



## LIBRARY OF THE YEAR NOMINEE

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### STATISTICAL DATA for 2006:

#### Total Annual Budget:

Total Revenue	\$11,419,242
Total Expenditures	\$8,092,882
a. Operating Expenditures	\$6,725,053
b. Other Expenditures (Capital Outlay, Debt Service)	\$1,367,829

% of Budget Spent on Materials 20.2%

Circulation 2,632,136 Circulation has more than doubled since 1996

Population Served 59,983\*  
Registered Borrowers 63,583

Per Capita Operating Expenditures \$112.12  
Per Capita Total Expenditures \$134.92  
Per Capita Revenue \$190.37

Total Staff 102 FTE  
Professional Librarians 30 29% of Total Staff

User Visits 1,477,521  
Web Site User Sessions 761,586 From outside the Library  
Web Site User Sessions 1,179,459 From inside the Library

\*This is the population of the Worthington School District, which is the service district boundary of Worthington Libraries. Population served also includes Columbus Metropolitan Library patrons of Northwest Library (a joint library), but that additional number is not known.



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2006 Action Plan Report  
2007-2008 Action Plan  
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## I. INTRODUCTION

2006 was a great year for Worthington Libraries. Passage of a permanent 2.6 mill operating levy in November 2005 meant, for the first time in five years, we could fully focus on providing excellent library service and moving forward with the implementation of our 2005-2008 Strategic Plan (the plan is available online at [www.worthingtonlibraries.org](http://www.worthingtonlibraries.org)).

Does that sound boring? It's anything but.

Worthington Libraries is a never-a-dull-moment library system that's recognized locally, regionally and nationally as an innovator. There's not a day or time when it's "business as usual." Our 2005-2008 Strategic Plan is ambitious, was developed with input from over 100 residents and includes the complete renovation of both libraries, redesign of the library's web site, expansion of outreach services and the introduction of a new customer service model.

Not having to worry about money is an enviable position, but the health of the library's finances is not the result of good luck or its location in a well-educated and relatively affluent community. If anything, Worthington residents hold their public institutions to a higher degree of accountability. The fact that the Library is held in such high regard by a majority of residents is the result of careful planning and hard work, listening and responding.

Our two libraries serve as centers of neighborhood and community life. Library programs are designed to meet the needs of everyone from the very young to the very old. Outreach initiatives are developed to expand the library's audience and increase public awareness of library services. The library's collection is intentionally deep, designed to meet the information needs of the person in search of the latest Danielle Steele book and a rare opera recording. The library staff is given ample opportunities for personal growth and is encouraged to take on new challenges and to be active in the community. As a result, Worthington Libraries is part of every large community event and initiative and serves as the "go to" organization when things need to get done in Worthington.

The Library of the Year Award celebrates the library that most profoundly demonstrates: service to the community; creativity and innovation in developing specific community programs or a dramatic increase in library usage; and leadership in creating programs that can be emulated by other libraries.

In four of the last six years, Worthington Libraries was recognized as a Library of the Year finalist. This year, we believe our library deserves to win.

## **II. Service to the Community**

What's more important than the community a library serves? Everything we do—from program planning to collection development to buying supplies and replacing the carpet—is done with the public in mind. After all, this is their library and they are the whole reason for our existence.

### **a. Stewardship of Resources**

Worthington residents trust the Library to make responsible financial decisions on their behalf, which is why stewardship is one of three priorities outlined in our 2005-2008 Strategic Plan. Specifically, the plan states we will “evaluate and improve the organization and its operation in a continuing effort to provide service to a diverse population, stimulate use of the library and encourage familiarity with changing technology.”

Prior to passage of the 2.6 mill permanent operating levy in November 2005, library funding was in decline as use was steadily increasing—circulation has increased 35.6% in the last five years. Despite the increase in use, operating expenses have only increased a total of 8.2% during the same time period, an average of 1.6% per year. This was not the result of staff layoffs or reduced hours. We simply looked for creative ways to become leaner and more efficient.

The library staff has been reorganized three times in the last five years. Each time, we assessed the work that needed to be accomplished and determined the best staffing structure to make it happen. In 2005, the traditional library hierarchy of department managers was abolished and replaced with lead librarians and staff work groups. This reorganization saved the Library a total of \$23,907.40 in salaries and benefits, compared to 2004 figures, and the first phase of its development only took five months to complete from inception to implementation. We've also changed insurance carriers several times and introduced employee Health Savings Accounts as another insurance option for staff members. Additionally, every time a staff member retires or resigns, their position is evaluated to determine if it should be filled or restructured to better meet the needs of the Library.

Library director Meribah Mansfield is never far from a copy of our long-range financial plan. Through constant review and careful management, she is able to track and maximize the use of every dollar and to see how spending projections will impact the Library now and in the future. The results have direct benefits to the community.

In December 2006, we paid off the Northwest Library bonds early. The bonds were originally issued by the City of Columbus in 1994, with a maturation date of January 1, 2015. The Library used the proceeds from the bond sale to fund the construction of the Northwest Library, which opened in 1996. Based on the stated interest rate of the bonds for their remaining life and the projected estimated earnings the Library could generate on the funds if they were not used to redeem the bonds, a savings of approximately \$50,000 was realized by paying off the bonds prior to their maturity date.

One of our action plan items for 2007-2008 is to develop a higher level of financial reporting through the preparation of a capital asset inventory for the first-ever Generally Accepted Accounting Principles report and completion of a first-ever Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. These detailed reports will provide the library board and the community with an accurate reflection of the library's financial position.

Our November 2005 levy passed with 58% of the vote and has enabled us to maintain the quality services, materials and programs the community expects and deserves. It generates over \$4 million per year in revenue and is expected to provide adequate funding for the Library until at least 2018. Our two local property tax levies (the Library also has a 2.2 mill levy passed in 1992) now account for 65.5% of our revenue, while our state funds account for 23.6%. When you consider that almost 75% of Ohio's libraries are completely dependent on state funds, you can appreciate our enviable funding situation—which is a direct result of the services we provide and not something we ever take for granted.

## **b. Building and Maintaining the Collection**

In "Hennen's American Public Library Ratings 2006," Thomas Hennen writes, "Back in the mid-70s, when I went to graduate school, numbers from *Wheeler and Goldhor's Practical Administration of Public Libraries* represented the gold standard for library planning. They recommended that 20% of a public library budget should go toward materials. More recently, the common wisdom has pointed to 15%. The latest data shows another in a continuing decline from 13.9% to 13.2%." (*American Libraries*, November 2006, p. 41)

Although it has become harder to do, because of rising costs in healthcare and other expenses beyond our control, Worthington Libraries still meets the "gold standard" in library planning. In 2006, 20.2% of the library's budget was spent on materials and the library director, Meribah Mansfield, works with the staff to maintain what she considers a healthy budget balance of 20% materials spending vs. 60% on salaries and benefits. As a matter of fact, Worthington Libraries has spent an average of 22.6% of its total budget on materials since 1979.

Being part of the Discovery Place Library consortium with Columbus Metropolitan Library and Southwest Public Libraries provides our patrons with access to over 3.6 million items (that they can reserve and renew online) and gives us the freedom to build a collection that is intentionally deep and varied. Although we purchase bestselling books, popular music and the latest DVDs, we know our patrons also expect us to have jazz recordings, independent film releases and poetry from small publishers. We often receive comments from patrons that our library is the only one in the Discovery Place system that owns the particular item they are looking for.

And what our patrons are looking for, more often than not, is a book to read. Our patrons want books more than any other information format, and that's what we give them. As of December 31, 2006, the library's collection consisted of 474,720 items, 405,070 of which are books.

In the last year, we began centralized selection by profile and have both adult and youth materials selectors. This streamlines the ordering process and allows us to better track and build the collection as a whole, rather than in segments.

The staff also takes weeding seriously, with a staff workgroup devoted to getting items that are in poor condition or have not circulated off the shelves. This keeps the collection fresh and interesting for patrons who are reserving items online or stopping by to browse.

### **c. New Customer Service Model**

In 2006, a New Customer Service Model workgroup was formed and charged with researching and developing a new proactive customer service model for Worthington Libraries. The workgroup explored the range of possible ways to meet the information needs of our patrons in the most efficient, effective and thorough manner, paying particular attention to services that are proactive, including roving reference and concierge services.

The workgroup found that adding roving reference to our existing customer service model would allow us to help more people who ask questions at the reference desk as well as those who are afraid or not inclined to ask questions. We wanted to make sure people were not leaving the Library without the information they came in looking for.

Based on the workgroup's recommendations, the library's reference desks adjusted their coverage by assigning one person as a "rover." Rovers are assigned to one-hour shifts and are expected to greet patrons and see if they need assistance. They are using handheld computers to access the library catalog and electronic resources so they don't have to run back and forth between the desk and the stacks. Staff has been trained to assess patron body language and to look for clues relating to who should be approached and who would prefer to be left alone, and to meet patrons at their "point of puzzlement."

We've also begun to aggressively merchandise the collection. Last summer, a merchandising work group visited several area libraries and bookstores to learn more about how they promote items to encourage patrons to borrow or buy. We also met with a marketing consultant who has experience with working in public libraries and bookstores. She walked through both our libraries and pointed out several areas for improvement. Using the information gleaned from the library/bookstore visits and the consultant's report, we've implemented several new initiatives. We've designed "power walls" to merchandise high-traffic areas of the collection (new fiction, picture books, mystery, cookbooks, travel, etc.) and have started to replace old and outdated signs with new, bold versions that are easy to read and attractive.

In February 2007, new and more self-checkout machines were added in both libraries. Although patrons can still request help from a person when checking out their materials, they are encouraged to use the machines. A staff member is always available to assist those that are new or unfamiliar with the process. The feedback we've received about the new machines, which are easier to use and faster, has been overwhelmingly positive.

All of this is designed to make the library's buildings, materials and staff more welcoming and easier to access.

### **d. Technology and Online Access**

The library's web site, Worthington Libraries Online ([www.worthingtonlibraries.org](http://www.worthingtonlibraries.org)), functions as our third location—the location that's available to patrons 24/7/365. It was the first web site to win the *netConnect* Award for a small public library web site, and it is maintained by a webmaster and two staff work teams: the Digital Library Team and the Electronic Resources Team.

The purpose of the Digital Library Team is to plan and implement the creation, integration and delivery of digital information and resources for use by patrons and staff, including continued

development of Worthington Libraries Online, the staff Intranet and Worthington Memory. The purpose of the Electronic Resources Team is to identify, evaluate, select and promote new electronic resources, and to analyze the use of existing electronic resources offered by Worthington Libraries to its patrons within the parameters of the Worthington Libraries Collection Development Statement and budget. Both teams meet regularly to make sure that Worthington Libraries Online delivers the same quality service and resources that patrons are accustomed to when visiting our brick and mortar locations. At the end of 2006, the library's web site provided access to 164 premium electronic resources and more than 8,000 full-text periodicals.

Adults can ask a reference question any time of the day or night by logging on to our web site and accessing KnowItNow24x7. A statewide service initiative funded by the State Library of Ohio, KnowItNow24x7 provides online reference help 24 hours a day, seven days per week. In only two years, from 2003-2005, questions posed to KnowItNow24x7 from patrons in our service district increased 53%, with a total of 10,618 sessions in 2005.

Students also have access to free online tutoring and HomeworkNow, the companion site to KnowItNow24x7.

Younger children can enjoy TumbleBooks. Introduced last year, TumbleBooks is an online collection of animated, talking picture books, reading comprehension quizzes, educational games, and teacher resources. It includes story books, life learning books, language learning books and TumbleReadables (large print 'Read-On-Your-Own' stories, chapter and young adult books). It is accessible in the Library and at home to anyone with a library card.

We also provide e-books and digital audiobooks for download from our web site in partnership with the Mid-Ohio Library Digital Initiative. We added downloadable video to this service in October 2006.

The Library has 130 computers available for public use and, as of last year, both Old Worthington Library and Northwest Library began providing wireless Internet access in partnership with the City of Worthington.

The Library also worked with city officials on the redesign of the community web site, [www.worthington.org](http://www.worthington.org). This site is hosted by the Library and links to the Worthington Schools, Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce and provides information on community events and other organizations.

To help patrons learn more about and become comfortable with technology, the Library provides free computer classes in both libraries and at the Lazelle Woods Recreation Center (a City of Columbus Recreation and Parks facility in the northeast section of our service district—more on this partnership in the Outreach section). The Library is the “technology supplier” for many community events and meetings, supplying a computer, projector and screen for events such as the Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Groundhog Day Forecast Breakfast.

We introduced a teen blog and MySpace for teens in 2006 (more on this in the teen programming section) and have a Flickr page to showcase pictures from library events. Within

the next few months, we plan to hire a web applications supervisor whose job it will be to develop new and interesting web content for the library and to help us introduce "Programs: To Go!"—an online place to experience library events through webcasts, podcasts and more.

## **f. Planning for the Future**

The library board adopted our 2005-2008 Strategic Plan on May 16, 2005. The plan was developed with input from over 100 community members. We also met with civic organizations and hosted community forums to get as much feedback as possible before writing the final version of the plan. The result has become so much more than a document or traditional outline of strategies and goals. The strategic plan serves as our touchstone, guide and reminder of the direction the community wants us to take. Their commitment to the Library, as well as their expectations, is embedded in each and every word. The exciting changes detailed below are a fulfillment of the strategic plan and the community's vision for the Library.

### **I. Old Worthington Library and Northwest Library**

Both libraries in the Worthington Libraries system (Old Worthington Library and Northwest Library) will be renovated this year. Construction at both facilities is scheduled to begin in July and, if everything goes according to current plans, will be finished in September 2008. The budget for both projects is \$3,590,544.

Use of Worthington Libraries continues to grow and space at both buildings is not being used as efficiently as possible to meet the increasing demand for library service. Since Northwest Library opened in 1996, system-wide circulation has more than doubled. Worthington Libraries now has the 9<sup>th</sup> highest circulation in the state, behind only the eight metropolitan library systems. Space in both circulation departments is no longer adequate to process the growing number of books and other library materials being reserved, checked out and returned by patrons.

To remedy this situation, and to position the Library for future growth, the renovation includes two small additions to the circulation departments at both libraries. The additional space will be used to process materials more efficiently and is necessary to accommodate an automated materials handling system which may be added in the future.

Because the methods for delivering library service and patron expectations regarding customer service continue to evolve, the buildings will also be rearranged to create the spaces people want within the Library and to implement the goals of the 2005-2008 Strategic Plan. This will make visiting the Library a more positive and rewarding experience for patrons and will economize and streamline library operations.

Highlights of the rearrangement include:

- the addition of **more computers**
- creation of a **remote reference center** at Old Worthington Library for digital and phone reference service
- the **size of the collection will be maintained**, and bookshelves will be rearranged to make **materials more accessible and attractive** to browsers
- adding **child-friendly furnishings** in the children's departments and more **defined areas for babies, younger children and tweens**
- the addition of a **family restroom** at Old Worthington Library and a **drive-up window** at Northwest Library

- creating a **single entrance/exit point for the Northwest Library children's department**, making it easier to monitor and for parents to keep track of their children
- providing **teens with their own room** in both libraries, where they can work together on school projects or just hang out without disturbing other library patrons
- providing tweens with their own space, that's separate from both the children's and teen areas
- the addition of seating and a **self-serve coffee/beverage station** in both library lobbies
- replacing the large reference and circulation desks with smaller workstations, thereby making the **staff more accessible** to patrons

Both libraries will undergo construction concurrently. At the present time, we don't anticipate that either location will be closed during any phase of the renovation.

When renovations are complete in September, the library will reemerge as a hip, happenin' place where people can hang out, enjoy a cup of coffee, attend a favorite program or catch up with a favorite author. Detailed plans of the building renovations will be presented to residents at our annual community breakfast, scheduled for Tuesday, April 17 at 7:30 am.

## 2. Expansion to Serve the Northeast

Patrons in the northeast part of our service district have been eagerly anticipating their own library branch for 12 years, since land was purchased in the area and set aside as a site for a possible future library. At two points in the last six years, we've come close to making their dreams a reality, but each time plans had to be scrapped because of state funding cuts. Although we've developed several outreach programs to serve northeast-area patrons, attending a storytime at the local recreation center is not the same as attending a storytime at the Library, and residents want a facility to call their own.

**Funding still prohibits construction and operation of a stand-alone library, but we are planning to expand service to the northeast by opening a storefront branch.** We are currently in the process of designing the space, which will be 5,280 square feet located in a retail center near a grocery store and within walking distance of an elementary school.

The storefront library, tentatively called Worthington Park, although smaller in scale than some have hoped for, will provide northeast area residents with the services they've been asking for. It will include a popular reading library of bestselling fiction and nonfiction. It will have a large children's collection and several computers for public use.

Programming at Worthington Park will be focused on meeting the needs of the many children and families in the area. To that end, we're planning to establish a Homework Help Center in this location. This would be a unique feature of the Worthington Park Library—not found in our other libraries—and would be a source of pride for residents as well as tremendously useful for students.

We would like to open this facility by the end of the year, but it is dependent on state funding. New Ohio Governor Ted Strickland (D) released his first budget proposal on March 15. In the new proposal, public libraries will receive 2.2% of the state's General Revenue Fund tax revenues. This represents a modest annual increase (after funding was frozen for several years)

that will ebb and flow with the economy. If the governor's funding proposal is passed by both the Ohio Senate and House of Representatives, it will generate enough additional revenue for us to open and operate the storefront library without significantly impacting the life of our current levy (we would still have a positive fund balance at the end of 2018).

Throughout the renovation and expansion projects, our goal will be to maintain communication with the community and to guide patrons through this process so they are prepared for upcoming changes and can look forward to seeing the finished product.

### III. Creativity and Innovation

#### a. Programming

Worthington residents can grow up and grow old at the Library with programming that meets the needs of everyone from young babies to senior citizens. **In 2006, the Library presented 1,228 programs and outreach activities that were attended by 42,637 people.**

#### I. Children and Early Childhood Literacy

Worthington is a terrific place to live, work and raise a family. The school district is widely regarded as one of the best in the area, and the community values initiatives which focus on the development and education of its youngest residents. An example of this came recently when the Library was asked to make a presentation to the local Rotary Club. We assumed club members would be interested in learning more about our business resources, but they instead asked us to make a presentation on early childhood literacy. Parents are eager to learn more about what they can do to help their children prepare for school.

The Ohio Library Council and the State Library of Ohio are currently collaborating on a statewide initiative, called Ready to Read, to promote early childhood literacy.

Worthington Libraries youth programming focuses on encouraging children to develop an early and lifelong love of reading. In partnership with local pediatricians, the Library distributes free Raising Readers packets that contain information on developing early childhood literacy skills, rhymes and book recommendations. Traditional library storytimes are held each week for babies as young as six months to children age five. Pajama storytimes are held in the evening and are designed for families to attend together with their children aged five and under. Other highlighted children's programs include:

**Kindergarten Ready or Not:** a kindergarten readiness program, featuring panelists of early childhood development experts from the Worthington Schools and local preschools, for the parents of preschoolers who are trying to determine if their child is ready to attend school.

**Sit, Stay, Read!:** children aged 6-11 who are interested in practicing their reading skills can sign up for a time to read aloud to Lucy, a certified therapy dog.

**Book Cooks:** children ages 4-6 get a taste for reading through stories and a simple cooking demonstration.

**Bookopoly:** one of the library's most popular programs, Bookopoly takes a popular children's book and adapts it for play as a life-sized board game where participants must answer questions associated with the book in order to win.

**Library Adventures:** children in grades K-3 are invited to learn more about a different topic each week through books, stories and songs. Past topics include weather science and musical instruments.

**Character Book Parties:** stories and activities focused on a favorite character from children's literature (Curious George, Maisy, etc.) including a special visit from the character. These programs are routinely attended by more than 150 children and their families.

In addition to regular programming, the Library has created several special events that promote reading as a family activity. These include:

**Read to Your Baby Festival:** held annually since 2005, this event features presentations by a well-known children's book author and community participation from area organizations also serving the needs of families with young children. This event is attended by 300-400 people.

**Pumpkin Parade:** children aged five and under come in costume to attend this Halloween-themed storytime followed by a parade around the Library—a great event the whole community looks forward to.

**Touch-a-Truck:** presented at Northwest Library, this event is for children aged three to seven who are invited to explore cool vehicles and big machines in person. Last year, we had a bulldozer, fire truck, motorcycle, city bus and a wagon pulled by ponies for children to enjoy. This event also features stories with a transportation theme and is a big hit with boys and their fathers.

Along with our partners in the Discovery Place library system, we also present an annual summer reading program for children. **In 2006, more than 6,000 children registered for and 3,700 completed the program.** This year, we're adding an early literacy component to increase awareness of early literacy skills and to make the program "friendlier" for young children. When parents with children under five sign up for the program, we will give them a handout defining the six early literacy skills, and listing some simple activities they can do with their children to promote each skill. Each completed activity, including attendance at storytimes, will count as 15 minutes of "reading." After six hours of reading/activities, children will receive a rubber ducky, and if they complete the program they will receive their own sippy cup with the library logo.

The Library also presents a number of events that are just plain fun for families, such as the outdoor summer concerts, presented on the lawn of Northwest Library on Friday evenings, and outdoor movies, presented at Old Worthington Library in partnership with the Worthington Parks and Recreation Department.

## 2. Getting Teens Involved

Teenagers are often considered the most difficult audience to attract to library programs. Their school days are packed with activities, they have busy social lives and, let's face it, the Library might not be at the top of their list of cool places to hang out with their friends. We've made an attempt to change the perception of the Library with local teens by introducing a series of events focused on their interests and by using technology to reach out to them where they live: online.

TGIF was created by our teen librarians last year. It's a series of for-teens-only events that take place on Friday evenings, after the Library closes. We've had a Dance Dance Revolution tournament, video game tournament and Bollywood movie event (complete with Indian food, music and sari-wrapping demonstration). The video game tournament held recently at Northwest Library was attended by more than 100 teens—most of them boys. TGIF has been a great way to make teens comfortable in and familiar with the Library and its staff—increasing the likelihood that they'll turn to us when it's time to work on a big homework assignment.

Another, and somewhat surprisingly, popular program for teens includes Book and Bagel. Developed last year by teen librarian Ann Pechacek, Book and Bagel is a book discussion group that meets before the start of school in the library of a local high school. This program begins at 7:15 am and regularly attracts close to 20 teens, who are getting up early to talk about books! Ann also meets regularly with middle school students who attend a Book and Bag program held at lunchtime in the Old Worthington Library.

Since so many teens are connecting to each other and the outside world online through the use of social networking software, we decided that our web site, even with its Just for Teens section, wasn't enough. In 2006, we introduced a teen blog ([www.worthingtonlibraries.org/teen/blog/](http://www.worthingtonlibraries.org/teen/blog/)) and created a MySpace page for teens. The teen blog has received hits from all over the world and has become a great tool for our teen librarians to communicate about library news and upcoming events.

Both libraries, which are within walking distance of the two district high schools, also have active teen advisory boards. These groups, ranging from 10-20 teens, help to plan library events and work on special library projects, including writing articles and book reviews that appear both on the teen blog and in the *Etc.* newsletter for teens.

The library's dedicated corps of teen volunteers, referred to as Volunteens, help throughout the year, but are especially needed during the summer months when they help us to administer the summer reading program for children. We couldn't manage the program without their help!

Teen altruism goes further than volunteering for the Library. In 2005 and 2006, the teens at Northwest Library coordinated a special Holiday Bazaar to benefit residents at the United Methodist Children's Home. They've raised close to \$700 each year through the sale of handmade crafts, baked goods and other donated items. At Old Worthington Library, teens participated in the annual CardCare program and made holiday cards for the library's homebound patrons.

All Worthington Libraries' programming for young people is designed to encourage use of the Library and to foster a lifelong love of reading, so that children grow to view learning as the key to a life of limitless discovery. While other libraries are removing their children's desks and hiring librarians without specialties, we remain committed to having a children's department staffed by children's librarians and a young adult department staffed by teen librarians. We currently have six full-time librarians in the youth services department, and remain committed to helping each child (and parent) find the right book at the right time.

### **3. Connecting Adults**

At Worthington Libraries, adult programming takes many forms. There are leisure activities and learning activities—and some programs that combine the two. This is a sample of the diverse programming we make available to adults in our service district.

**NovelTea:** promoted as a "book discussion with a twist," NovelTea has grown to become one of the library's most successful programs since its inception in 2005. The program consists of a book discussion with a featured guest speaker or author accompanied by tea and other refreshments related to the selected book. For example,

when the group read *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Arthur Golden, they learned about and were treated to a full Japanese tea service.

**By the People Forums:** presented in conjunction with the Council for Public Deliberation, the forums provide local residents with an opportunity to discuss—rather than debate—important topics. An upcoming program on April 17 will focus on teaching evolution in the public schools.

**The Reel World:** this is a theme-based series of film programs at Old Worthington Library. Past themes have included international films, films with cooking or eating as a focal point (*Chocolat*, *Eat Drink, Man Woman*, etc.) and movies that didn't win an Oscar (but probably should have).

**Behind the Bestseller:** a series of author events featuring bestselling writers of fiction and nonfiction. We hosted mystery writer Suzanne Brockmann last year. Earlier this year, we presented bestselling young adult author Sharon Draper, and on April 19 we're presenting former *New York Times* food critic and cookbook author Molly O'Neill.

**Warm Up America!:** in 2006 and 2007, we participated in this national event to help provide afghans to needy individuals. People throughout the community donated completed crocheted or knitted afghan blocks which were then stitched together by volunteers at a finishing bee. The finished afghans, a total of 30 in 2007, were donated to homeless and women's shelters throughout Columbus.

**Parenting 101:** a series for the parents of small children presented in partnership with the Elizabeth Blackwell Center at Riverside Methodist Hospital, programs address such important topics as when to begin toilet training, parenting the high needs child and helping children learn the meaning of words.

**English Conversation Group:** a discussion group for people whose first language is not English and who are interested in practicing their English skills. These sessions are led by a librarian and include a basic language/comprehension exercise, like reading a newspaper article or ordering from a restaurant menu. A session held on March 20 was attended by native speakers of Russian, Japanese and Spanish.

**Resumes That Get Noticed:** presented in partnership with the Career Exploration Office at The Ohio State University, this program shows participants how to develop targeted resumes that will increase job prospects. It is one of many business and career-oriented programs provided by the Library.

## **b. Outreach**

In addition to providing programs and services within the Library, we also "take the show on the road" through extensive community outreach and the presentation of library programs at other locations. **In 2006, outreach programs were attended by more than 11,000 people.**

### **I. Outreach to the Northeast**

Two goals of our 2005-2008 Strategic Plan deal specifically with outreach and highlight extending service to the northeast area of our service district in particular: "Investigate outreach opportunities and partnerships with organizations serving residents in the northeast section of the library's service district;" and "Provide outreach to children and families, beginning with those living in the northeast section of the library's service district and extending beyond those served by traditional public schools."

In 2005, the Library began a partnership with Worthington Schools to extend library service through Slate Hill Elementary School (one of two elementary schools serving the northeast area). In December 2005, we began work with the director of the Lazelle Woods Recreation Center and participated in opening day activities at that facility in January 2006. We've also worked with the Children's World Daycare facility located in the northeast.

At Slate Hill Elementary School, we've presented a total of 58 programs attended by 2,063 people. Programs include Spanish tutoring, a tour of Old Worthington Library, a Family Fun Night hosted by the Library and Ambassador Programs (more on Ambassador Programs below). We've also presented programs at Worthington Park Elementary School, the other school serving the area, that have reached 212 people.

We've presented a total of 132 programs that have reached 1,702 people at the Lazelle Woods Recreation Center. These programs include regular presentations of storytimes and CyberSchool computer classes.

At the Children's World Daycare Center, we presented the summer reading program to 65 children and visited four times throughout the summer.

We will continue to provide library outreach through these established community partnerships and look for other innovative ways to extend service to this area until a library can be opened to serve northeast-area patrons.

## **2. Ambassador Program**

In 2006, Worthington Libraries' Ambassador Program was recognized by Tutor.com with an "Innovator Award," and we are routinely asked for more information on the program by other libraries seeking to replicate its success.

The Ambassador Program was developed in 2001 as a way to promote use of the library's web site and available electronic resources. A librarian attends a classroom or community site to provide a firsthand demonstration of the library's resources—often tailored to a specific topic that the group is studying or interested in. The program is most often utilized by teachers in the Worthington Schools, where we also highlight the availability of Online Tutoring and 24/7 online reference. Worthington residents are responsible for generating a high percentage of activity for both these services. **In 2006, we presented 46 Ambassador Programs for 1,017 people, and the average number of monthly Online Tutoring sessions was 75% higher than in 2005.**

## **3. Homebound Program**

Perhaps more than any other service offered by the Library, the Homebound Program has the potential to make the greatest difference in the lives of patrons. This is best illustrated by Ronald Lee McConnell. Mr. McConnell was a homebound patron for many years before his death in July 2005. Shortly following his death, we learned that he left his entire estate to Worthington Libraries, resulting in a total gift of more than \$250,000 to the Worthington Libraries Endowment Fund.

At the end of 2006, the library had 33 homebound patrons and delivered to several nursing and assisted care facilities in our service district. In addition to a part-time associate responsible for

coordinating the Homebound Program, deliveries are made by a dedicated group of library volunteers. Because there is currently a waiting list for homebound service, we are exploring the expansion of the program in 2007 through Books by Mail (books and other items for the visually impaired can be delivered free of charge through the USPS).

Additional outreach programs include school and daycare visits and attendance at community events. The library's outreach services and volunteer coordinator is responsible for managing all our outreach activities and works to maintain a balance between the programs we can offer outside the Library and the needs of patrons within the Library.

### **c. Partnerships**

Partnership is the name of the game in Worthington, and we continually look for opportunities to work with other community organizations, both in the presentation and promotion of library events and in the development and promotion of collaborative efforts involving several community groups.

In 2006, we partnered with the following organizations: Worthington Schools, City of Worthington, Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce, Worthington Arts Council, Healthy Worthington, Leadership Worthington, Worthington Historical Society, Worthington International Friendship Association, Worthington Community Relations Commission, Worthington Alliance of African American Parents and Educators, Columbus Metropolitan Library, Elizabeth Blackwell Center, Thurber House Literary Center, Merry Moppet Children's Center, Children's World Daycare Center, St. John's Early Education Center, United Methodist Children's Home, Franklin Park Conservatory, Columbus Recreation and Parks Department, Worthington Parks and Recreation Department, La Leche League, MOMS and More, The Ohio State University, Action for Children, Children's Hospital and the Center for Public Deliberation.

In February 2007, Worthington Libraries received the "Collaboration Award" from Healthy Worthington for outstanding support and service. Focused on encouraging residents to improve their health, Healthy Worthington offers a series of lectures at the Old Worthington Library. The Library creates all the promotional materials for these lectures and promotes them to our patrons through inclusion in the library's quarterly newsletter and in other publicity.

Together with the superintendent of Worthington Schools and Worthington's city manager, the library director is a featured presenter in the Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce's Annual Groundhog Day Forecast Breakfast. This illustrates the status of the Library in the community as one of the "big three" organizations people want to learn more about.

As was mentioned previously, we partnered with the City of Worthington to coordinate and promote wireless Internet access—available in both our libraries and throughout the business district of downtown Worthington—last year. We also worked with the city in the redesign of the community's web site ([www.worthington.org](http://www.worthington.org)).

Several local businesses are partnering with us on our library card campaign, begun last year. The theme of the campaign is "Get Connected. Get Smart. Get a Card" and our goal is to increase library card registration by 10% through 2008. Dairy Queen, Old Bag of Nails Pub, Mrs. Goodman's Baking Company and Buckeye Subs and Salad agreed to participate in the campaign

by providing free items, or items at reduced cost, to anyone with a valid Worthington Libraries library card.

Our list of partners continues to grow. Establishing and nurturing these relationships has obvious benefits to the Library and our partner organizations. It's what makes Worthington a true community where people are inspired and encouraged to work together to make a positive difference.

#### **d. Community Involvement**

The library staff is encouraged to get involved in the community at the personal as well as professional level. Our reach is deep; **30 staff members and seven board members are currently affiliated with 119 community and professional organizations.** Throughout the community, we're recognized as people who get things done.

In March 2007, the library's community relations and development director was asked to take over as chairperson of the Ohio Chautauqua in Worthington event after the original chair was diagnosed with cancer. This event, held over five consecutive evenings (July 4-8) in downtown Worthington, will bring more than 3,000 people to downtown Worthington.

The City of Worthington recently asked for the library's assistance in researching grocery chains that might be interested in establishing a store in downtown Worthington. The Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce has also asked for our assistance in researching possible uses of the former library building (now owned by the City of Worthington) which has been vacant for several years.

Many staff members are self-described activists who volunteer their time for causes and organization such as the Capital Area Humane Society, Sustainable Worthington, Friends of Ravines and Adena Brook Community, Worthington Special Olympics and Pancreatic Cancer Action Network. We have a staff member who serves as a village council member and another who is the mayor of her home community.

The staff is also actively involved in the Ohio Library Council and the American Library Association. Lead Librarian Wendy Rawson is one of only 100 librarians selected to participate in the American Library Association's "Emerging Leaders 2007" program.

As a library, we've participated in the annual United Way Campaign, Relay for Life, Race for the Cure, Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month, Passionately Pink for the Cure, Go Red for Women and Lee National Denim Day. The Library also regularly supports the participation of at least one staff member in the Leadership Worthington professional development program.

Whether at home or at the Library, we are people committed to making an impact and bringing about positive change in the world.

## IV. Circulation

The story here is that library circulation continues to climb and shows no sign of slowing down. In 1991, Worthington Libraries ranked 20<sup>th</sup> in state for circulation; in 2002, we moved to 11<sup>th</sup> place. In 2005, Worthington Libraries circulation ranked 9<sup>th</sup>, behind only the eight metropolitan library systems, which have more branches and serve much larger populations. **2006 circulation was 2,632,136 items, an increase of 4% over 2005. In the last 10 years, circulation has more than doubled and increased 150% since 1991.**

Handling the ongoing increase in circulation is one of reasons we developed the new customer service model and the primary reason behind the upcoming building renovations. If we are able to open a storefront branch to serve northeast-area residents, it will hopefully assist in alleviating some of the pressure on our two current facilities.

### a. Registered Borrowers vs. Service District Population

As of December 31, 2006, the Library had 63,583 registered borrowers. Considering our service district population is 59,983, it begs the question, "Where are all these people coming from?" The answer: Delaware County.

Delaware County sits just to the north of Franklin County, where Worthington Libraries is located. In the last 10 years, southern Delaware County has been the site of tremendous growth. According to census data, from 1990 to 2000, the population of Delaware County grew by 64%. That number continues to increase as new housing developments and shopping centers seemingly spring from the ground overnight.

Many new residents of Delaware County moved there from Franklin County and still work or attend school in the Columbus vicinity. As such, they are still used to getting service from Franklin County entities, including public libraries. Because we are funded by the state through the Local Libraries Fund (LLF), public libraries in Ohio serve all residents no matter where they live. Ordinarily, this would not be a problem, but for Worthington Libraries, use by out-of-county residents is problematic and increasingly unfair to district residents who support the Library with significant property tax dollars.

At Northwest Library, the library in our system that's closest to the Delaware County border, 44% of the registered borrowers live outside our service district or the Columbus Metropolitan Library district. Last year, more than 26% of the children who registered for the summer reading program were from Delaware County. One of the reasons we've opted not to build a library on land owned in the northeast section of our service district is due to its proximity to Delaware County. Even if we had the financial resources to build and operate a third facility, its certain use by a large percentage of Delaware County residents would make it an immediate inequitable proposition to our residents if it was built without the cooperation of the Delaware County District Library.

New leadership at the Delaware County District Library recognizes this is an issue and sees the need to develop a plan to serve all county residents, which could include cooperation with Worthington Libraries. However, that library system has no local property tax levy in place, doesn't plan to put a levy on the ballot until 2009 and receives the least amount of per capita funding through the LLF.

So what can we do? We have no plans to “bar the door” and continue to welcome residents of Delaware County to our library with open arms. We’ve focused on educating our state legislature about this issue and hope to work with them in the coming years to find a regional solution to providing fair and equitable library service and will continue to support the efforts of the Delaware County District Library to serve its residents.

## **V. Leadership**

Worthington Libraries is a recognized leader. Our library system is well managed and staffed by a tremendously talented and dedicated group of people who are passionate about delivering excellent library service. As such, we have earned a reputation for creating innovative programs, building a sought-after collection of materials and introducing new services at just the right time. What follows are a few examples of why Worthington Libraries is a cut above the rest.

### **a. Northwest Library**

In 1992, trustees from both Columbus Metropolitan Library and Worthington Libraries began meeting regularly to explore ways to provide library service to the growing northwest area of Franklin County. On October 13, 1993, the two library boards signed a joint development agreement for the construction and operation of a new library facility. Groundbreaking for the facility took place on September 13, 1994, and opening day was April 16, 1996.

In 1998, Northwest Library received the first annual "Saturn's Ring" Award of Excellence from PlanIt Columbus. Sponsored by the City of Columbus' Department of Trade and Development, PlanIt Columbus was created to increase community and corporate awareness of the impact that planning and design has on the quality of life in Ohio. Northwest Library also received a design honor award from the Columbus Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1999.

In 2006, we celebrated the library's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The event featured remarks delivered by Patrick Losinski, executive director of the Columbus Metropolitan Library, and Samuel Porter, a member of the Columbus library board of trustees.

After more than 10 years of operation, Northwest Library retains its unique status as one of only two libraries in the country to be built and operated by two library systems. A cooperative project with the Columbus Metropolitan Library, Northwest Library is managed by Worthington Libraries and serves both residents of the Worthington Library district and the Columbus Metropolitan Library district. We make this partnership work through constant communication and respect for each organization's mission and core values.

### **b. Strategic Planning**

Ever since our 2005-2008 Strategic Plan was completed, other libraries have asked us for copies and questioned us about the process we used to develop the plan. Community involvement was, and still is, the key to the plan's success.

Work on the plan began more than a year before it was adopted and included 100 community interviews conducted by library staff. The people interviewed included those that were known to us (business leaders, city council, etc.) and those whose names we had never heard before. They were asked questions about what they liked about the Library and what they would change if they could.

We conducted a core values audit with the library staff, board and members of the Friends of Worthington Libraries to determine if the Library was living the set of values defined in the previous strategic plan. We formed a community strategic planning group of 12 people who met to discuss results of the interviews and to review the first drafts of the plan. This group

provided us with focus and helped to set service priorities for the future. We also presented a draft of the plan at meetings of the Far North Columbus Communities Coalition, Olde Worthington Business Association, Worthington Park PTA and Far Northwest Coalition.

Involving this many people in the process, not to mention the entire staff, library board and Friends board, took a lot of time, but it was worth it. As we are now in the final two years of living the plan, the thoroughness of its preparation and breadth of community involvement gives us confidence that we're doing the right thing for the people we serve. The process is one that can be emulated and used successfully by other libraries—no matter how big or small.

### **c. Staff Development**

Recently, we asked the community to tell us why they love our library. The friendliness of the staff was cited most often in their responses. The library staff always goes the extra mile to deliver excellent library service. Recently, a teenage patron e-mailed us to say that she was having trouble accessing one of our electronic resources. This sparked a flurry of activity as both the technology department and the librarians tried to figure out what the problem could be. We followed up with the patron at least twice, to ask her if the problem was fixed (it was) and to make sure she found the information she was looking for (she did). People are continually stunned by how much we enjoy helping them and how hard we'll work to answer their questions and help them find the materials they are looking for.

A staff this dedicated doesn't just happen.

Library director Meribah Mansfield has made staff development a priority. This includes selecting just the right people during the interview process and making sure they have all the training opportunities available to make them stellar employees.

The staff is kept engaged through their involvement in library projects. Big changes are not made at the management level without input from the larger staff. Everyone has a voice at our library, and an opportunity to present their ideas and, in many cases, see them implemented.

In 2006, the staff worked in groups to develop the New Customer Service Model, to explore merchandising opportunities for the collection, and to revise the library's position descriptions. The latter group worked with the library's human resources manager to develop and incorporate a set of core competencies into every position description, and to refine and rewrite all our position descriptions. It was a tremendous amount of work, which they accomplished in less than four months.

A staff that's allowed and encouraged to participate in "big picture" planning is a staff that's engaged, energized and proud to be of service. That's what patrons experience when they visit our libraries, and it's why "friendly staff" often tops the list of why they love Worthington Libraries.

### **d. Worthington Memory**

Launched in 2002, Worthington Memory ([www.worthingtonmemory.org](http://www.worthingtonmemory.org)) is an online scrapbook of Worthington history and a cooperative project of the Worthington Libraries and Worthington Historical Society. It includes digital imaging of historic documents and photographs and a searchable online index to local 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century newspapers.

Community involvement is a key component to the project and volunteers work to help in various ways. One such activity is basic conservation treatment, such as metal removal, paper flattening and transfer of photographs and documents into chemically stable storage containers. Volunteers also assist by entering data into the Worthington News Index. Community members have also contributed their own local history treasures, which have been scanned and included on the Worthington Memory site. Thirty-four community agencies have contributed items to Worthington Memory.

Remote access to materials via the Internet makes heavily used, non-circulating materials more accessible while reducing the amount of physical handling they would normally endure. Worthington Memory brings attention to materials that traditionally receive less use because they are in private collections, special collections or are very fragile. It also brings together materials housed in different parts of the collection or even at separate agencies in the community, providing a sense of unity and a better understanding of local history for visitors.

The staff in charge of this project has made numerous presentations at professional library and museum conferences to share "how we did it." In addition, the Dublin Core metadata generator on the site helps others who are working on their own digitization projects.

This collaborative project helps the public embrace the concept of libraries and museums as both physical spaces and digital places, and serves as an example of using technology to make local history more accessible and meaningful.

## **VI. Conclusion**

In the last five years, Worthington Libraries has had its share of ups and downs—state funding cuts, trying to decide how best to extend library service to the northeast, a levy campaign—but we’ve tackled each challenge successfully and emerged in a fresh, new place ready to begin our next adventure.

The upcoming building changes and possible expansion will mark another period of growth as we seek to position the Library for the future in anticipation of increased use and continued technological advancements.

Throughout it all, the strong relationship we’ve formed with the community will be our guide, as it’s always been. We work to be their Library of the Year every year, and if we are selected as this year’s recipient of the award, the cash prize of \$10,000 will be used to celebrate the people of Worthington and their library. After the celebration, the remainder of the money will go toward the fundraising effort to establish a Homework Help Center in the proposed Worthington Park Library.