

Ohio Library Partnership Summit
May 21, 2007
Central/Southeast Region Breakout Group Discussion Notes

The Central/Southeast Region breakout group was dynamic and energetic. The group benefited from the fact that several librarians had worked in other states besides Ohio so they brought a different perspective to the discussion. There were also several current and/or past association presidents in the audience who brought unique perspectives and thoughts.

The group agreed that the Ohio Web Library (OWL) and Statewide Resource Sharing were the key components to pursue. But before moving forward some participants felt that a process should be found to focus on the specifics of these components and prioritize them. The group added one additional component, Advocacy. Any plan developed would need to be focused and to that end, the group felt that a strong message with a unified voice would have the most power both with the legislature and the local community. Additionally, it was clear that the group felt that in order to succeed there must be a plan in place to stress life-long learning, from cradle to grave and that libraries, all types of libraries, have a role to play in meeting life-long learning goals. Finally, several participants spoke about the digital divide. It is great to talk about OWL and SWRS, but libraries cannot forget the many who do not have ready access to these resources.

When discussing funding options the group thought creatively and outside of the box. Several options aside from LSTA and state dollars from the legislature were suggested.

The process to be used to obtain the funds to get the components desired also engendered a broad range of options. Thoughts included a cost-benefit analysis like that done by public libraries in Southwest Ohio, an assessment of new communication devices and how they can and will impact library services, and the development of a legislative agenda similar to that in Minnesota. But what the group touched on over and over again was the need for and desire to get to know each other, to work together and to come together as one library community. To that end, many suggested a common lobbyist, one statewide library card, one joint legislative day and either one statewide library organization or one statewide conference where all types of libraries attend. Although school libraries are behind other libraries, the consensus was that if all libraries spoke in one voice, then the needs of school libraries would be strongly articulated.

Each library needs to begin within their own community. All types of libraries within a distinct community and within a county should be talking to one another and initiating partnerships and collaborative opportunities. The association presidents talked about putting together a mini-summit among themselves later in the summer to see how they could collaborate and cooperate. In general the group felt that a structure was needed to form a steering committee that would work to achieve the goals arising from the summit. The energy and excitement was still present as participants left the room. And, it is hoped that the momentum will continue.