

This workshop summary was written by Nicole Swerhun, Workshop Facilitator, and was subject to the review of participants at the workshop. No suggested edits were received. If you have any questions or comments on this summary, please contact Nicole (nicole@swerhun.com or 416-999-2665) or Maggie McFalls, Community Engagement Coordinator, Office of External and Government Relations, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (feedback@carnegielibrary.org or 412-622-8877). As discussed at the workshop, summaries from all 4 public workshops held during Part 1 of the Community Conversation, as well as website feedback, will be posted on the Library website.

I. WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Terri Wolfe, Library Board member, welcomed the participants and thanked them for coming. Nicole Swerhun, Facilitator began the workshop by again welcoming participants, reviewing the proposed agenda (Attachment 1), and asking all participants to introduce themselves (Attachment 2). Mary Frances Cooper, Deputy Director of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh then delivered a presentation that briefed participants on “where we were”, “where we are”, and “where we’re going”. The presentation is available online at <http://www.clpgh.org/about/future/conversation.htm>. Participants had an opportunity to ask questions of clarification, before moving into a working session that sought feedback on the following questions:

1. Why do you think it is important that the Library is financially and operationally healthy?
2. What do you think are the two biggest challenges to achieving this? What are your suggestions on how to address these challenges?
3. What are the two or three things you value the MOST about Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh?
4. What opportunities do you see for library users and the broader community to play in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the library?

The working session took place both through small table discussions as well as a full room (plenary) discussion. This draft workshop report is intended to reflect the key messages delivered, and is not a verbatim transcript. It includes both the verbal and written feedback received at the workshop.

II. FEEDBACK RECEIVED

1. Why do you think it is important that the Library is financially and operationally healthy?

When participants introduced themselves, the vast majority included a reference to the critical role that the library has played in their life and the valuable contribution the library makes to the local community and the city. Because of these experiences, participants treated this first question as almost a given – of course the library needs to remain financially and operationally healthy. The two themes that emerged from the feedback are

listed here, with additional detail on what participants valued most about the library included in Question 3.

It's important that the Library is financially and operationally healthy because:

- *Libraries are central to the life of educated and cultured communities.* They are a center of culture that facilitates learning, and they also archive and store history. It's an important cultural, historical, and social institution.
- *It needs to continue serving the community in a way that promotes reading and education, and provides computer services.* This is relevant for many populations, from children to elderly communities, as well as the people with a range of incomes, particularly those with less income. Some participants felt the continuation of library services is a necessity, an obligation, a responsibility.

2. What do you think are the two biggest challenges to achieving a Library system that is financially and operationally healthy? What are your suggestions on how to address these challenges?

Participants worked first in small groups to identify challenges, and also discussed suggestions on how to address those challenges. A number of common themes emerged, as listed below.

CHALLENGE	SUGGESTIONS
<p>Limited/Static funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise additional funds and find additional sources. The Library it has relied too long on too few sources. Need to grow the library's base of revenue • Invite/seek corporate sponsorships for individual libraries. The Library could offer to include the sponsoring company's logo on materials (make a "big splash"). • Find dedicated public revenue streams that relate to different constituencies that use libraries, this could include the State Dept of Education (because children use the library), lottery funds (because of elderly users). The feasibility of a tax was raised by a few participants, wondering if people would support it. Suggestion that libraries receive a percentage of the amusement tax. • Gather books from the community and re-sell them. The South Side raised \$500 selling books last month, and other libraries in the country have raised substantially more. Set up a used book store and/or new book shops to expand the revenue stream. • Have a campaign to raise endowments (like at universities). • Set up matching gift collaborations, like several universities do with credit cards (where credit card provider contributes). • Make a more concerted effort to approach foundations. The AARP Foundation was suggested as a source (because so many library clients are elderly). It could be possible to get a grant to support some aspect of the library (e.g. to purchase of books). • Look at revenue sharing with other municipalities. This could happen through a merger or affiliated structure. Ideally this would be with cities that fund libraries more than Pittsburgh is able to.

<p>There's a lack of awareness of the value of the library, especially among non-users</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the marketing of the two-tiered Library membership system. Let people know that basic membership is always free, and let them know about the opportunity to donate more (become a "Platinum" member). • Recognize the libraries are community centers/multi-service centers, and look to affiliate with other similar centers and service-providers in the area (e.g. City of Pittsburgh community centers). • Establish corporate affiliations, where library sites or kiosks are located in retail establishments (e.g. this could happen in/with Giant Eagle, drycleaning stores, pharmacies, etc.). • Collect and sell used items, other than books. The people who really need the library don't have a lot of money, but they do have things. These could be donated and some could be worth a lot of money. • Involve each branch in raising money on its own for their own branch. This could happen through Friends groups. • Recognize the importance of libraries as community centers. Schools have closed, recreation facilities have closed, and libraries are one of the few remaining safe gathering places in the community, especially for children. They're also very positive gathering places. The branches are essential community resources, especially in certain neighborhoods (e.g. Hazelwood, Beechview). Middle class areas already have access to many resources – but other areas do not. • Recognize that libraries are opportunity for people who wouldn't have access to these resources otherwise. Anyone can use the library. • Recognize that we have a moral and ethical obligation to continue Library service to the community. • Use public service announcements (PSAs) and YouTube and to tell stories of what the library means to people – this will start to make the library real to people, and let people know what the Library has to offer. Maybe tap into the pro bono budget of ad agencies. Use the "Save the transit" campaign as a model for the Library to follow. Also tell people about the high library visitorship (especially compared to sports event attendance).
<p>"Cutback mentality"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead of always focusing on "cutbacks", start thinking about changing the service delivery model. Maybe there are other options like kiosks and delivery that could be explored. We need outside the box rather than inside the box thinking.
<p>Focus on raising capital funds should instead be on raising operational funds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on raising money for operations (as opposed to capital campaigns). Return to those donating to the capital campaign and ask if they mind if their dollars are redirected. Consider creating a "Wall of donors" as part of the bigger broader fundraising efforts. • Rather than spending money on redoing libraries, use that money to pay utilities instead.
<p>Living within our means if additional funds don't materialize</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase volunteer involvement, and give volunteers more things to do. Tell a specific branch that the library needs x number of hours of volunteer activity. This may mean we use fewer professional staff and maybe part time employees are not renewed.
<p>Volunteer involvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People want to do something other than shelve books – the Library needs to give volunteers more options. You could even see if architects could volunteer.

Limited public involvement in this process – there should be more people here	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize that some people probably couldn't get here – like children, elderly, people without transportation. Move the meetings to branch libraries. There should be a meeting like this in each branch library. Do more advertising about the needs of the library. We need excellently done public service announcements, YouTube videos, etc. Maybe college students could produce them – give them an incentive.
Due to recent history, there's a lack of confidence in the Library board and executive direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure there is city-wide representation on the Board and ensure the Director has Library qualifications. Gain trust of community by removing prospect of closing any library branch – that will gain our confidence “with a silver stake”.
Lack of transparency in decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board meetings should be open to public – I'd like to see full compliance with sunshine act and “right to know”. This is especially true because they're using public money.
How people in power make decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If our society can spend \$1 trillion keeping our banks afloat, then we should be able to spend a few million keeping the library open. Money shouldn't be an issue when considering the future of the library. People in power need to use money differently. They have power to take money and dedicate it to different uses. They need to stop making decisions without concern for people involved. The bottom line has been driving their concern, but human beings should be.
Library doesn't have a strong vocal constituency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Users need to be more vocal in expressing their demands, and they need to educate and communicate elected officials on the value of the library. We also need to make more effort to involve the leaders of the community in advocating for the Library – people with money, and people with power (e.g. sports).
Libraries can be difficult to access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate between the Library system and the Port Authority to ensure access to libraries.
Lack of faith in economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize that the economy will get better and library funding will get better. If we think this way then maybe we won't be so overwhelmed by the situation. This is a crunch time for everyone.

3. What are the two or three things you value most about the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh?

The experience the library location provides to all ages

- I value that the library involves whole generations, from kids in daycare, to students who need one-on-one training, teaching, and tutoring that a lot schools don't provide, to seniors who have nowhere to go. They walk to the library and have a history they can tell other people. We need to keep the library going.*
- Presence and ease of availability in low income communities throughout the city. Where schools have been closed and recreation facilities also, libraries are among the few positive public gathering places, especially for youth. I value the branch libraries, especially those in poor communities.*

- *Youth mature at the library.* It's a great experience for them, they love to be there. It's one of the "top 5" activities they pick on a regular basis.
- *Going to the library is as important as going somewhere that is an adventure for my kids.* They value and find comfort at the library. They love to play, look at books, talk to staff, they have relationships with staff.
- *Neighborhood libraries are terribly important to community because of the access they provide to seniors, the handicapped, people who are poorer, people who can walk from school to the library and get help with homework.* If suddenly the nearest library is too far – parents will have to make a choice "do I have bus pass so I get to work?" or "does my child have a bus pass to get to the library?"
- *Free, accessible, anonymity (partial), quiet and comfortable place (some libraries).*
- *Hours open (late on weekdays).*
- *The buildings are so inspirational, children's services – getting children to love books.*
- *Great place to study, center of culture.*
- *Neighborhood libraries, books, programs.*
- *I can't imagine neighborhoods without them.*
- *In difficult economic times libraries become invaluable.*

The resources it provides access to

- *I value the way a public library provides access to intellectual value.* Library users are not always looking for a "101" level of experience. A lot of people without academic affiliations come to the library seeking a higher level of discourse. I'm very satisfied with the level of service the library provides in that regard, especially through interlibrary loans and electronic resources. The library draws in a user base of people engaged in a higher level of discourse who otherwise would be without access to these resources. They are a valuable constituency for the library.
- *Selection of materials, including new fiction, best sellers, multimedia (books and movies)*

The staff

- *I value the presence of librarians and staff that go above and beyond the call to work with kids, seniors, anyone that walks through door.*
- *The building is less important/valuable than the staff and services at the branch.* Focus on library resources not the building. Location is more important than the building.
- *Helpful staff, computers, research materials.*

4. What opportunities do you see for library users and the broader community to play in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the library?

Participants focused their discussion on opportunities for the library users and the broader community to:

- Help create a strong relationship between with the Library Board, Library Staff and the community;
- Interact more with elected representatives, including City Council, State Reps, the Mayor, and especially members of the RAD Board;
- Increase their participation and involvement in library community affairs;
- Volunteer more, and do more kinds of volunteer activities;
- Donate things, hold cake sales etc.

Other feedback:

- Librarians should be a part of this process

III. NEXT STEPS

Nicole Swerhun, Workshop Facilitator, wrapped up the meeting by asking participants to please submit any written comments – either today or online until the end of May. She let participants know that the draft workshop report would be distributed to them for review prior to being finalized, and that the final reports from all of the workshops will be available on the Library website. She also encouraged everyone to continue to participate in the Community Conversation process – and hoped to see them during Part 2 in July 2010.

ATTACHMENT 1 – Workshop Agenda

CLP STAGE 1 WORKSHOP

Saturday, May 15

10 am - Noon

Serbian Club, 2524 Sarah Street

- 10:00 am **Welcome**
Terri Wolfe, CLP Board Member
- 10:02 **Introductions & Agenda Review & Introductions**
Nicole Swerhun, Facilitator
- 10:10 **Community Briefing**
Mary Frances Cooper, Deputy Director, CLP
- Questions of clarification*
- 10:45 **Discussion**
1. Why do you think it's important that the Library is financially and operationally healthy?
 2. What do you think are the 2 biggest challenges to achieving a Library system that is financially and operationally healthy? What are your suggestions on how to address these challenges?
 3. What are the 2 or 3 things you value MOST about the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh?
 4. What opportunities do you see for library users and the broader community to play in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the library?
- Any other feedback?*
- 11:55 **Next Steps and Wrap Up**
- Noon **Adjourn**

ATTACHMENT 2 – Participant List

The following participants signed in at the meeting (alphabetical by last name):

Rebecca Altes	Mary Ann McHarg
Nancy Bernard	Linda McIntyre Bobak
Marion Damick	Carylyn Gwyn Moser
Dean Damick	Melanie Myers
Rebecca Denova	Mary Angela Ogg
Jim Denova	Armand Panson
Phyllis Didano	Ann Rodgers
Debby Dodds, CLP Board	Natalia Rudiak, City Council, CLP Board
Jannah Ferrara	Andrew Russell
Andy Gmitter	John G. Scahill
Linda Gmitter	Evan Stoddard
Janet Jai	Debra Thompson
Wanda Jankoski	John Thompson
Kim Katapski	Michelle Traficante, Senator Jay Costa’s Office (& CLP Board)
Mark Kohut	Desiree VanTassel
Bruce Kraus, City Council, CLP Board	Glenn A. Walsh
Andy Kubiczky	Rick Willo
Mary Ellen Leigh	Terri Wolfe, CLP Board
Colin Lengyel	Maureen Young
Paul Little	Greg Zovko, CLP Board
Anna Loney	
Elizabeth Magaletta	

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

Mary Frances Cooper, Deputy Director
Linda Gmitter, Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH)
Sheila Jackson, Assistant Director, Main Library Services
Maggie McFalls, Community Engagement
Mary Ann McHarg, Branch Manager, Hazelwood Branch
Karen Meharra, Manager, Volunteer Services
Mary Monaghan, Assistant Director, Neighborhood Libraries
Karlyn Voss, Director, External and Government Relations
Trina Walker, Director, Communications and Creative Services

Facilitation Team

Nicole Swerhun, Facilitator
Lloyd Corder, CorCom, Inc.
Rami Bensasi, CorCom, Inc.