

*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](mailto: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](mailto: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.*

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## **I. WORKSHOP OVERVIEW**

Joan Gulley, Library Board member, welcomed participants and thanked them for coming. Nicole Swerhun, Facilitator, reviewed the proposed agenda (Attachment 1), and asked all participants to introduce themselves (over 24 people attended, see 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?**

Participants identified a number of reasons why they feel it’s important that the Library be financially and operationally healthy, including those listed below. Note that many of these points were raised as people introduced themselves to the room, and several of these points were expanded on during discussion of Question 3 (when participants were asked to describe what they value most about the Library).

Reasons it's important that the Library be financially and operationally healthy:

- So the Library can continue to be used during the day. So users maintain access to the computers for job searches and kids can use the Library after school.
- So that resources can continue to be available, including books, CDs. In particular the value for parents was raised, as was the value of the libraries to schools, and especially for kids after school.
- The Library was identified as the "only thing for the community and for folks with limited resources".
- As one worksheet noted, "No library = death".

**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><b>Attitude – the Library has always been there, so it's taken for granted.</b></p>	<p><i>"I heard someone say that 'the library is like my refrigerator. I take it for granted. I get up every day and assume it will be there'."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>There's a need on the Library's part to do constant education on what library the does, what is offered.</b> Channel 13 is our education station, use it. Also use PSAs – create a 15 second ad on how our leaders have used libraries (e.g. Washington, Abraham, Obama). Focus on their use of books and love of knowledge – it just needs to be a short piece on real people's lives.</li> <li>• <b>It's important to stay connected to elected officials.</b> There needs to be better/more improved communication with the City, County, Corporations and School District Elected officials who control funding and/or legislation that enables additional funding. We have the numbers of people we need to apply effective pressure. More people use the Library than go to see our sports teams. In communities that support libraries, elected officials must also support those libraries.</li> <li>• <b>Tell people about library use in other countries,</b> for example, students in Japan stand in line to get into Library. We are in competition with China, India, they appreciate education. There are more graduates with honors in India than students in America.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lack of awareness of what the Library provides</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Library has to try harder to communicate opportunities it provides.</b> The Library is under-used because people don't know all that can be done there. For example, libraries and books have been critical to our leaders – could communicate this better.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Getting citizens to mobilize</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Citizen advocacy is key.</b> We need to get more people to understand their role in advocating with elected officials. People need to call, write, email, and tell their friends and neighbors to do the same. "I use the library, the library is important to me because x, y and z." Last year it was the elected officials that came to the rescue. Had the City not stepped forward, and the State, then we wouldn't be here.</li> </ul>

Changing the Library service model – people are wedded to a traditional idea of what a public library has been since it was created

*“It’s hard for the public and staff to change what we’ve grown accustomed to.”*

- **We need to see if it is possible that service models exist that would have an even greater impact.**
- **We could come up with a pilot program for a new model** and take it to an area of the city that doesn’t have library service currently. We’d hope it would be successful and then we could apply it elsewhere. Though one participant did also note that they wouldn’t want a situation where revenues are taken from an existing library to support a pilot project in a neighborhood that doesn’t have a library.
- **Our library is our recreation center – so means there’s an important partnership opportunity with the City.**
- **We need to remember that the primary mission of the library is to provide books and materials to the public on a loan basis** (or for use in the Library) and there’s value to that.
- **Today everything is digitized – written and audio.** We’re changing service models around that, yet at same time physical structure is so important to the community – so we need to balance how information is delivered today with the continued need for brick and mortar.

Identifying new ways to use technology

- **Maybe the Library needs help on ideas on how to be a leader in the future of the digital library.** For example, could we connect with the people at Google who are thinking of having a national library “in the sky? Wouldn’t it be great if Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh was that library?
- **Magazines** – maybe there’s a way they can be seen online and that could save the library some money. Also, maybe we need a digital community session?

Lack of funding

- **Diversify the Library’s funding base.** The budget is so reliant on RAD and the State. We need to secure additional public funding through alternative methods. For example, get part of the Amusement Tax or set-up a special Library district (like Ohio) or dedicate a portion of an increased income tax or property tax or sales tax to libraries. One participant felt that a tax would be extremely difficult to get, and they thought the Library would need complete transparency to get that.
- **Cleveland receives more Library funding per capita than Pittsburgh. Find how what their elected officials do and how an PGH officials can model that.**
- **Get school district to direct revenue stream to libraries** because of students use it – they are open to it.
- **Gaming revenues** could be source of steady stream of funding.
- **Dedicate a portion of revenues earned from major league sports teams** to the library.
- **Seek corporate partnerships & sponsorships.** Focus on the importance of the library as a job research center. So many people use computers to do job searches. Corporate America could get this message and then feel some responsibility to contribute.
- **Promote the donor card program more** – a lot of people aren’t aware of it.

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

Participants indicated that they most value:

#### *Online services*

- **“I used to come down to look through the stacks, now I look at book reviews online and search best seller lists on my computer.** I order the book I want online and the Library sends me an email that it’s here. Someone else can even pick it up for me. Books in the Library are nice to look at, but I don’t spend the time browsing the way I used to. Now I browse online.”

#### *Physical space*

- **“The Library is perfect for young people because of the physical space.** Kids see a selection of books – it’s a perfect way to get a lot of books to little kids. It engages kids, Librarians have lap sit and I have time to browse and look for a book – as a mom I need that. I go online for me, but for kids – they need time and space and time to interact.”
- Our after school program uses the library – it’s great because kids that don’t like to read can look around different sections.
- Community gathering place, buildings, access to computers for job hunting. It’s (the Library is) an equalizer, an educational asset, and a force for development.

#### *Resources & Staff*

- All the books, all the movies/music, the whole wide world is mine
- Access to music/video, free, internet availability of audio books, educated/dedicated staff, computer access.

### 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 reinforced the themes raised throughout the workshop, including:

- The importance of not taking the Library for granted;
- Keeping up the interest and pressure on elected officials to support the Library, including writing and calling legislators;
- Bringing new users into the system and using the library more; and
- Thinking out of the box regarding new ways to use and raise money.

## 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

2 – 4 pm

Sheraden Senior Center, 720 Sherwood Ave

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2:00 pm

#### **Welcome**

Joan Gulley, CLP Board Member

2:02

#### **Introductions & Agenda Review & Introductions**

Nicole Swerhun, Facilitator

2:10

#### **Community Briefing**

Mary Frances Cooper, Deputy Director, CLP

*Questions of clarification*

2:45

#### **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?*

3:55

#### **Next Steps and Wrap Up**

4:00

#### **Adjourn**

## **ATTACHMENT 2 – Participant List**

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

Alice Conyers  
Debby Dodds, CLP Board  
Kathy Franczak, CLP Support Pool  
Joan Gulley, CLP Board  
Celine Harkins  
Alena Jackson  
Theresa Kail-Smith, City Council  
Mark Kohut  
Bob Kollar  
Bruce Kraus, City Council, CLP Board  
Ted Medfisch  
Jeff Parker Sr.  
NC Salter  
Michelle Traficante, Senator Jay Costa's office  
Glenn A. Walsh  
Donna Washington

### **Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh**

Mary Frances Cooper, Deputy Director  
Chris Gmitter, CLP Staff  
Sheila Jackson, Assistant Director, Main Library Services  
Maggie McFalls, Community Engagement  
Mary Ann McHarg, CLP Staff  
Karen Meharr, Manager, Volunteer Services  
Mary Monaghan, Assistant Director, Neighborhood Libraries  
Karen Rossi, CLP Staff  
Karlyn Voss, Director, External and Government Relations  
Trina Walker, Director, Communications and Creative Services  
Pat Quinn Winter, Director of Development

### **Facilitation Team**

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