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Public library funding disparities: What can be done?

This article is intended to inform the Iowa library community about significant disparities in public library funding across Iowa and suggest possible remedies.

How are public libraries funded?

Public libraries in Iowa are established by city ordinance and receive funding to serve their city's residents from the city's General Fund. This funding is raised by levying property taxes. In Iowa there is a cap on the amount a city may levy for the General Fund of \$8.10 per \$1,000 assessed property valuation. The majority of Iowa cities are at this limit. New funds come only from increased valuation of property or from special levies.

Iowa public libraries receive financial support from counties for providing library service to rural residents. Public libraries are funded from the county's Rural Services Fund. The maximum levy for Rural Services is \$3.95 per \$1,000 of assessed property value in the unincorporated areas.

Like counties, cities without a public library contract with a local public library to provide library service to their residents. The funding comes from the city's General Fund as described earlier.

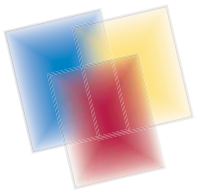
Both city and county support of public libraries is mandated by Iowa Code 256.69. A tax of at least \$.0675 per \$1,000 assessed property valuation must be levied by each county and city for the purpose of library support. The \$.0675 per \$1,000 is an inadequate minimum. No public library in Iowa could keep its doors open if it were funded at this level.

What are the disparities?

Typically, two methods are used to measure public library funding: per capita and cents per \$1,000 assessed property value. To figure a library's per capita funding from its city, divide the city's annual appropriation to the library by the population of the city. For example if the appropriation is \$20,000 and the population is 1,000, divide \$20,000 by 1,000 and the per capita library income from the city is \$20. Funding from contracting cities is figured the same way. With county funding, divide the county's total appropriation for library funding and divide it by the rural population of the county.

Public library funding measured in cents per \$1,000 assessed property value indicates how much the city or county is funding library service based on property value. Fortunately, both per capita and cents per \$1,000 have already been calculated and the statistics are available on the State Library Web site.

The disparities in public library funding across Iowa are illustrated by the following statewide averages using fiscal year 2006 data (the most recent at time of publication):



Per Capita

- \$31.90 – the statewide average city funding for public libraries
- \$13.15– the statewide average county funding for public libraries

Cents per \$1,000 Assessed Property Value

- \$1.17 – the statewide average city funding for libraries
- \$0.21 – the statewide average county funding for libraries

Why are the disparities a problem?

Put simply, it is not equitable or “fair” for one group of Iowans to pay one rate for library service while another group gets the same service for a substantially discounted rate. The Iowa Commission of Libraries believes that all Iowans should provide equitable financial support for library service.

More important than fairness, adequate funding is essential for providing high quality library service – the kind of service all Iowans deserve. If some government bodies are funding library service at discounted rates, it affects the quality of service a library is able to provide. Inadequate funding results in libraries that:

- are open only a limited number of hours
- can’t offer a wide range of up-to-date books and other resources
- may not be able to offer special services for children and teens
- have outdated computers and other technology
- are not handicapped accessible
- pay low staff salaries leading to high turnover and customer service problems

What can be done to address the funding disparities?

The Iowa Commission of Libraries, the State Library’s policy-making board, passed the following resolution at their August 9, 2005 board meeting and confirmed it on August 9, 2006:

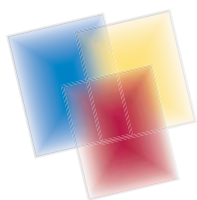
“The Iowa Commission of Libraries strongly endorses the principle of adequate compensation for library services to all Iowans. Toward that end, the Commission encourages library boards to adopt policies regarding contracts for library services that assure equitable tax support for libraries by all jurisdictions.”

The Commission respects the authority of Iowa public library boards to decide whether to contract with a county or city without a library for a particular funding amount. The Commission also wishes to support public library boards that decide to pursue equitable funding from counties and contracting cities.

Suggestions for addressing funding disparities are below:

- Identify what more your library could do for the community if it were equitably funded from your city, county and contracting cities.
- Compile the funding statistics that pertain to your library.
- Discuss funding disparities at a library board meeting.
- Be aware that the Open Access program allows a local public library board to decide not to loan items to residents of a jurisdiction which is contracting with a library(s) at a rate that the board deems to be inequitable (item 3G in the agreement). (The library must notify the State Library, in writing, of its intent and its rationale for the decision.)
- Discuss funding disparities with your city manager, city fiscal office, mayor, council members and ask for their support.
- Make sure counties and cities without libraries are aware they are required by Iowa Code to arrange for library services.
- Make sure your own city and cities without libraries know about the Special Library Levy – for details, see <http://www.statelibraryofiowa.org/ld/funding-info/sp-levy>.
- Make sure contracts for library services from counties and cities without libraries are written.
- Review these contracts annually and use funding statistics to make the case for better funding for your library.
- Ask the city for their support and participation when approaching counties and contracting cities for library funding.





Read. And Discuss this Book.
*Splendid Solution: Jonas Salk and the
 Conquest of Polio*

Footnotes January-February 2007

All Iowa Reads unveils new Web site on polio in Iowa: Share your stories

Online book discussion also planned

The 2007 All Iowa Reads selection, *Splendid Solution: Jonas Salk and the Conquest of Polio* by Jeffrey Kluger may jog people's memories of the epidemics before the development of the polio vaccine.

As part of the 2007 program, the Iowa Center for the Book is collecting stories from Iowans about what they remember about the impact of polio and the development of the polio vaccine. There are already several stories on the Web site and people are encouraged to add theirs at www.iowapoliostories.org.

The following is an excerpt from State Library staffer Gerry Rowland's story:

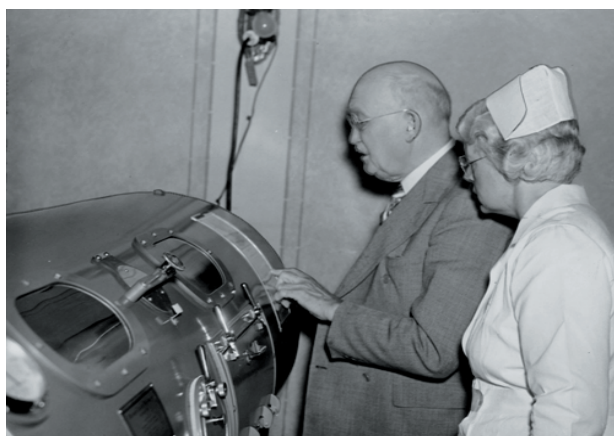
"Fortunately, I have no memory of the polio attack. As far as I know, I suffered no permanent damage. Over the years, I have heard the story of my parents' heroic efforts to save me from this dreaded disease, and my appreciation for their loving care has increased as my understanding of the peril I faced has deepened."

Photos from the 1950's, like those here, are also available to view. Anyone who has pictures depicting the epidemic are encouraged to share them.

In April, an online book discussion of *Splendid Solution* will begin. More information about that will be available later.



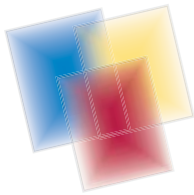
Physical therapist working with polio victims at Younker's Memorial Rehabilitation Center, Iowa Methodist Hospital. Circa early 1950s.



New Iron Lung

Dr. W. L. Bierring, State Health Commissioner, and Supt. Florence Wiesland read directions for operation of a new iron lung. Iowa Methodist Hospital. Circa early 1950s.

Both photos are courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines. Photos credited to the State Historical Society of Iowa (Des Moines) are not to be copied and reused for other purposes without the permission of that organization. (515) 281-8976.



Important information regarding Public Library Accreditation application/report form due 1/31/07

The list of libraries that need to submit the Application/Report Form for Accreditation is on the State Library Web site: <http://www.statelibraryofiaowa.org/ld/accr-and-standards>.

Accreditation is based on the 75 standards in the 4th edition of "In Service to Iowa: Public Library Measures of Quality." The information provided in these reports will allow the State Library and the LSAs to more accurately track the progress of libraries in meeting each of the 75 measures in "In Service to Iowa." Also available on the Web site are:

- In Service to Iowa, 4th ed. The 75 standards listed in "In Service to Iowa" are the basis for Enrich Iowa's Direct State Aid program.
- Request for Supporting Documentation FY07. Documents and photographs required to demonstrate that a public library meets certain accreditation requirements.
- Application Form (Word). Accreditation Application/Report Form 2007 as a Word document.
- Cover Letter, Standards and Accreditation 2007. Describes the requirements and benefits of the Standards and Accreditation program.
- Tier Status and Measures Not Met. Tier status and measures not met for standards

New Requirement

All Tier 1 and Tier 2 public libraries must have a current (NO OLDER THAN 1/31/04) set of by-laws (Measure #7) and policies (Measure #8) on file at the State Library. (A copy of the Library Ordinance will not meet Measure #7. For sample bylaws, see the Iowa Library Trustee's Handbook, 2003, page 97.) These documents are due 1/31/07 (request an extension if needed). One copy of the information should also be mailed to the Library Service Area.

Accreditation of Public Libraries

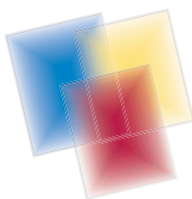
There are currently 312 accredited public libraries. To recognize this achievement, each accredited library received a certificate and a higher rate of compensation through Enrich Iowa. News releases were also sent to local media outlets. The list of accredited libraries is on the State Library Web site.

Background

The State Library is required by the Code of Iowa to document the condition of public library service in Iowa. In order to fulfill that requirement and to provide public libraries with a tool for identifying strengths and areas for improvement, the State Library requires that public libraries submit accreditation reports. Uses of the report are numerous, benefiting the local library as well as the library community. The application/report form:

- Is the mechanism for applying for accreditation;
- Benchmarks the status of local library service; and
- Determines eligibility and funding tier status for Enrich Iowa.

If you have questions about Standards, Accreditation or the Enrich Iowa Tier for public libraries, contact Gerry Rowland, 1-800-248-4483 or 515-281-7573, or e-mail Gerry.Rowland@lib.state.ia.us.



*Be sure to check out the State Library's
Web site often for the latest news!*

Cameron elected president of CSLP

State Library Youth Services Coordinator, Mary Cameron, became president of the Collaborative Summer Library Program (CSLP) on December 1. She was elected during the organization's annual meeting in April, 2006. Her term of office was to start June 1, 2007, however, the former president retired and Cameron's term began in December and will last until June 1, 2008.

CSLP was initiated in 1987 by the regional libraries in Minnesota. In 1990, North Dakota and South Dakota joined, and Iowa became a member in 1995. Today, 42 states are involved.

State representatives attend an annual meeting each spring that lasts three to four days. There, decisions are made regarding themes, art work, public service announcements and incentives.

"There's a lot of discussion and sometimes disagreements," said Cameron, "but we eventually compromise. The bottom line is that all states want quality summer reading programs and materials."



Certification Update

Congratulations to the following public library staff certified for the first time through the State Library's Iowa Certification Program for Public Librarians.

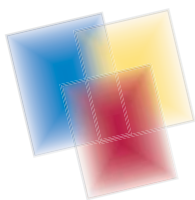
Jill Bachus, Wheatland
Stacey Buick, Malvern
Karen Campbell, Lewis
Kristin Clark, Clarksville
Lola DeWall, Pocahontas
Scott Dermont, Ames
Valerie Donnell, Ames
Dawn Hayslett, Ames
Hope Hofland, Hospers
Darla Johnson, Plover
Loraine Kalvig, Grafton
Julie Larson, Titonka

Terry Madison, Creston
Glenda Mulder, Laurens
Shelly Nelson, Gowrie
Jason Paulios, Iowa City
Katie Phippen, Stuart
Susan Ponder, Prairie City
Kellen Rehlander, Rake
Teri Rogers, Coralville
Melissa Russell, West Branch
Betty Schmaltz, Bussey
Faye Seidl, Coon Rapids
Denise Smith, Tipton
Abby Sturtevant, Williams



Reminder:

*The meeting minutes of the Iowa Commission of Libraries can be found at
<http://www.statelibraryofiowa.org/about/gov>*



News from around the state

One Book One Siouxland Announces 2nd Annual BIG READ

Library, theatre, and museum officials announced in December that the second annual One Book One Siouxland reading initiative will feature *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

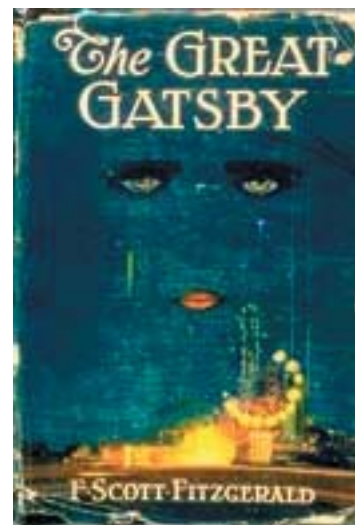
Siouxland is one of 72 communities nationwide selected to receive a 2007 Big Read grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Building on last year's successes, the \$14,000 grant will enable One Book One Siouxland to expand programming and offer additional reading and discussion guides.

From now through mid-March, the 1920s will come alive in Siouxland as participants explore a variety of events, including fashion exhibits, book discussions, film screenings, and more.

One Book One Siouxland partners include the Sioux City and South Sioux City public libraries and the Orpheum Theatre, in conjunction with Morningside College and the Sioux City Public Museum.

According to Sioux City Public Library Director Betsy Thompson, the goals of One Book One Siouxland are to share ideas and build community through the experience of reading and discussing the same novel—the same universal human issues and values—and viewing a film adaptation of the novel. Organizers see the opportunity to advance literacy and build learning partnerships as additional benefits for the community. Visit the One Book One Siouxland website at www.onebookonesiouxland.org for the latest information.

The Big Read, is an NEA initiative designed to restore reading to the center of American culture. In partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and in cooperation with Arts Midwest, The Big Read brings together partners across the country to encourage reading for pleasure and enlightenment.



High speed Internet access in public libraries

Considering that five years ago 80% of the state's public libraries didn't have high speed Internet access, the latest information gathered by SILO program coordinator Alan Schmitz is quite interesting.

497 or 89% use high speed Internet

39 or 7% have high speed Internet available, but are not using it

20 or 4% have no high speed option available.

Retirements and anniversaries

After 30 years working at the Humboldt Public Library, Vivien Hansen has retired. According to library director Nikki Ehlers, "I can't imagine the Humboldt Public Library without our Viv. I depend on her for so many things. We will miss her energy and enthusiasm. No one I know celebrates life more than Vivien."

Carolyn Walz recently celebrated 45 years with the Estherville Public Library. In an article in the Estherville Daily News, Carolyn said she is grateful for how Estherville has backed its public library. "We just have a wonderful community of support," she said. Carolyn has seen many changes over the years. An update to the library in 1993, the move to new technology like computers and the Internet. One thing she says hasn't changed is the looks on children's face when they first open a book or look at a computer. "The kids weren't any different then than they are now," Carolyn said.

