation and coordination. ACLA operates as a federated library system (defined by State Library Code and Regulations) with 45 Member Libraries. Each of those libraries is governed and operated autonomously but has agreed to be part of a countywide consortium. As a federated library system ACLA is charged by the State to provide service to the population of Allegheny County and to meet established service standards collectively as well as individually by library. ACLA headquarters staff monitors compliance with those standards, encourages collaborative efforts among the libraries, and secures State and County funding and private grants to sustain and grow library services. As a contractual asset ACLA receives direct funding annually from the Allegheny Regional Asset District (RAD) for administration of the system, to support mobile library outreach to preschoolers and older adults, and to distribute funding allocations among 44 Member Libraries (Carnegie

Library of Pittsburgh is a separate contractual asset and receives funding from RAD independently of ACLA).

eiNetwork

In 1996, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, ACLA and the Commission on the Future of Libraries in Allegheny County established the Electronic Information Network (eiNetwork) to serve the combined technology needs of all ACLA Member Libraries. eiNetwork is a 501(c)3 corporation with two members (Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and ACLA). The corporation provides public access to the holdings of all 45 public libraries in the county through an online catalog, connects libraries by means of a shared wide area network, provides public Internet and wireless access, hosts a communication platform for library personnel, and manages software and hardware needs by leveraging consortium discounts. eiNetwork is funded primarily through the Allegheny Regional Asset District (with CLP serving as its fiscal agent) and the federal E-rate program.

Expenditure and staffing information for CLP, ACLA Headquarters and all other Member Libraries, and eiNetwork are included in the chart below.

	2013 Expenses	Staffing (FTE)
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh	\$ 29,734,429	438
ACLA HQ & All Other Member Libraries	\$ 24,795,112	455
eiNetwork	\$ 3,687,666	11

The State Library Code regulates library service in Pennsylvania, and some duplication exists statutorily regarding the responsibilities of “District Library Centers” and “Systems.” CLP and ACLA make continuous efforts to limit any overlap as much as possible, and over the years, some functions have been reassigned between the District and the System (See Appendix G).

CLP as the District Library Center focuses on:

- Countywide delivery of materials
- Inter-Library Loan
- Coordinated selection/management of digital resources
- Specialized collections/subject expertise/reference support
- Discounts on materials/processing supplies
- Teen Services

ACLA as the System focuses on:

- Library development
- County library governance and funding
- Advocacy and public information

- State and RAD compliance
- Grants for countywide initiatives or local assistance
- Coordination of youth services
- Continuing education
- Programming & outreach

State requirements of CLP as the “District Library Center” for Allegheny County and ACLA as the “System” for Allegheny County are included as Appendix H.

Although these three separate organizations have responsibility for helping to shape countywide library service in Allegheny County, no one entity has the authority to mandate performance expectations of the independent libraries in the current federated system.

Note about “Federated” Library Systems: The Library Code defines a federated library system as one operating at a county level and serving a minimum of 25,000 people. Its Member Libraries voluntarily agree to participate in the federation and to delegate the policymaking functions to a system board of directors. However, the Member Libraries operate as independent entities, each with its own governance structure and supported to varying degrees by the municipalities they serve. Frequently there is inherent tension between the needs of the individual libraries and those of the system overall.

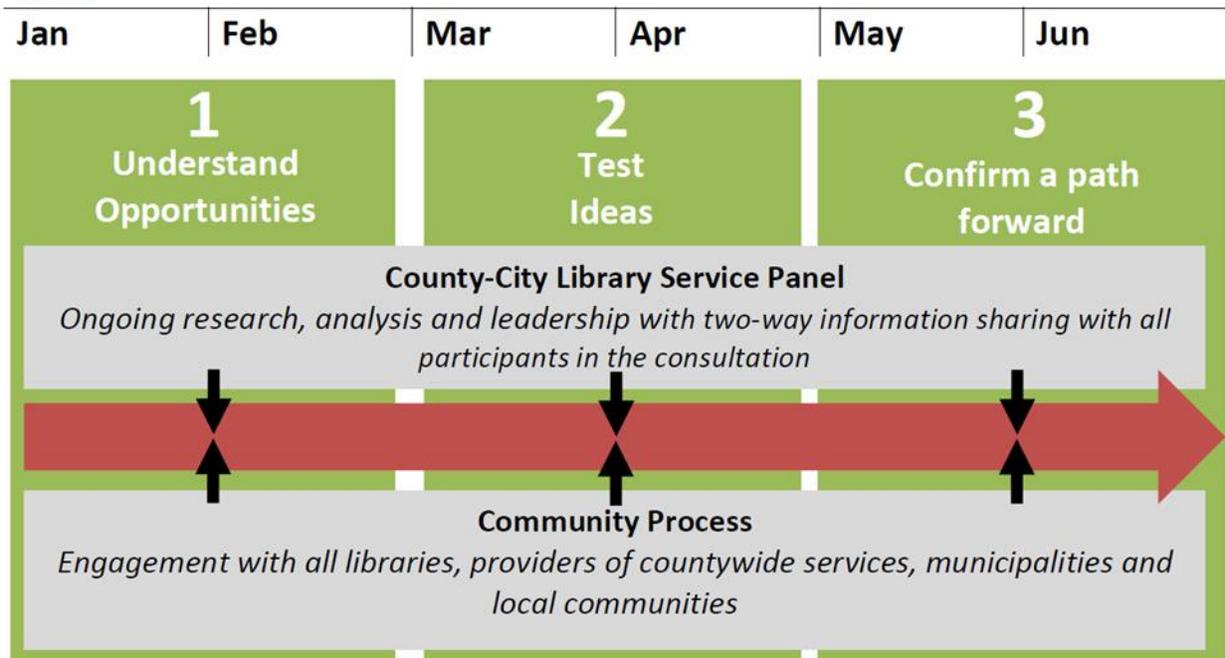
Retrospective of Reports about Library Service in Allegheny County

Since 1950 more than a dozen reports have been issued regarding library service in Allegheny County. Some of these were commissioned by specific agencies (e.g., Allegheny County, the Allegheny Regional Asset District), while others were compiled at the request of a specific library or library-related organization. All of the reports have been used to inform decision-making regarding library resources, funding, and organizational structure. While the recommendations from these reports have been numerous and varied, there are some observations that appear throughout: library service across the county is inconsistent, and local funding is unstable and uneven. In addition, the reports consistently recommend coordinating library service at a county level even if delivered to the public locally. A summary of study recommendations over the years is included as Appendix I.

Library Service in the 21st Century Process

The Libraries in the 21st Century initiative was envisioned as a multipart process, with the County-City Library Service Panel providing research, analysis and leadership along a path parallel to, and connected with, community engagement actions and facilitated discussions by and with the ACLA Member Libraries, their boards, community leaders and library users. The diagram below illustrates the process.

2014



To initiate the overall process, the University of Pittsburgh’s Institute of Politics sponsored a half-day symposium on *The Future of Our Public Libraries* targeted to County Library Directors, Library Board members, municipal officials, elected officials and other community leaders. Over 100 people attended to hear the line up of North American, state and local speakers who presented information on the latest trends in library use, alternative organizational models for delivering library services and the current state of public library service in Allegheny County. The agenda for the symposium, including links to the presentations, is included as Appendix J.

Swerhun Inc. was hired to facilitate a collaborative conversation on the future of library service with the ACLA General Membership and to provide community engagement training to Library Directors. Information and background on Swerhun, Inc. is included as Appendix K .

The engagement process with the libraries and the public was overseen and managed by Nicole Swerhun with the assistance of Bianca Wylie and Yulia Pak. A public website was established for the process (www.countycitylibraries.org) so that information could be shared and feedback solicited. Public reports and documents were posted to the website, and reports and documents for use by the Library Directors and Boards were posted on the ACLA wiki (acla.pbworks.com). All ACLA libraries were encouraged to attend the voluntary training sessions and engage their communities in conversations on county library topics.

Community engagement training sessions were held with ACLA’s Librarian’s Advisory Council (LAC) on October 31, 2013, January 9-10, 2014, March 6-7, 2014 and May 8-9, 2014. Libraries were asked to hold meetings with their communities after the January and March sessions. Members of the Facilitation Team at CLP, previously trained by Swerhun, Inc., as well as

students in the University of Pittsburgh's School of Social Work Facilitation/Negotiation/Mediation Class of Spring 2014 were made available as facilitators and note-takers to any library requiring assistance.

Thirty-four (34) libraries participated in the January community engagement training session, and fourteen (14) community consultation meetings were held. Thirty (30) libraries participated in the March community engagement session, and eleven (11) community consultation meetings were held. More than 300 responses were received via the website throughout the process. The first set of community meetings focused on the vision that people had for their community and how they felt libraries could help achieve that vision. The second set of community meetings involved discussion on what library services could be provided consistently, countywide and what services were important to deliver locally. Notes from the individual library sessions are posted on the public website. Summaries of the libraries' community engagement meetings are included as Appendix L.

Working sessions with the ACLA General Membership were held on February 13, 2014, April 3, 2014, and June 5, 2014. At the first session, participants identified five priority objectives for the Library Service in the 21st Century process. They also identified the importance of understanding where on the continuum between total consolidation and total independence the best library services are provided, and then determining the most cost effective way to provide those services. At the April session, possible models for some collective and/or consistent services to libraries countywide were shared. Two key outcomes from this meeting included a sharpened focus on the value of finding efficiencies among the three organizations with a countywide library mandate (CLP-District Services, ACLA and eiNetwork) and significant interest in connecting more closely to the work of the County-City Library Service Panel (with the Panel immediately providing opportunities to enable this). At the June session, participants identified elements for a shared vision of library service across Allegheny County, identified the most important current and some potential shared services that could improve the patron experience at libraries across the county, and discussed opportunities and options for additional funding. Summaries of the three ACLA General Membership meetings are included as Appendix M.

Members of the County-City Library Service Panel attended each of these General Membership sessions to listen, learn, and consider what the library directors, board members and municipal officials identified as priorities and concerns. Panel members reviewed reports from the sessions and had as an agenda item at each Panel meeting a review of what was observed, heard and read. The Panel received and responded to several letters submitted by library directors, board members and municipal officials commenting on this process. In response to feedback from the ACLA Member Libraries, the Panel strove to post notes from its meetings in a timely fashion, shared on the ACLA wiki all documents received and reviewed, opened its meetings for public observation effective with the April 21 meeting, convened focus groups of local officials to solicit input and feedback at the municipal level, and commissioned an independent audit of the financial projections for eiNetwork, ACLA member libraries and CLP-District Services budget projections.

In response to ideas expressed at the General Membership Sessions, the Panel also organized several sub-committees that focused on service, governance and financial issues along a spectrum of total independence versus total consolidation of the system. Panel members reviewed different options that could be available to libraries if centralization of certain services occurred. Options explored both opt-in/opt-out and mandatory participation models and whether efficiencies could be gained without full participation. Regardless of the model, there will have to be associated revenue to achieve any desired service improvements and efficiencies.

Findings

What the Public Wants: Public Library Services Are More Relevant Than Ever

Ongoing national research of the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project regarding public libraries (<http://www.pewinternet.org/topics/libraries/>) demonstrates that the vast majority of Americans 16 and older say that public libraries play an important role in their communities.

- 95% of Americans ages 16 and older agree that the materials and resources available at public libraries play an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed;
- 95% say that public libraries are important because they promote literacy and a love of reading;
- 94% say that having a public library improves the quality of life in a community;
- 81% say that public libraries provide many services people would have a hard time finding elsewhere.

At the Institute of Politics Symposium *The Future of Our Libraries*, speaker Karen Perry reported on this research, which also documents that people report confidence and positive experiences in their interactions with and assistance from library staff; that reading holds a significant place in the lives of many people; and that people value the role of the public library in providing books and materials, expert assistance and access to technology.

In Allegheny County, people participating in the community engagement process reiterated these priorities, indicating that books, expert assistance and support from library staff, and access to technology were key aspects of how the library currently serves their community. They also look to the library as a community connector, a social hub and a center for quality programs. They identified the need for stable funding, a consistent level of funding for libraries across all communities, opportunities for coordination of services, and uniform policies as areas to explore in the 21st Century Libraries process.

People Value the Library Most For:

Books and Other Materials
Librarian Expertise
Access to Technology
Community Connector
Social Hub
Quality Programming

There are many ways for libraries in Allegheny County to improve services that would create the best patron experience possible across the county and provide a more consistent level of service. Participants in the community engagement process ranked access to technology and staff support for technology use, circulation policies, and access to the broadest possible collection in all formats as services that should be consistent across all libraries in the county. Programming for all ages, community relations and communications, and library collections reflecting local interests were most frequently identified as services that should be customized locally (See Appendix L).

People Looking for Consistency In:

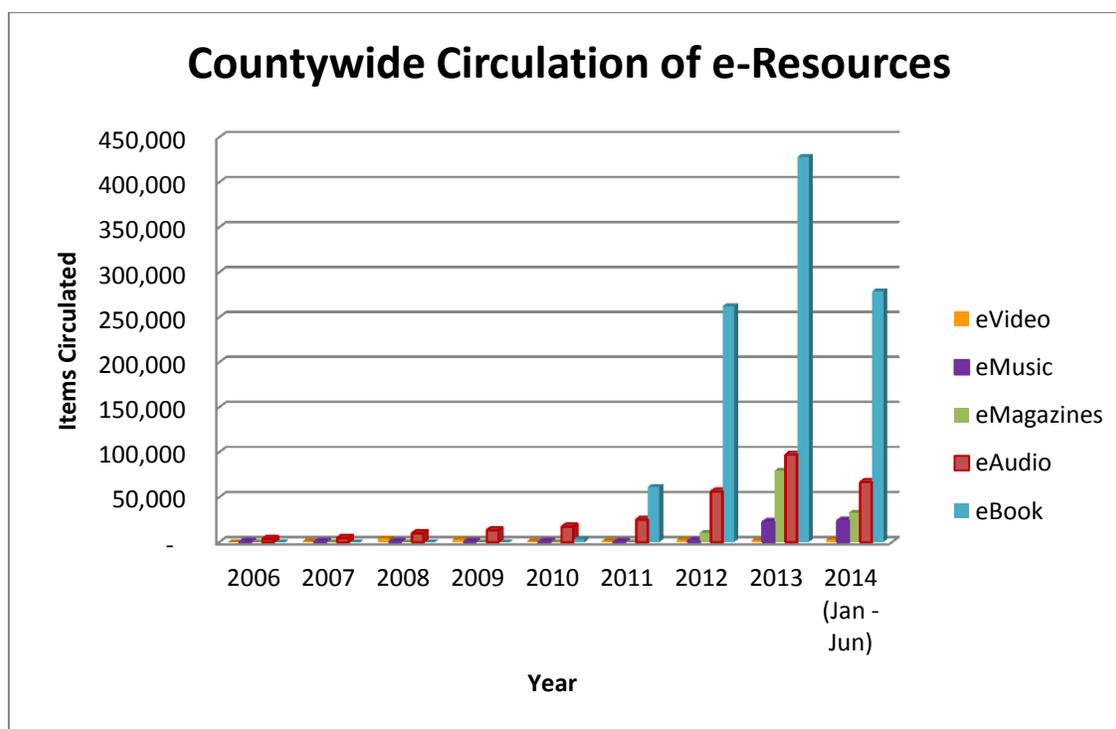
Access to Technology
Staff Support for Technology Use
Circulation Policies
Access to Broad, Current Collections in a
Variety of Formats

Sessions with the library directors and with the ACLA General Membership underscored these priorities. Access to technology, a shared catalog and delivery system to move materials across the county, the knowledge and understanding library staff have for the communities they serve and local support for local services were identified as key to consistent and excellent service across the county. Library directors and board members described the local library's role in community building and its place as an anchor, hub and connector within its service area as important to local quality of life (See Appendix M).

Demand for E-Resources Exploding

An analysis of usage data indicates that demand for e-resources is experiencing extraordinary growth. Circulation of electronic materials, including e-books, e-magazines, e- and streaming audio and video, is increasing exponentially on an annual basis, and now accounts for almost

10% of total circulation. The chart below illustrates the explosive growth in the circulation of e-Resources available at libraries through Overdrive, Freegal, Hoopla, OneClick, and Zinio.



Use of wifi within library buildings also has been increasing dramatically. Even with the growth in accessing resources electronically, the volume of items that move among the county libraries each year through the shipping and delivery system in response to borrower requests continues to rise incrementally with over four million items shipped. Numbers for other traditional library services like materials borrowed, library visits, program attendance and numbers of cardholders continue to hold steady across the county. The numbers indicate that library services continue to be very relevant to the people of Allegheny County in both traditional and more modern ways. Usage statistics by library are included as Appendix N.

What 21st Century Libraries Demand: Technology, Education Support & Focus on Community Priorities

There is no question that traditional library services such as borrowing books, literacy support and the expertise of reference librarians are still very important and highly valued. At the same time people are demanding greater access to technology and electronic content. Libraries also are playing critical roles in support of formal and informal education, job and career development, health and wellness, and financial literacy. With intentional and coordinated efforts in these areas, libraries have an opportunity to significantly impact the strength and vitality of Allegheny County.

Shifts in Technology and User Behavior:

The proliferation of portable devices, whether e-readers, smart phones, or tablet computers, is creating a greater demand for access to resources in digital formats and the ability to access materials remotely. At the same time, those without their own devices must still turn to the library for access to computers in order to apply for jobs, access social service agencies, or connect to other information. Increasingly, information and services are becoming available through electronic access alone.

Shifts in Educational Priorities:

Standards for learning and learning behaviors continue to evolve. A significant shift toward connected learning is occurring where people of all ages, particularly the young, are learning more through hands-on experience in areas of interest. People are gaining knowledge, skills and expertise by actively producing, creating, and experimenting with information through technology and other resources in a much more collaborative way. Libraries are adapting services and programs to provide opportunities like maker spaces, community forums around important topics, or incorporating use of tablets and apps into children's storytimes to connect people with learning in these new ways.

A 21st Century Library thus demands a strong technology infrastructure to support the devices and services that enable residents to access the content they want and need whenever and wherever they are. It requires a seamless system that easily allows a library user to travel among multiple physical and virtual locations to borrow materials, retrieve information, attend programs, and manage accounts while still ensuring that the local user, who relies exclusively on the services of a single community library, can get everything he or she needs through that neighborhood location. A 21st Century Library connects people of all ages within and across communities and areas of interest to resources and experiences that support learning and inspire action. It relies upon a staff that is knowledgeable about resources, technology, reading and people, can focus on the single individual or community at large as needed, and has the skills to connect county residents with the services that they require.

With these shifts come targeted opportunities for libraries to positively impact their communities:

- Early childhood programs throughout our community that encourage language and literacy experiences in all of our youngest residents, enhancing brain development and helping them go to school ready to learn;
- Productive out-of-school activities that keep young people engaged in learning and focused on positive behaviors to secure a bright, successful future;
- Access to job search resources and programs as well as opportunities for workforce skill development to ensure job readiness;

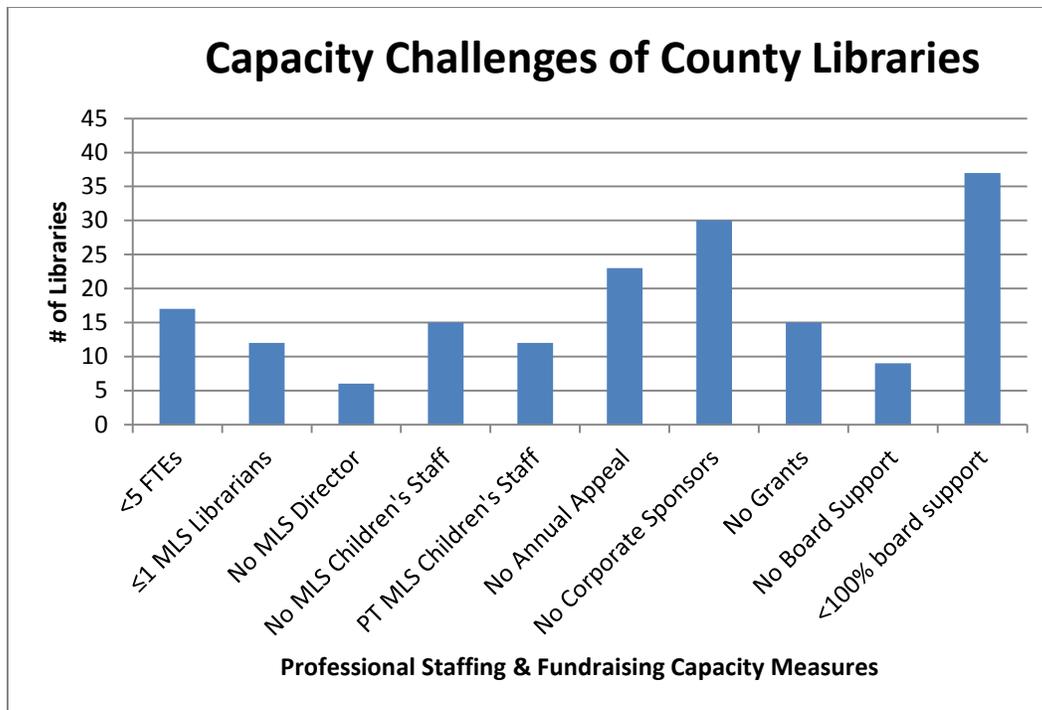
- Digital literacy and technology proficiency to effectively navigate new and emerging information tools;
- Formal and informal learning support, especially through enhanced technology and remote learning opportunities;
- Support for information-driven, community-based problem solving

Service Standards and Capacity Issues Challenge Libraries

The State Library Code and regulations define service standards for federated systems in Pennsylvania. Currently, only 17 out of the 45 ACLA Member Libraries meet those standards in their entirety. Standards are included as Appendix O. Data regarding compliance with State standards by Member Libraries is included as Appendix P. It should be noted that noncompliance by individual libraries jeopardizes State funding to the System as whole.

Unlike library systems in other regions, Allegheny County's libraries benefit from supplemental funding through RAD and table gaming revenue. It would be logical to infer that such funding would result in a higher level of service than elsewhere in the Commonwealth. Yet, even with those additional resources, the level of library service in Allegheny County is inconsistent, and many libraries are still struggling to achieve and maintain standards. And importantly, the State standards may not adequately address the current needs of the community. The public is calling to not only maintain but improve levels of service. Member Libraries of ACLA themselves have proposed higher level standards (See Appendix Q). They also proposed service standards for communities considering establishing a new library in order to ensure that library service remains consistently at that higher level (See Appendix R). To date, those proposals have not been adopted and implemented.

The Panel recognizes that Allegheny County is home to many strong libraries, but collectively, the System is underperforming. Significant capacity gaps exist that make meeting standards even more of a challenge. The capacity of county libraries was reviewed in some detail in consideration of Staffing (paid FTE staff; MLS qualifications) (See Appendix S); Youth Services (dedicated Children's librarians with or without MLS); and Fundraising (annual appeals, corporate support, grant writing, and board support). Derived from specific surveys of the Member Libraries and from State reports submitted by the libraries, the data shows a wide variation in capacity among the Member Libraries.



Note: MLS refers to the Masters in Library Science degree and is the professional certification for librarians.

Yet, regardless of the level of local capacity in county libraries, each library director has not only delivery of service responsibilities but all the administrative responsibilities as well (managing boards, budgets, contracts, facilities, HR, community and municipal relationships, etc.). These demands can interfere with many local libraries’ ability to focus on public service and meet ever-increasing public demands. This tension is not new. The inconsistency in capacity and local resources has been noted in consecutive reports dating as far back as the 1950s.

Funding Challenges: Major Deficits Loom

Public libraries have historically relied on government funding, especially local support, to fund their operations. Since the days of Andrew Carnegie and the early establishment of public libraries in America, the community held the responsibility of funding its libraries primarily through tax revenues to ensure the public had access to a wide range of information for their personal education, development and enrichment. Government sources typically account for nearly 90% of all library operating revenues on an annual basis; however, libraries across the nation have been experiencing significant funding constraints resulting from the economic recession and pressures in sustaining government support. Libraries in Allegheny County are no different.

In 2012, a total of \$55 million was spent on libraries in Allegheny County. While significant in total, a review of individual budgets reveals great disparity in funding levels because of the revenues available to each library. Levels of local government support of individual libraries are very diverse due to fluctuating revenue streams and competing priorities. Recent discussions

with municipal officials indicate that securing local funds in the future will become increasingly difficult due to escalating local obligations. Currently, funding for libraries in Allegheny County ranges from \$.16 to \$42.39 per capita with some municipalities providing no support at all. As a result, levels of service differ greatly among all libraries across the County. Yet, all Allegheny County libraries must serve all residents regardless of the level of local support provided. This mandate is a current requirement for receipt of State funds.

The Regional Asset District allocates resources from ½ of the extra 1 percent sales tax authorized in Allegheny County to the regional assets such as parks, libraries, museums, cultural institutions, the Zoo, the Aviary, etc. Since RAD's establishment in 1994, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and the Allegheny County Library Association have been designated as two of the nine "contractual assets" by RAD that receive funds on a multi-year basis. Annual RAD increases are dependent on growth in sales tax receipts and competition from other assets applying for funds. The breakdown of 2012 revenue sources (See Appendix T) shows that funding from the Allegheny Regional Asset District (RAD) makes up 44% of all revenue sources that support library service in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County (\$24 million). Additional revenue sources include local government sources (24%); other local sources like fines, fees, and fundraising (18%); State Aid (10%); and table gaming revenues from activity at the Rivers Casino (2%).

RAD funding for county libraries has been growing incrementally with increases totaling \$2.5 million (11% increase) since 2008; however, State funding for libraries across Pennsylvania has decreased 34% since 2008-2009. Since that time, state funding for libraries in Allegheny County has declined by \$2.3 million.

Funding for Individual Libraries Varies Dramatically

As the designated County Library for Allegheny County, CLP is a separate contractual asset with RAD and receives a direct funding allocation from them. CLP also receives additional classes of state aid for its responsibilities as the District Library Center, County Library, and Statewide Resource Center. Additionally, it receives funding from the City of Pittsburgh through a special City Library Tax.

Libraries in Allegheny County represent a variety of governance structures, including those housed as departments within municipal governments, partners of school districts, nonprofit organizations with 501(c)(3) status, and multi-municipal libraries (Appendix U). With such variety in governance structures, funding structures vary widely as well. With the exception of CLP, libraries in Allegheny County receive funding through ACLA from the Allegheny Regional Asset District (RAD) based upon a mutually agreed upon formula, and from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Some libraries, but not all, receive funding from their local municipality(ies) through a unique arrangement with whatever entity has legal responsibility for their funding (See Appendix V).

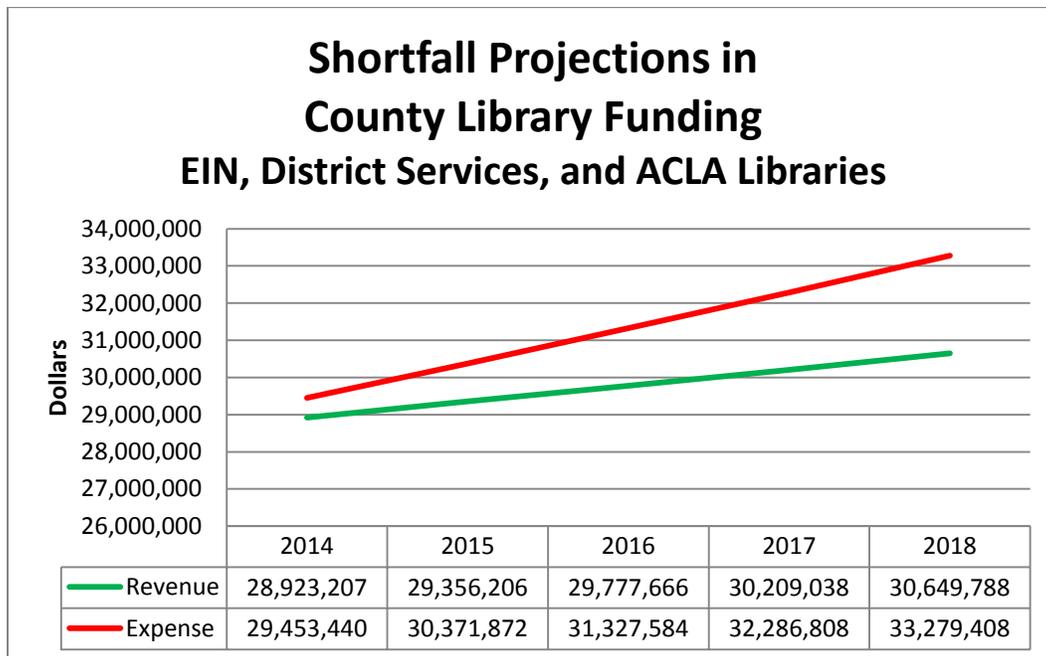
Countywide Library Services at Risk: Projected Cumulative Shortfall of \$7.8 Million by 2018

As the three entities responsible for providing countywide services to libraries in Allegheny County, CLP-District Services, ACLA, and eiNetwork developed budget projections for specific services as well as for all local library operations for the next five years (See Appendix W).

The projections show that deficits will begin as early as 2015, and that the gaps grow precipitously with each passing year. By 2018, the projections show a shortfall totaling \$2.6 million. Adding up the projected deficits in each year, the cumulative deficit by 2018 would be \$7.8 million.

Projected Deficits by 2018

CLP-District Services	\$299,660
ACLA and All County Libraries	\$2,151,773
eiNetwork	\$205,332



The independent auditing firm of Sisterson & Co. LLP was engaged to review the financial information and provide the Panel with an opinion as to whether the projections as presented were sound. Sisterson & Co.’s report (See Appendix X) concluded that the projections did not contain any calculation errors; that they were based on reasonable assumptions for each individual line item; and that they represented a realistic outlook regarding the results of future operations for the three organizations. The report notes that some of the assumptions used may be considered somewhat optimistic (RAD, Universal Service/E-rate, Private Revenue), which, if

actual results for these items are less than projected, would result in operating deficits even greater than those reflected in the original projections.

With State funds declining for District Center and System functions, CLP has had to supplement funding for some of the countywide services to cover the shortfalls, and ACLA has had to seek private grant support. eiNetwork, which is chiefly funded by the RAD and E-rate reimbursements, also has had to use money from its fund balance to cover shortfalls. These gaps continue to grow and must be addressed.

The Sisterson & Co. report confirms that library service in Allegheny County will be facing serious challenges in the coming years if funding issues are not addressed. It is clear that RAD and State revenues are not going to grow at the level needed to address the increasing costs of these services over time. Current services like technology infrastructure, e-resources, and shipping & delivery that have been identified as priorities by both the public and library directors will be at risk without additional funding. Beyond the ability to sustain current countywide services is a strong desire to improve the overall quality of service across the county that also will require an influx of new revenue. It is not enough to maintain current levels of service. CLP and ACLA should be striving to improve library services across the county. Yet, based on findings in the Sisterson report, looking to RAD, State or local government sources to provide additional resources may be unrealistic, and alternative sources must be explored.

A Deeper Look at Centralization of Services: Service and Governance Impacts

Panel members formed several subcommittees to explore specific areas where efficiencies might be gained and associated legal and financial implications. One group reviewed potential cost estimates for centralizing certain services like cataloging and various human resource and financial functions. Another group explored the costs associated with creating a combined entity to manage all countywide library service functions. Yet another group reviewed the legal and governance issues of creating that combined entity.

Services (HR, Finance, Collections & Cataloging)

Some Panel members engaged in a discussion about human resource functions (uniform position descriptions, pay equity, healthcare benefits, pensions, portability, and professional development) and financial services (accounting, audits, reports) and how standardization and coordination of these services might positively benefit libraries and provide efficiencies. Many libraries would benefit from such services, and some type of arrangement for many of these functions might be set up for libraries to opt in.

Another group of Panel members engaged in a discussion about Cataloging and Collection Management and reviewed some preliminary cost estimates for different scenarios that included centralizing one or more aspects of book selection, ordering, cataloging, and processing. This is an area that should be explored further because doing so will likely result in operational efficiencies and improved search response for the public.

Panel members also reviewed a variety of services that are either currently provided countywide or could be provided countywide and how different scenarios might impact overall costs.

Legal Issues to Create a Single, Combined Entity to Manage Countywide Library Services

A group of Panel members reviewed the trust agreement that governs CLP as a Public Trust and the Articles of Incorporation and By Laws governing ACLA and eiNetwork as 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations. It is possible for two or more non-profit organizations to merge or for two or more charitable trusts to merge, but there is no statutory provision to merge a non-profit organization and a trust. While complicated, any process to create a single entity to manage countywide library service should be explored.

Libraries Must Achieve Highest Levels of Efficiency and Effectiveness

Limited resources demand operational efficiency and consistency.

In many ways, libraries in Allegheny County already demonstrate an efficient service delivery model. They have long served as an exemplar for countywide cooperation and collaboration. Over the past 20 years, the following accomplishments have occurred:

- The collections of all ACLA libraries are housed in one, centralized, easily searchable catalog through eiNetwork.
- A single user database enables cardholders of any one ACLA library to borrow and return materials to any of the other libraries in the county.
- eiNetwork deploys and maintains all of the 2,340 public and staff computers and requisite technology infrastructure for all libraries in the county.
- A centralized shipping and delivery system operated by CLP moves library materials among all 70 library locations in the county.
- ACLA libraries purchase e-resources collectively since these items do not reside on a physical shelf in any particular library.
- Access is now available to over 25 subscription databases and five downloadable/streaming services from library computers and remotely to anyone in the county with a library card.
- Mobile Services is coordinated centrally and delivered countywide to Headstart programs and seniors with access challenges.

Even with these successful examples of cooperation, many other opportunities exist to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness in the future. A continuum between total independence and total consolidation was developed early on in discussions with the ACLA General Membership to try to discern where on the continuum the best services to the patrons could be provided. Although merging all Allegheny County Libraries into one consolidated entity does not appear to have widespread support, combining the three entities that have countywide responsibilities, that is CLP-District Services, ACLA and eiNetwork, is widely encouraged and would add efficiencies to the system and help eliminate duplication in delivery of services. The sub-committee of the Panel that reviewed legal considerations for such a merger determined that,

although the process to do so is complex, it is a possibility. A document describing the legal considerations of a potential merger process is included as Appendix Y.

Both the Panel and library directors have identified multiple areas where potential centralized countywide services could positively benefit libraries and library users, as well as provide efficiencies, including collection services, cataloging/processing, technology support, consistent policies, trained youth services corps, human resources, marketing, fundraising and finance. This preliminary investigation into providing new shared services on either a mandatory basis or as an “opt-in” model has great potential and will require additional analysis. Unless there is associated revenue for this work, it will be difficult to make a meaningful difference in service improvements and efficiencies, which is what the public and Member Libraries would like to achieve.

There is an urgent need to identify potential funding sources to protect and enhance what is a critical investment in the people and communities of Allegheny County. But, before new funding can be secured, existing funding must be optimized, and libraries must be able to demonstrate that they are operating as efficiently as possible, both individually and collectively.

Conclusions

The review and analysis described in this report leads the Panel to conclude that there is inherent tension within the culture surrounding libraries in Allegheny County:

1. There is a demand for more and better library services, but there is less funding available to support these services.
2. There is a desire for more resources to support library service, but libraries must face the reality that additional resources are unlikely unless libraries can show that collectively they are operating as effectively and efficiently as possible.
3. There is a desire for strong central services to support all libraries but reluctance to release any local control of library service.

This tension is heightened by the fact that under the current model some municipalities, even though they are able, provide no direct support for library service. Residents may be reluctant to provide any additional resources for libraries until all municipalities in Allegheny County are supporting library service at a fair and equitable rate.

Recommendations

Based upon these conclusions, and in order to ensure efficient, effective, quality library service to all, the County-City Library Service Panel makes the recommendations listed below for consideration by the CLP and ACLA Boards. These recommendations, taken as a whole, constitute an action plan for the most effective provision of library service in the 21st Century within Allegheny County.

1. Establish mandatory standards for library service in Allegheny County.

- a. Identify the improvements needed to raise service levels to meet mandatory standards countywide.
 - b. Through an independent consultant, project the additional funding necessary for the delivery of mandatory service levels at every library countywide while ensuring no community experiences a decline in service.
2. In order to maximize the efficiencies of centralized services, combine Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh-District Services, the Allegheny County Library Association, and eiNetwork into one integrated entity responsible for the provision of agreed upon required centralized services for all public libraries in Allegheny County, and for supporting compliance with mandatory service standards.
 - a. Model financial benefits and implications as well as the optimal organizational structure of a single, combined entity
3. Establish the conditions that permit interested local libraries to opt into certain additional non-mandatory, centralized services or to become members of the central integrated system while permitting libraries that wish to remain autonomous the ability to do so.
4. Allocate Regional Asset District funds and applicable funds from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to support required centralized services provided through the integrated entity.
5. Identify and secure new funding sources for library service in Allegheny County that ensure mandatory levels of service are provided countywide while, at the same time, ensure that local municipal funding is equitable and fair.

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