A Thesis

entitled

How Two Large Library Systems Co-Exist in Cuyahoga County, Ohio

by

Kim Finley

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Liberal Studies Degree

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Abstract
Cuyahoga County, Ohio, is represented by two major public library systems: The
Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library. This thesis attempts
to explore how the two systems co-exist in a somewhat overlapping geographic area, and
will explore the complementary nature of the two organizations. The role of public
libraries, specifically in Ohio, is also an important part of this project, as well as how the
current economy is affecting public libraries as a whole. A literature review and a survey
of a small number of Cuyahoga County library users provide additional context and
original research for this thesis. A recommendation is made based on these factors.
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Chapter One: Introduction

The neighborhood public library is a refuge for many residents in Northeast Ohio. In the City of Cleveland, patrons have more than two dozen branches to choose from as part of the Cleveland Public Library system. However, Northeast Ohio residents have another option when it comes to a large public library: The Cuyahoga County Public Library.

What are the major differences between the two systems? On the surface, not much. In fact, a person who is not familiar with the public library systems in Northeast Ohio might not even realize the two are separate organizations. Both systems offer patrons resources and services such as books, magazines, CDs and DVDs, and computer and Internet access. Branches in both systems have available meeting spaces for community groups and tutoring programs for students. Civic and community services, such as voter registration, are a staple available through both systems. They even have similar multi-colored plastic library cards which are accepted at branches in both systems.

The Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library have co-existed in Northeast Ohio for more than 60 years. However, in the current economic climate where organizations of all types are examining resources and exploring the pros
and cons of regionalism, some experts, and even residents, might question the need for
two major public library systems in one metropolitan area.

As a result, the inevitable questions arise: Should the two systems merge? Do the
organizations offer complementary programs and services? What are the similarities and
differences between the two? How have both systems been able to survive--and thrive--
for so long?

This thesis will explore the origins of the two systems and their similarities and
differences. This thesis will also attempt to explain why residents of Cuyahoga County,
Ohio, continue to patronize both library systems. In order to examine the relationship
between the Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public library, an
Electronic survey, published media reports, background research, and a literature review
will be used to draw a conclusion about and make recommendations for the two largest
public library systems in Northeast Ohio.

This undertaking is not being conducted by a librarian or a student in a library
science program. However, it is being researched by someone who has grown up using
and still relies upon the public library for both academic purposes and personal
enjoyment. On an academic level, all of the classes the author has taken in the Master of
Liberal Studies program—ranging from a 1960s film and music class to business
communication and technology to natural disasters around the world—required extensive
research. Most of the necessary materials to support these classes were available at a
public or academic library. Or, a library system was at least a potential resource for
providing additional information to support coursework. In theory, a book about a
specific topic, a companion documentary or feature film, and a research database which serves as a gateway to additional scholarly articles or papers could be found at or obtained by a public library system. On a personal level, this thesis writer has read numerous books and watched dozens of feature films and documentaries courtesy of a public library card. The fact that this project is being done by someone who is not professionally affiliated with a library system will hopefully provide a unique patron perspective.

In addition to providing information about the Cleveland Public and Cuyahoga County public libraries, this thesis also will refer to the smaller public library systems in the county. A general breakdown of the county-city library configurations in each of Ohio’s 88 counties also will be provided. Since Ohio consistently ranks as one of the states with the best public library systems, a general overview of the state’s libraries should help shed light on what makes Ohio unique in library support and patronage.
Chapter Two: Cuyahoga County vs. City of Cleveland Demographics

Although the City of Cleveland is the largest city in Cuyahoga County, the city itself is vastly different from the county in areas of key demographics. These differences could possibly provide the framework for the outreach initiatives and philosophies of the Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library. For example, according to the Cuyahoga County Board of Health, (http://www.ccbh.net/ccbh/opencms/CCBH/contact/About_Cuyahoga_County.html, 28 Sept. 2008), 26.3 percent of residents in Cleveland live below the poverty line, while 13.1 percent of Cuyahoga County’s population lives below the poverty line. More than 32 percent of families with children in Cleveland live below the poverty level; in Cuyahoga County overall, the statistic is 13.1 percent. Meanwhile, 31 percent of Cleveland’s adult population age 25 and older does not have a high school diploma, while the statistic for that same age group is 18.4 percent for the overall county. With these key differences in mind, the amount of job training, tutoring programs, computer literacy options and early reading initiatives offered by both the Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library are tailored to the people and demographics represented in each system.

Both library systems appear to stay informed about their patrons’ habits and needs. For instance, according to a 2008 Cuyahoga County Public Library survey, 78 percent of adults in Greater Cleveland read a book without being prompted by a teacher.
An article about the survey stated that this statistic “puts the area ahead of the rest of the nation” (The Plain Dealer, 21 Apr. 2008). When taking into consideration how public libraries are changing to meet growing consumer needs—the availability of computer courses, movies and audio books available for checkout—the fact that people read a book on their own shows that the literacy and access component of a public library’s mission is still viable.

The Cuyahoga County Public Library touted this fact in its 2008 annual report. “Books have been at the core of the library business since the establishment of the American public library system. We are extremely proud of the fact that 54% of all items borrowed by our cardholders in 2008 were print items, bucking a national trend toward audio-visual materials” (Cuyahoga County Public Library 2008 Annual Report).

Meanwhile, the Cleveland Public Library also responds to its patrons’ diverse needs. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Cleveland has a high poverty and mortgage foreclosure rate. The problems were documented in a 2008 report from Case Western Reserve University’s Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences’ Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development. According to PATHWAYS TO FORECLOSURE: A Longitudinal Study of Mortgage Loans, Cleveland and Cuyahoga County, 2005-2008, “Foreclosure rates have reached unprecedented levels in Cuyahoga County and across the State of Ohio. In Cuyahoga County, the number of foreclosures filings fourfold in just the past 12 years” (2).

In response to the community’s need for education and information, the Cleveland Public Library recently provided space for a series of free foreclosure
mitigation workshops at several of its branches (http://www.cpl.org/files/features/Foreclosure_plan_flyer.pdf). Referenced earlier in this paper was the fact that more than 32 percent of families with children in Cleveland live below the poverty level. When the Cleveland Public Library offered its 2009 Summer Reading Club, the program also included free lunch five days a week to participants ages 18 and younger (http://www.cpl.org/files/PressReleases/PR-CPL_Summer_Events_06-09.pdf). The Cleveland Municipal School District referenced the program in an electronic newsletter for parents and the community. “For the second year, the Cleveland Public Library has partnered with the Children’s Hunger Alliance and the City of Cleveland’s Division of Parks & Recreation to serve nutritious lunches to the children of Cleveland during the long summer months. For many of the District’s children, the free lunch program is their only nutritious meal when school is out” (http://newsletters.school2parent.com/nl/cms/oh/cmsd/s2p/cmsdec?issueId=74&articleId=458). Although the public library does not seem the most likely place to eat lunch, the program achieved two goals: providing young people with a proper meal while introducing them to the pleasure of reading. According to the article, the library’s summer program ended up serving more than 15,000 meals during the summer of 2009.
Chapter Three: Why Study Libraries in the First Place?

Why undertake a library study? Libraries have played an integral role in society, both in the past and in the present. According to the American Library Association (ALA), business tycoon and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie “may be best-remembered by his establishment of free public libraries meant to make available to everyone a means of self-education.” The ALA information indicates that he eventually spent more than $56 million to build 2,509 libraries (http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/carnegiemedal/carnegieabout/index.cfm). Carnegie once said: “There is not a cradle of democracy upon the earth as the Free Public Library, this republic of letters, where neither rank, office, nor wealth receives the slightest consideration.”

The simple explanation for conducting this project is that many people consider public libraries to be equalizer mechanisms for all in society and that public libraries should remain a staple in the communities they service. However, budget issues are forcing library directors, librarians and board member to examine resources, especially in an area such as Cuyahoga County, which has two major public library systems and numerous smaller public library branches in suburban communities.

Mention the word library, and some people conjure up images of a large room lined with rows of books. However, those who have not set foot in a library in the past 10
years might be surprised to find what is inside many public libraries today: A 21st century multi-media space. In addition to books, standard and Blue-ray DVDs, as well as music CDs, are available at most public library systems. Patrons also can find resources beyond what they can check out with their library card, including a plethora of children’s programming, community events and seminars, and designated spaces where they can log onto their laptops or listen to songs and audio books on their iPods.

Who patronizes public libraries? One could argue young children, the elderly and everyone in between. According to a recent report from the Urban Library Council, “Making Cities Stronger: Public Library Contributions to Local Economic Development,” (http://www.urbanlibraries.org/files/making_cities_stronger.pdf), the United States is home to “over 9,000 public libraries providing services in over 16,000 branch facilities and through the Web.” The report goes on to say that:

“Public libraries build a community’s capacity for economic activity and resiliency. Many families and caregivers rely on the library to provide important preschool reading and learning. Many people entering the workforce rely on libraries to get them online. Local businesses are increasingly tapping into the library’s online databases to keep themselves competitive and to find synergistic new business opportunities” (2).

In the current environment of a struggling American economy, many families and individuals are seeking ways to cut costs. For many, the public library plays a pivotal role in how they access information or entertainment resources. Some families do not have the financial resources to purchase a home computer, pay for Internet access, or rent movies and buy books.
A few years ago, the City of Cleveland was saddled with the dubious distinction of being the largest urban poor city in America. For Cleveland residents, as well as other Cuyahoga County residents struggling in the current economy, the free resources available through public libraries could be viewed as a feather in the cap for a region struggling with major financial and public perception issues.

In addition to resources such as books and DVDs, public libraries offer access to other vital services and programs. Tim Kambitsch, director of the Dayton Metro Library, and Cynthia Klinck, then-director of the Washington-Centerville Public Library, explained in a co-authored article that voter registration information, Golden Buckeye cards (which offer discounts for Ohio’s senior citizens) and tax forms are available in public library systems statewide (Ohio Libraries, Spring 2005).

In addition to services offered within the public library systems, community outreach is offered as a way to supplement libraries’ traditional mission. When Hurricane Ike hit Texas and Louisiana in 2008, public libraries offered FEMA resources and childcare services (American Libraries, November 2008, p. 24). Meanwhile, the Nacogdoches Public Library in Texas “closed its doors to the public for more than a week in order to house some 250 displaced persons inside the building” (24). Although Ohio was thousands of miles away from the eye of Hurricane Ike, the residual effect included inclement weather and high winds that brought down power lines. Marsha McDevitt-Stredney of the State Library of Ohio explained in the same article that libraries in Ohio were available to help residents who needed Internet access, as well as basic necessities (24).
Chapter Four: Rationale

Most people would probably agree that having two major public library systems such as the Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library is indeed beneficial for the region. Whether people live in the urban core or in the suburbs, most Northeast Ohio residents are likely within a short driving or walking distance from a public library. The simple task of signing up for a free card affords them access to a multitude of resources.

But how has the Cleveland area been able to support two systems for so long, and why do the two systems continue to thrive? Are the two systems considered to be complementary or in competition? This report will attempt to determine how the two systems coexist.
Chapter Five: Methodology

The methodology for this thesis includes a literature review of library studies and media interviews. In addition, information about the origins of the two largest public library systems in the Cleveland area—as well as research about public libraries in general related to the thesis topic—will be provided.

Original research conducted for this project includes survey responses about library patronage in Cuyahoga County. Responses were solicited from this thesis author’s electronic contact lists. Also, a timely topic affecting dozens of public libraries—mergers and regionalism—will be examined by reviewing media reports and case studies.
Chapter Six: Ohio’s Library Systems

There are 88 counties in Ohio, and all are serviced by a public library system. Most of the larger cities are serviced either by a merged city/county system or one large system under a city or county umbrella. According to the Ohio Library Council (http://www.olc.org/memberpubliclibraries.asp), the following are just a few of the library configurations set up in the state’s major cities:

Akron: Akron-Summit County Public Library
Canton: Stark County District Library
Cincinnati: Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County
Toledo: Toledo-Lucas County Public Library
Youngstown: Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County

Two of the state’s largest systems, the Columbus Metropolitan Library and the Dayton Metro Library, include branches in suburban locations. The Cleveland Public Library appears to be unique among the larger systems in Ohio in that its branches are only located within the City of Cleveland proper. Cleveland’s suburbs are serviced either by smaller local libraries such as the Cleveland Heights-University Heights and Lakewood Public Library systems, or the other large public system in the Greater Cleveland region, the Cuyahoga County Public Library.

Many larger metropolitan areas in Ohio have a combined city/county library operation such as the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library and the Akron-Summit
County Public Library. According to a newspaper article explaining the Cuyahoga County Public Library tax levy, Cuyahoga County has nine public library systems (The Plain Dealer, October 28, 2008). In addition to the county system and the Cleveland Public Library, other autonomous libraries located within the county are Cleveland Heights-University Heights (http://www.heightslibrary.org/); East Cleveland (http://www.ecpl.lib.oh.us/); Euclid (http://www.euclidlibrary.org/Home.aspx); Lakewood (http://www.lkwdpl.org/); Rocky River (http://www.rrpl.org/); Shaker Heights (http://www.shakerlibrary.org/); and the Westlake Porter Public Library (http://www.westlakelibrary.org/).

Although the Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library both have unique patrons and missions, there is bound to be some overlap in both patrons and mission outreach due to geographic proximity. For instance, a person might work in Cleveland and check out library materials at the Cleveland Public Library branch closest to their job. However, that same patron might live in a suburb of Cleveland such as Parma, Ohio, which is serviced by a Cuyahoga County Public Library branch.

Section 6.1: Ohio is No. 1 for Library Offerings

When it comes to public library offerings in the United States, Ohio usually lands in the No. 1 spot of Hennen’s American Public Library Rankings (HAPLR) Index. The rankings are conducted by Thomas J. Hennen Jr., director of the Waukesha County Federated Library System in Wisconsin. According to the HAPLR web site, the rankings are an independent index covering libraries’ input and output measures such as circulation, staffing, materials, reference services and funding. According to this ranking,
the Buckeye state was tops for 2008, as well as 2006, 2005, and 2004 (http://www.haplr-index.com/AverageStatewideScores.html). Northeast Ohio had a particularly strong showing, with the Cuyahoga County Public Library ranking No. 2 for the 2008 list, and No. 1 for the 2006 list in the population category of 500K and above.

Ohio also received the second highest number of stars in the Library Journal Index of Public Library Service 2009 (http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6636731.html). For this newly-created ranking, criteria such as visits, circulation, Internet computer usage and program attendance were calculated to generate a specific number of stars for public libraries around the country.

These designations prove that the state and its residents recognize the value of public libraries, and that the various systems invest the resources—both financial and human—into maintaining thriving libraries. According to the Ohio Library Council, as of January 2008, Ohio’s public libraries are funded through 2.22% of the state’s total general tax revenue.

But can public libraries in Ohio still provide sufficient services for patrons and maintain an outstanding ranking while working with less revenue? The library systems and the patrons are about to find out. The state’s public libraries are facing a funding crisis. More details are forthcoming later in this thesis.
Chapter Seven: The Cleveland Public Library

Using the tagline “The People’s University,” The Cleveland Public Library consistently ranks as one of the best larger public systems in the United States. According to its web site (http://cpl.org), its mission is “to be the best urban library system in the country by providing access to the worldwide information that people and organizations need in a timely, convenient, and equitable manner.”

The Cleveland Public Library (CPL) system has 28 branches, as well as its main library located in the city’s downtown section. The system has a mobile library that services various locations. Also, the Library’s web site indicates that the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Cleveland Public Library also serves as the regional library for Northern Ohio.

According to background information in Clarence Henley Cramer’s book *Open Shelves and Open Minds*, CPL opened in 1869 with 5,800 books, and was adjacent to the city’s Board of Education (19). Today, the library has more than 11 million holdings with an expansive main library consisting of two buildings, according to information in a CPL news release (http://www.cpl.org/files/PR%20-%20CPL%20140%20Birthday%202-17-09.pdf).

The Cleveland Public Library recently received five stars—the highest number possible—in the Library Journal Index of Public Library Service 2009 rating system.
According to the Cleveland Public Library’s official news release announcing the accolade, “Among systems that expend $30,000,000 and above, Cleveland Public Library received the second highest score” (http://www.cpl.org/files/PressReleases/PR-CPL_%20Rated_5_Star_Library.pdf). In the same news release, Felton Thomas, the library’s director, cites the efforts of the library’s previous director. “This is wonderful news, and underscores what the people of Cleveland already know: CPL is truly a Cleveland treasure. Our staff, our collections, and our services are what separate us from other systems around the country.”
Chapter Eight: Cuyahoga County Public Library

According to its web site, the Cuyahoga County Public Library (CCPL) has 28 branches that serve 47 suburban Cleveland communities (http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org/StdBackPage.aspx?id=406). More than 600,000 people reside in the library’s service system. The Cuyahoga County Public Library uses the tagline “Browsing is just the beginning.” On its web site, CCPL states a desired goal to “be at the center of community life by providing an environment where reading, lifelong learning and civic engagement thrive” (http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org/StdBackPage.aspx?id=908). In addition, the county library system wants to help patrons reconnect with reading; help children entering school be prepared to read; assist patrons on their quest of going back to work; help young people reach their maximum potential; help senior citizens with their needs; and connect with new Americans (http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org/StdBackPage.aspx?id=908).

As mentioned earlier, the Cuyahoga County Public Library receives top ratings in nationwide library rating systems. The system was once again ranked No. 1 in the 2009 HAPLR Index. It was the top library in the 500K population category (http://www.haplr-index.com/HAPLR100.htm). And in November 2009, the county’s public library system also announced it had received five stars in Library Journal’s 2nd annual Index of Public Library Services (http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org/StdBackPage.aspx?id=28382).
According to the history section on the library’s web site, “The original petition called for the inclusion of all of Cuyahoga County not then served by an existing public library. In 1922, only eight communities had tax-supported library service and only a few other communities had libraries supported by private funds.

Supporters who advocated for the county library system said it was needed because of population trends moving away of Cleveland, which increased after World War II.

Both the Cleveland Public Library’s and the Cuyahoga County Public Library’s missions are heavily-focused on community outreach. Cleveland Public Library’s partnership with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District is a natural fit because the library’s branches are probably more than just a place for students to go to for school resources. With its extended hours on certain days, these branches also offer a safe haven for children during the hours after school.

Due to Cuyahoga County’s overall demographics compared to the City of Cleveland’s specific demographics, the fact that the county library’s mission and outreach also includes basics such as helping children prepare to read and job resources was an interesting discovery. This proves that this system, too, is focused on providing its patrons with basic necessities as a way of improving quality of life.
Chapter Nine: Merger Talks

Although the Cleveland and Cuyahoga County library systems both appear to be stable independent systems, discussions surrounding a merger are not new. Cramer devotes an entire chapter to the topic in the book *Open Shelves and Open Minds*. According to information in the book, the Cleveland system held its opening ceremony in 1869. In 1921, at the urging of the Cleveland system’s librarian, Linda Eastman, the Ohio legislature “authorized the creation of county libraries.” (225). A year later, residents of Cuyahoga County voted for the measure, and the Cuyahoga County Public Library opened in 1924.

Why did Eastman and others advocate for a county system in the first place? According Cramer’s research, geography and service were major issues that ultimately influenced the championing of a separate county system. “In the early 1920s separate libraries were serving some of the residents of Cuyahoga County, that is, those who happened to live in the municipalities of Cleveland, East Cleveland, Cleveland Heights, Lakewood, Westlake and Bay Village; the remainder were without library facilities” (225).

According to Cramer, when the Cuyahoga County library system officially opened, it did not have any books or staff; within a year, it was circulating 29,000 books in numerous locations (225). He also notes that within the first several years of the new
system’s opening, it was primarily linked to the city system. Cramer states that “as early as 1923 the American Library Association stated that the county or region was the logical unit for library service in most parts of the United States” (226). The author also notes that in 1947, the legislature of the state of Ohio mandated that all new public libraries be established on a county or regional basis (226). This was based in part on the number of school district libraries financed by county taxes. Cramer writes that the state became concerned about this and mandated the new county-regional library configurations. Cramer notes the concern about streamlining resources, providing more equitable resources across the region, and bringing salaries from both systems on par with each other.

Merger talks came up again in 1970 between the county system, the Cleveland Public Library and other systems in the area. According to the county library’s web site, cost studies of combining the systems was continued through 1971, resulting in the systems sharing some computer equipment (http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org/StdBackPage.aspx?id=908#HISTORY).
Chapter Ten: Review of the Literature

A literature review seems to reveal that no research has been conducted or published within the past five years that specifically examines the relationship between the Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library systems. Instead, articles or materials were available that focused on specific programs or library concerns. However, case studies and articles were available which examined another major city’s library configuration: Minneapolis, Minnesota. For the purpose of a similar comparison, this literature review explores the Minneapolis city/county library configuration.

In recent times, other library systems around the country have either merged or been engaged in discussions on the topic. The merger between the Minneapolis Public Library (MPL) and the Hennepin County Library (HCL) system is a high-profile example. News reports indicated that the Minneapolis system was in financial trouble. Experts traced the financial problems to 2003 when state and local funding was cut. A formula that relied more on monies from local government instead of property taxes spelled trouble for MPL (American Libraries, March 2007). MPL eventually merged with HCL in 2007.

Like the two largest systems in Northeast Ohio, the MPL and the Hennepin County Library were geographically close. As far as resources, MPL had 15 branches and 2.2 million items, while HCL had 26 branches and 1.9 million items (Library Journal, March 1, 2007).
“The two library systems complement each other well in terms of collections and program strengths,” stated a letter from the two systems’ boards. The letter pointed out the county library system’s strength of popular materials and the Minneapolis system’s historical and archival collection (http://www.mpls.lib.mn.us/mphclmerger0207.asp).

About a year after the two public systems joined, Anita Duckor reflected on lessons learned from the merger. A member of the MPL Board, Duckor detailed how MPL tried to increasingly provide services with less funding. MPL cut staff and hours before eventually closing several branches. “An outpouring of community support was easily found at library and city council meetings,” Duckor wrote (American Libraries January/February 2009, Vol. 40). The library’s plight received media attention. However, that support was not enough to keep MPL afloat.

Duckor outlined some of the lessons learned from the MPL-Hennepin County merger in her article. She wrote that “Library advocates must show their support in quality as well as quantity” (46). In addition, she emphasized the importance of people knowing where policymakers stand when it comes to library support. With that lesson in mind, it goes without saying that it’s important for stakeholders in both the Cleveland and Cuyahoga County Public Library systems to know city and county lawmakers’ stance on the topic of public library support, as well as how the two systems complement each other.

Duckor also insisted that “active advocacy is never out of style” (46). She said it’s not enough to tout a library’s positive impact during impending cutbacks; instead, advocates have to constantly share their success stories, including how the library helps
specific populations (students, the unemployed, graduation rates, workers, etc.). On the same note, she insisted that libraries need to communicate their role in enhancing the quality of life for residents and businesses. “MPL failed to market its intrinsic value soon enough or broadly enough with all key stakeholders” (46).

With the Minneapolis case study in mind, both the Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library should continue to promote how their programs and services impact the community. For instance, a March 21, 2009, visit to the West Park branch of the Cleveland Public Library by the author of this thesis resulted in the discovery of a kickoff program for a wellness series. This branch, along with several others in the system, was scheduled to be the site for health classes such as yoga and Nintendo Wii fitness. Some people might question why a public library would offer fitness classes. To show its continued value to the community, the Cleveland Public Library could demonstrate the correlation between healthier residents and the health of the overall local economy. When patrons check out fitness books and magazines at their neighborhood library branch, they could stop downstairs to attend a fitness class that will help them adopt a healthier lifestyle. This could result in overall better health for work, school, etc., which benefits the economy because of less missed time at work and an increased academic performance in school.

The Cuyahoga County Public Library’s thriving visiting author series is a prime example for how this system could demonstrate its unique relationship with local bookstores through the co-sponsorship of an author’s local appearance. On the surface, one might ask about the connection between the library and a bookstore. For patrons, it
might even seem that the choice would come down to purchasing a book vs. borrowing a book. However, the county library system could show how its purchasing power could actually be a winning proposition for the local bookstore. That is because patrons who become acquainted with an author via library books might choose to purchase additional books written by the same author at a later date from their local bookstore. They might borrow the first book, but then purchase additional books.

The topic of mergers and regionalism will be addressed again in the discussion section after examining the results of the electronic survey on library patronage in Northeast Ohio.
Chapter Eleven: The Economy and Public Libraries

The decrease in property taxes in many local communities continues to impact public libraries around the country. In December 2008, Philadelphia’s public library woes were detailed in the media. “Eleven of 54 branches of the Free Library of Philadelphia will close, and 111 positions will be lost…” (Library Journal, December 2008, Vol. 133, page 20). The same journal article also noted that the San Diego Public Library was facing branch closures, while New York’s public libraries were facing a $20 million budget cut.

Like other communities around the country, Cuyahoga County also continues to face an economic crisis. A March 2009 New York Times Magazine article documented the plight of Cleveland’s Slavic Village, a community which recently had one of the highest foreclosure rates in the country. And although the suburban communities serviced by the Cuyahoga County Public Library have not been affected as much as the inner city, there are still noticeable increases in foreclosure filings throughout the county. The decreased tax base will eventually impact which services receive the limited resources available from the city and county.

While many public library systems around the country have to scale back services when the economy takes a downturn, library advocates say that even more patrons rely on public library services during these challenging times. Even before the current
economic meltdown, warning signs of troubled public library funding began to surface nationwide. In 2005, Sarah Ann Long of the North Suburban Library System in Wheeling, Illinois, wrote “We must heed the signs and warnings: library closings are becoming more commonplace” (New Library World, Vol. 106 No. 1212/1213 p. 284-285). Long went on to write that these closings had little to do with a lack of library patronage. “Indeed, the circulation of materials in America’s public libraries has increased approximately 60 percent over the past 20 years” (284-285). She went on to add that in addition to taxes and the overall economy, the public library also faces competition for its numerous services.

In Northeast Ohio, public library systems are continuing to see an increase in traffic. Deborah O’Conner, director of the Geauga County Public Library, attributed the increase to the slowing economy. For instance, she said entire families were making the library part of their toned down vacations (The Plain Dealer, July 29, 2008). In that same article, Sari Feldman, executive director of the Cuyahoga County Public Library, noted a 21 percent increase in usage over the last five years.

In April 2008, ALA released its annual “The State of America’s Libraries.” In the executive summary, ALA suggested that libraries are continuing to expand and that they are “serving the needs of patrons of all ages and reaching out to those who have been underserved” (page i). In today’s economy, it also is evident that more than just the underserved are utilizing public libraries’ resources. In addition to those seeking free entertainment options, ALA’s report cited a survey showing that Internet services for job
seekers and computer skills training were deemed very important. Many of the patrons who are using those services might not have needed them prior to the slowing economy.

Some people might question why others would need to use a public library when they can search for information on the Internet at home. This is assuming that an individual or family has home Internet access. Although a majority of Americans probably do, millions still depend on public libraries for Internet access. Vulnerable populations in Cleveland—including low-income families, some of the elderly and more—use the public library as a resource for connecting online. In addition to using the computer terminals at public libraries, these populations also might depend on library staff to show them how to navigate the Internet for homework help, job resources, health information and more. The same can be said for many of those living in the communities served by the Cuyahoga County Public Library.

Another issue to consider is whether or not public library funding should continue on the same level in light of current economic circumstances. Ron E. Scrogham of the Johnson County Library in Kansas writes that the vulnerable state of the library “is a self-inflicted fragility because of failure to recognize the library as a place within the public sphere for the intellectual development of a community primarily through books and reading, where service to the public, is framed by professional librarians” (The American public library and its fragile future, New Library World Vol. 107 No. 1220/1221 2006, pg. 8).
Chapter Twelve: Collaborative Projects

Although the Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library are separate, there is a collaborative tradition between the two systems, as well as with other public libraries in the county and throughout the state. The connections among the public library systems in Northeast Ohio are in many ways reflective of what is happening throughout the entire state. As noted earlier in this thesis, Tim Kambitsch, director of the Dayton Metro Library, and Cynthia Klinck, then-director of the Washington-Centerville Public Library, explained the overall collaborative nature of Ohio’s public libraries. In an article for *Ohio Libraries*, the two wrote, “Ohio’s libraries-collaboration makes them among the most heavily used in the country. 1.5 million residents visit weekly.” They went on to explain that every public library in Ohio extends reciprocal borrowing privileges for patrons. “This level of cooperation is not found in states lacking substantial state funding. More than 30 million books and audio-visual items circulate from Ohio’s libraries each year thanks to resource sharing.” (*Ohio Libraries*, Spring 2005).

A more recent example of collaboration was the Save Ohio Libraries campaign (http://saveohiolibraries.com/). In June 2009, Ohio Governor Ted Strickland proposed cutting state library funding by $227.3 million in fiscal years 2010 and 2011. The proposed cuts were part of an overall plan to close a $3.2 billion hole in the state’s budget, and the money saved from the library cuts would have been allocated to other
programs. According to the Ohio Library Council (OLC), the proposed budget cuts were on top of a 20 percent reduction libraries were already facing due to Ohio’s General Revenue Fund losses. OLC responded to this situation with a public statement on its web site. “With some 70% of the state’s 251 public libraries relying solely on state funding to fund their operations, the reduction in funding will mean that many will close branches or drastically reduce hours and services” (http://www.olc.org/SaveOhioLibraries.asp#trouble).

In a show of solidarity, public library employees and patrons around the state joined forces to bring attention to the libraries’ plight. The Save Ohio Libraries initiative was especially active online, through public rallies, and via an e-mail letter writing campaign. Supporters stressed that the cuts would come at time when more Ohioans were using public library resources. “If this happens, we will not be able to maintain our current library system,” Sari Feldman, director of the Cuyahoga County Public Library system, was quoted in a June 2009 Plain Dealer story. Although the budget cuts were proposed, Ohio’s public libraries got a last minute reprieve and the funding cutbacks were not as severe. Perhaps this is in part due to the fact that thousands of Ohioans showed their support of public libraries.

Despite the success of the Save Ohio Libraries campaign, libraries in Northeast Ohio and throughout the state are still facing financial difficulties. According to the Cuyahoga County Public Library web site, the library made the decision to keep only seven of its 28 branches open on Sundays through 2010, a high traffic day (http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org/StdBackPage.aspx?id=26696). In addition, CCPL
eliminated numerous positions, offered retirement and resignation incentives, increased overdue fine rates and made cuts to its materials budget to offset the financial crisis.

The Cleveland Public Library also took drastic steps to close a budget gap. CPL announced that its three branches that were open on Sundays during the school year would be closed through December 2009 (http://www.cpl.org/files/PressReleases/PR-Suspension_of_Sunday_hrs_8-4-09.pdf). The press release further stated that plans were underway to accommodate budget cuts amounting to an additional $7.4 million in 2010.

It remains to be seen how the cuts in the two largest public library systems in Northeast Ohio will affect patrons long term. In the short term, the loss of Sunday service in both systems potentially impacted library users who could not get to the library during the week. However, the overall cost cutting measures from both systems indicated a commitment to limiting the impact on patrons’ needs. For instance, the Sunday closures in the Cuyahoga County Public Library system allows for several branches to remain open. Some patrons may have to travel further to get to those branches, but at least there are several options available. Meanwhile, the Cleveland Public Library’s Sunday closure announcement was an indication that the measure was scheduled to last through the end of 2009, implying that there was hope that Sunday hours would return sometime in 2010.

Section 12.1: Library Consortia

The CLEVNET consortium allows library patrons from one system to borrow materials from another one. For instance, a DVD that is readily available at one of the
participating CLEVNET libraries can be requested by a Cleveland Public Library card holder and shipped to his/her neighborhood branch.

The framework for CLEVNET was put into motion in 1979. “The system envisioned would be capable of expansion in the number of programs it could manage; in its ability to deliver information simultaneously from any and all programs to a large number of terminals without delays; and in its storage capacity” (CLEVNET: 20 Years of Library Cooperation). The library’s director predicted that other public libraries would want to join in the consortium, which officially launched in 1982.

The CLEVNET consortium currently has 31 partners, including public libraries and several K-12 schools and law libraries. Many of the larger public library systems in Cuyahoga County—as well as surrounding counties—participate. According to the book, this makes CLEVNET “one of the largest public library systems in the world...”

A May 2009 return on investment study conducted by Driscoll & Fleeter, economic analysts, further highlighted the benefits of the CLEVNET consortium. “Specifically, there was a collective cost savings of more than $30 million, which resulted from libraries being able to share cataloging services, administration, computer equipment and professional support, as well as to consolidate circulation” (http://www.clevnet.org/ROI_study.php). In a news release touting the findings, Felton Thomas, the Cleveland Public Library’s director, said “CLEVNET allows individual libraries to develop policies, collections and programs that fit their communities’ needs while offering their cardholders access to a tremendous volume of resources that might
not otherwise be conveniently available to them”

A search on CLEVNET reveals that the county public library system is not a member of the consortium. However, library patrons in both service systems have another option. In 2000, then-executive director John A. Lonsak of the county system discussed the new Greater Access Library Card partnership. “It’s the first time in years the two library systems have done a joint venture to benefit patrons” (The Plain Dealer, 19 Oct. 2000). In some ways, the Greater Access Library Card was a major public display of collaboration among the two largest systems in Northeast Ohio. Instead of holding cards from multiple library systems, patrons could use just one card to gain access to the Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library, as well other participating systems in the region.

According to the Cuyahoga County Public Library’s web site, the system participates in the SearchOhio consortium. “Ohio library organizations banded together to form SearchOhio, a library consortium that makes over 7,000,000 items available to borrowers in their communities” (http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org/stdbackpage.aspx?id=11013). Based on the information posted on the Cuyahoga County Public Library web site, about 15 public library systems participate in SearchOhio.

In addition, both the Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library initially participated in the InterLibrary Loan system. The system is set up so that library patrons can request materials from other local and Ohio systems, as well as
libraries in the United States or around the world. The materials—including books, magazines and videos--can be sent to patrons’ home libraries. In August 2009, the Cuyahoga County Public Library system announced it would no longer participate in the program partially due to budget constraints.<http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org/StdBackPage.aspx?id=26862>.
Chapter Thirteen: Survey Results

Section 13.1: Background

This thesis has already highlighted the origins of the Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library. It also has shown how the two systems frequently collaborate and complement each other as far as services and outreach missions. However, in changing economic times and an era of regionalism discussions, should the two remain separate? What are the primary reasons people visit the libraries, and would they be willing to support a levy to keep the systems separate?

In order to determine library patrons’ habits, an online survey was conducted via SurveyMonkey.com between April 13, 2009, and May 7, 2009. The survey pool came from this thesis writer’s electronic e-mail contacts, as well as contacts on the social networking site Facebook. This method was chosen due to the diversity of the contacts. This route also was selected because it allowed for easy access to a sizable pool of potential respondents. Since it was an online, anonymous survey, people could respond at their own convenience. The survey was intentionally set up to be user friendly and able to be completed in about 10 minutes or less.

The contact list of approximately 150 people included both professional and personal contacts, people from diverse age groups, and people who use the library either on a regular basis or for occasional use. This thesis writer relied upon personal or
professional knowledge to solicit contacts who had previously identified themselves as living or working in Northeast Ohio communities serviced by the Cleveland Public Library, the Cuyahoga County Public Library, or one of the other independent library systems in the county. Those who did not live/and or work in Cuyahoga County were not asked to participate in the survey. However, those who did know about it were invited to pass it along to people who met the criteria.

Although the thesis author knew all of the contacts because of professional or personal relationships, the survey results were returned anonymously via a Web link. A total of 69 surveys were completed by the closing date. SurveyMonkey.com has a secure system in place to record, analyze and cross reference responses. This method was relied upon for the majority of the survey results. Some questions and answers needed additional cross referencing based on male/female responses, which was done by manually recording and reviewing the results. In addition, responses were imported into an Excel spreadsheet, and final results were downloaded from SurveyMonkey.com’s secure site as PDF documents that could not be edited.

The following questions comprised the survey. The complete survey is listed in Appendix A:

A. Which library system do you primarily use?
B. What do you primarily use your public library for? Please rank the following in order of use: 1 being the primary reason through 5 being the least.
C. Where do you live/work in relation to the public library systems?
D. Which public library system best provides the materials/services you need?
E. Would you be willing to support a tax levy (which may mean paying additional taxes) in order to keep these systems separate?
F. What is your age group?
G. What is your gender?

Section 13.2: Male Respondents

Of the 69 completed responses, 19 respondents were males. Of those, one identified himself in the 18-34 age group; seven identified themselves in the 35-49 age group; eight identified themselves in the 50-64 age group; and three identified themselves as age 65 and older.

Seven of the respondents said they use the Cuyahoga County Public Library system; Five said they use the Cleveland Public Library; four said they use both the Cuyahoga County and Cleveland Public library systems; and three said they use another system located within Cuyahoga County.

The male respondents said they utilized their public library for the following reasons, in order of the most to least: to read books and magazine; to check out DVDs and music CDs; to consult reference materials or a librarian; to use computers; and to attend special programs or events.

The male respondents were asked where they live/and or work in relation to the public library system they used. Of the 19, 16 percent (3) said they live/and or work in Cleveland and primarily use the Cleveland Public Library system. Twenty-one percent (4) said they live/and or work in a community serviced by the Cuyahoga County Public
Library and use that system. Eleven percent (2) said they live and or work in a
community serviced by the Cuyahoga County Public Library but mainly use the
Cleveland Public Library system. None of the respondents said they live and or work in
Cleveland and primarily use the Cuyahoga County library system. The majority of the
male respondents, 53 percent, checked the “Other” option for this question.

At 53 percent, a little more than half of the male respondents (10) said they would
be willing to support a tax levy to keep their preferred library system separate from the
other systems. The age group most willing to support a tax levy was the 65 and older age
group; 67 percent (2) of them would support a levy. In addition, the one respondent in the
18-34 age group would support a tax levy.

As far as levy support per library system, all of the male respondents who
indicated that they used another public library system in Cuyahoga County (3) would be
willing to support a tax levy to keep the public library systems separate. Of the Cuyahoga
County Public Library users, 43 percent (3) would support a tax levy, while 57 percent
(4) said they would not. Of the respondents who primarily use the Cleveland Public
Library, 60 percent (3) would support a levy, while 40 percent (2) would not. Of those
who indicated that they use both the Cuyahoga County and Cleveland Public library
systems, 75 percent (3) indicated that they would not be willing to support a tax levy to
keep the public library systems separate.

Section 13.3: Female Respondents
Of the 69 completed responses, 50 respondents were females. Of those, 22 percent (11) identified themselves as part of the 18-34 age group; 48 percent (24) identified themselves in the 35-49 age group; 26 percent (13) identified themselves in the 50-64 age group; and four percent (2) identified themselves as age 65 and older.

Seven of the respondents said they use the Cleveland Public Library system; 22 said they use the Cuyahoga County Public Library; three said they use both the Cuyahoga County and Cleveland Public Library systems; 17 said they use another system located within Cuyahoga County; and one respondent skipped this question.

The female respondents said they utilized their public library for the following reasons, in order of the most to least: to read books and magazines; to check out DVDs and music CDs; to attend special programs or events; to use computers; and to consult reference materials or a librarian.

The female respondents were asked about where they live/and or work in relation to the public library system they used. Of the 50, 42 percent (21) said they live/and or work in a community serviced by the Cuyahoga County Public Library and use that system. The next largest group of respondents—40 percent (20) checked “Other” for this question, indicating that they used another public library system in Cuyahoga County. Ten percent of the female respondents said they live/and or work in Cleveland and use the Cleveland Public Library system, while 8 percent (4) said they live/and or work in Cleveland and use the Cuyahoga County Public Library system. None of the female respondents said they live/and or work in Cuyahoga County and primarily use the Cleveland Public Library.
Of the 50 female respondents, 44 percent (22) indicated that they would be willing to support a tax levy, while 56 percent (28) would not be willing to support a levy. The age group most in favor of a tax levy was the 65 and older group. Although there were only two respondents in this group, they both indicated they would be willing to support a tax levy. The next age group most willing to support a tax levy was the 50-64 age group. Of the 13 respondents in this age group, 54 percent (7) indicated that they would be in favor of a tax levy to keep public library systems separate. In that same age group, 46 percent (6) indicated that they would not be in favor of a tax levy. The female age group least in favor of a tax levy was the 35-49 age group. Of the 24 respondents in this age range, 58 percent (14) would not support a levy, while 42 percent (10) said they would be willing to support a levy. In the 18-34 age range, 45 percent (5) of the respondents would be in favor of a levy, while 55 percent (6) would not.

As far as levy support per library system, the female respondents who patronize the Cuyahoga County Public Library were evenly divided. Fifty percent (11) said they would be in favor of a tax levy, while the other 50 percent (11) would not. For female Cleveland Public Library patrons, 86 percent (6) would not be in favor of a levy to keep the public library systems separate, while 14 percent (1) would be in favor of a levy. For those who use both the Cleveland Public and the Cuyahoga County Public library systems, 67 percent, (2) would not be in favor of a levy, while 33 percent (1) would. Seventeen of the female respondents said they use another public library system in Cuyahoga County. Of those, 53 percent (9) would be in favor of a levy, while 47 percent (8) would not.
Section 13.4: Overall Responses

Although all questions above were broken down by male and female respondents, overall responses for specific questions were also collected. The following is breakdown of some of those responses.

“Which public library system best provides the materials/services you need?” was asked as part of the questionnaire. Of the 69 people who took the survey, 66 responded to this question. Of those 66 who responded, 28.8 percent (19) indicated that other public library systems located in Cuyahoga County provided them with the best materials and services. The next closest response was 27.3 percent (18) who indicated that both the Cleveland Public and Cuyahoga County public libraries were of equal weight when it comes to providing materials and services. The third most popular response was the Cuyahoga County Public Library, with 24.2 percent (16) of the responses. The Cleveland Public Library was selected by 19.7 percent (13) of the respondents.

Earlier in this thesis, the “Where do you live/work in relation to the public library systems?” responses were analyzed by male and female respondents. All male and female respondents answered this question. For the overall results, 37.7 percent (26) indicated that live/work within the Cuyahoga County Public Library system and primarily use this system. Meanwhile, 11.6 percent (8) said they live/and or work in and use the Cleveland Public Library system. Four of the respondents (5.8 percent) said they live/work in the Cleveland system but use the Cuyahoga County Public Library. Two people in the survey (2.9 percent) indicated that they live/and or work in the county public library
system but use the Cleveland Public Library. The majority of respondents--42 percent (29)--checked the “Other” category.

All male and female respondents submitted an answer for the “Would you be willing to support a tax levy (which may mean paying additional taxes) in order to keep these systems separate?” question. Of these, 53.6 percent (37) said that they would not support a levy, while 46.4 percent (32) indicated that they would be in support of a levy to keep the public library systems separate.

Of all the people who took the survey, 46.4 percent (32) indicated that they were in the 35-49 age group; 27.5 percent (19) were in the 50-64 age category; 17.4 percent (12) were in the 18-34 age group; and 8.7 percent (6) were age 65 or older.
Chapter Fourteen: Discussion

Although public library systems in Northeast Ohio are experiencing major financial challenges due to the economy’s downturn, there do not appear to be any major public announcements or indications suggesting that the Cleveland Public Library or the Cuyahoga County Public Library are in any sort of merger discussions. Instead, it appears that the two systems are examining budgets and resources in order to continue providing services and programs for patrons.

In 2000, John Lonsak, former executive director of the Cuyahoga County Public Library system, said the Cuyahoga County and Cleveland Public Library systems complemented each other. He explained that the county system soars when it comes to branch services, while the city’s public library system is considered a top research library (The Plain Dealer, October 19, 2000). Although this article is older, it sheds insight on the niches both systems fill. However, based on the answers provided for one of the survey questions, both systems now appear to provide top-notch branch service and a plethora of research materials for patrons. “Which public library system best provides the materials/services you need?” was a survey question. Of the 69 people who took the survey, 66 responded to this question, with 28.8 percent (19) indicating that other public library systems located in Cuyahoga County provided them with the best materials and services. The next closest response was 27.3 percent (18); they indicated that both the Cleveland Public and Cuyahoga County public libraries were of equal weight when it
comes to providing materials and services. The third most popular response was the Cuyahoga County Public Library, with 24.2 percent (16) of the responses. The Cleveland Public Library was selected by 19.7 percent (13) of the respondents. Individually, the Cuyahoga County Public Library fared slightly better than Cleveland Public Library; but when the two systems were combined, 27.3 percent of the respondents said both systems were equal in providing services. The fact that 28.8 percent of respondents said that other public library systems in the county provided the best service shows that library patrons who took this survey feel they can find the best materials and services at a variety of library systems in the county.

Some might point to the merger of the Minneapolis library systems as a model for conserving resources. However, unlike the Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library, MPL and HCL started out as one system up until the 1920s. Although there seemed to be a great deal of support to keep the systems separate, there also seemed to be a strong contingent of support for the city and county public library systems in Minneapolis to merge. “Supporters hope a merger with HCL would improve service and hours in Minneapolis, while the county would benefit from MPL’s broader collection,” (American Libraries, March 2007).

As indicated earlier in this paper, a merged county-city public library system configuration would not be new in Ohio. However, there might be several reasons a merged county-city system such as the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library might not be as well received in communities serviced by the Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library. For one, in order for a merged system to work there
has to be cooperation among the city and county/and or suburban entities. A merged system would likely be a reflection of strong ties between the large urban core and the suburban areas. In the suburban communities, there is some resource sharing, such as fire department service and community recreation centers. On the other hand, discussions about the benefits of merging services such as school systems or police forces between the City of Cleveland and some suburban communities often generate heated debates on local newspaper message boards and call-in radio shows from proponents and opponents on both sides of the debate.

Although the two largest systems and the other sizable public library systems in the area are examining ways to remain autonomous, one of the smaller systems is examining the feasibility of becoming part of one of the larger systems. There have been media reports of regionalism talks between the Cuyahoga County Public Library and the East Cleveland Public Library. An article in *The Plain Dealer* about regionalism between the Cuyahoga County and East Cleveland library systems explained the thought process behind the proposal. According to the article, East Cleveland has three branches that serve approximately 27,000 people. “I’m looking at trying to sustain this system in the future,” Gregory Reese, director of the East Cleveland library and a former county librarian, stated. According to the article, Reese initiated the talks because of declining property tax revenue and high operating costs. Sari Feldman, director of the county library system, is quoted in the article as saying that the county’s library board could “give one community more branches and services per person than another, depending on economic, educational and transportation needs” (*The Plain Dealer*, March 21, 2009).
Although officials from the two systems are exploring regionalism, voters in East Cleveland will have the final say as to whether their independent library system should become part of CCPL. The comments section that followed the article shed light on how residents from other parts of the county viewed the idea. An anonymous reader wrote the following in the comments section: “This is incredible news and makes all the sense in the world. Good for East Cleveland and I hope the other six systems look at this now…” However, other commentators expressed concern about the proposal, questioning if there would be fewer resources available at other branches that are already part of the system.

In contrast to the East Cleveland Public Library system, where administrators initiated talks about a possible merger, there does not seem to be any indication that the other smaller systems will follow suit, or, that the two largest systems will. Earlier in this paper, the topic of merger discussions in the 1970s between the Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library was briefly explored. According to the *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, the topic was explored again during the 1980s. Kermit Pike of the Western Reserve Historical Society wrote “Into the mid-1980s, the Cuyahoga County Public Library, emphasizing its larger geographic area and population base, clung to its autonomy, as did the Cleveland Public Library. The failure to effect a merger, however, does not diminish the fact that residents of the Greater Cleveland area have access to a plethora of excellent library institutions and comprehensive collections for recreational and scholarly purposes” ([http://ech.cwru.edu/ech-cgi/article.pl?id=LAAHS](http://ech.cwru.edu/ech-cgi/article.pl?id=LAAHS)).
In addition to patrons, the independent public library systems in Northeast Ohio have their own reasons for remaining separate. Each system works to create programming and cultivate resources that appeal to their specific patrons.

One of the reasons this original survey of public library habits in Cuyahoga County was conducted was to provide insight into the habits of a small sample of library patrons. Would their responses provide information that could lead to possible recommendations for the area’s public library systems?

Of the 69 respondents who took the survey, 42.6 percent (29) said they primarily use the Cuyahoga County Public Library. In comparison, 17.6 percent (12) said they primarily use the Cleveland Public Library. Also, 10.3 percent (7) of the respondents indicated that they use both the Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library. All of these totals added together suggest that a little more than 70 percent of the survey respondents use either one or both of these systems on a consistent basis. Of the remaining respondents, 29.4 percent (20) indicated that they use another public library system in the county, and one respondent did not provide an answer for this question. Whether based on geographic convenience or the type of resources available, most of the respondents were familiar with and primarily use the Cuyahoga County Public Library and the Cleveland Public Library. However, the fact that a little more than 29 percent use another public library system in the county should not be overlooked. Since additional questions were asked regarding live/work patterns in relation to library usage and resources, those factors also should be taken into consideration. The answers provided for this question show that the people who took this particular survey are
primarily users of the county’s public library system, but that the Cleveland and other public library systems in the county also have a sizable amount of patrons.

Perhaps a stronger indicator would be the question related to levy support to keep the library systems separate. Earlier in this paper, it was revealed that all of the respondents submitted an answer for the “Would you be willing to support a tax levy (which may mean paying additional taxes) in order to keep these systems separate?” question. Of these, 53.6 percent (37) said they would not support a levy, while 46.4 percent (32) indicated that they would be in support of a levy to keep the public library systems separate. Only five additional respondents (37 compared to 32) said they would not support a levy. Although a small majority would not be willing to pay additional funds to keep the library systems separate, a sizable number would, which might indicate the type of service or a sense of loyalty they have to their local public library.

Based on the survey results, it seems that respondents would be in support of a larger, merged public library system. However, the fact that only a small majority would not be in support of a levy keeping systems separate seems to indicate that the numerous public library systems in the area enjoy a loyal patronage. For the most part, public libraries do not generate revenue resulting in direct dollars for communities. Instead, the systems are tax-supported and are considered beneficial because of the resources available and the sense of community fostered by having a neighborhood gathering place. Since a sizable number of patrons who took this survey said they would be willing to keep systems separate, this might be evidence that an overall merger of public libraries in the area would not be necessary at this time. An overhaul of the systems would probably require major branding efforts, and could potentially result in layoffs of duplicated
services, furthering hurting the local economy at this time. Although it is beneficial to
discuss the pooling of resources to leverage funds, it appears that people who took this
survey still enjoy the local feel of their neighborhood branches. The public library
systems are examining programs and resources in order to continue providing services for
patrons. Perhaps these types of checks and balances -- whether out of financial necessity
or just as a way to provide better resources -- will help the systems continue to meet the
unique needs of patrons.
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Graph 1: Responses indicating which Northeast Ohio public library system survey respondents patronize on a consistent basis.
Graph 2: Responses indicating which services the survey takers primarily used at their libraries. Note: The following question had to be broken down into sub-categories manually because SurveyMonkey.com did not offer an option of displaying specific answers that corresponded with the results. The above visual is a general breakdown showing how many ranked answers as a first choice, second choice, etc.
Graph 3: Responses indicating where the survey users live/work in relation to the Northeast Ohio public library systems they patronize on a regular basis.
Graph 4: Responses indicating which public library system best provides the materials/services survey users need.

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<tr>
<th>Response Description</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cleveland Public Library</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cuyahoga County Public Library</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Both systems offer equal materials/services</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Other public library system within Cuyahoga County (Cleveland Heights-University Heights, East Cleveland, Euclid, Lakewood, Rocky River, Shaker Heights or Westlake)</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question: 66
Skipped question: 3

Graph 5: Responses indicating tax levy support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Description</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question: 69
Skipped question: 0
Graph 6: Responses indicating the age groups of survey participants.

Graph 7: Responses indicating the gender of survey participants.
Appendix A: Complete Master of Liberal Studies Library Survey Questions

A. Which library system do you primarily use?

1. Cleveland Public Library (http://www.cpl.org/)
2. Cuyahoga County Public Library (http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org/stdbackpage.aspx?id=48)
3. Both the Cleveland Public Library and Cuyahoga County Public Library
4. Other public library system within Cuyahoga County (Cleveland Heights-University Heights (http://www.heightslibrary.org/), East Cleveland (http://www.ecpl.lib.oh.us/), Euclid (http://www.euclidlibrary.org/Home.aspx), Lakewood (http://www.lkwdpl.org/), Rocky River (http://www.rrpl.org/), Shaker Heights (http://www.shakerlibrary.org/), or the Westlake Porter Public Library (http://www.westlakelibrary.org/)

B. What do you primarily use your public library for? Please rank the following in order of use: 1 being the primary reason through 5 being the least.

   Read/check out books, magazines or newspapers
   Consult reference materials or librarians for helpful information
   Use computers
   Check out DVDs, CDs, and other audio/visual materials
   Attend special programs, lectures, or other events

C. Where do you live/work in relation to the public library systems?

1. I live/and or work in Cleveland and use the Cleveland Public Library
2. I live/and or work in Cleveland and use the Cuyahoga County Public Library
3. I live/and or work in the Cuyahoga County Public Library system area and use the Cuyahoga County Public Library
4. I live/and or work in the Cuyahoga County Public Library system area and use the Cleveland Public Library
5. Other
D. Which public library system best provides the materials/services you need?

1. Cleveland Public Library
2. Cuyahoga County Public library
3. Both systems offer equal materials/services
4. Other public library system within Cuyahoga County (Cleveland Heights-University Heights, East Cleveland, Euclid, Lakewood, Rocky River, Shaker Heights or Westlake)

E. Would you be willing to support a tax levy (which may mean paying additional taxes) in order to keep these systems separate?

1. Yes
2. No

F. What is your age group?

1. 18-34
2. 35-49
3. 50-64
4. 65+

G. What is your gender?

1. Male
2. Female
Appendix B:

The following is a breakdown of Ohio’s public libraries by county:

1. Adams County: One public library system
2. Allen County: Three public library systems
3. Ashtabula County: Eight public library systems
4. Ashland County: Two public library systems
5. Athens County: One public library system
6. Auglaize County: Two public library systems
7. Belmont: County: Four public library systems
8. Brown County: Two public library systems
9. Butler County: Two public library systems
10. Carroll County: Two public library systems
11. Champaign County: Three public library systems
12. Clark County: Two public library systems
13. Clermont County: One public library system
14. Clinton County: Three public library systems
15. Columbiana County: Eight public library systems
16. Coshocton County: One public library system
17. Crawford County: Four public library systems
18. Cuyahoga County: Nine public library systems
19. Darke County: Five public library systems
20. Defiance County: One public library system
21. Delaware County: Three public library systems
22. Erie County: Four public library systems
23. Fayette County: One public library system
24. Fairfield County: Three public library systems
25. Franklin County: Seven public library systems
26. Fulton County: Six public library systems
27. Gallia County: One public library system
28. Geauga County: One public library system
29. Greene County: One public library system
30. Guernsey County: One public library system
31. Hamilton County: One public library system
32. Hancock County: Three public library systems
33. Hardin County: Six public library systems
34. Harrison County: Two public library systems
35. Henry County: Four public library systems
36. Highland County: One public library system
37. Hocking County: One public library system
38. Holmes County: One public library system
39. Huron County: Five public library systems
40. Jackson County: Three public library systems
41. Jefferson County: Six public library systems
42. Knox County: Two public library systems
43. Lake County: Eight public library systems
44. Lawrence County: One public library system
45. Licking County: Five public library systems
46. Logan County: Three public library systems
47. Lorain County: Seven public library systems
48. Lucas County: One public library system
49. Madison County: Four public library systems
50. Mahoning County: One public library system
51. Marion County: One public library system
52. Medina County: Two public library systems
53. Meigs County: One public library system
54. Mercer County: Four public library systems
55. Miami County: Six public library systems
56. Monroe County: One public library system
57. Montgomery County: Four public library systems
58. Morgan County: One public library system
59. Morrow County: One public library system
60. Muskingum County: One public library system
61. Noble County: One public library system
62. Ottawa County: Three public library systems
63. Paulding County: One public library system
64. Perry County: Two public library systems
65. Pickaway County: One public library system
66. Pike County: One public library system
67. Portage County: Three public library systems
68. Preble County: Three public library systems
69. Putnam County: One public library system
70. Richland County: Two public library systems
71. Ross County: One public library system
72. Sandusky County: Two public library systems
73. Seneca County: Five public library systems
74. Scioto County: One public library system
75. Shelby County: One public library system
76. Stark County: Seven public library systems
77. Summit County: Seven public library systems
78. Trumbull County: Seven public library systems
79. Tuscarawas County: Five public library systems
80. Union County: Two public library systems
81. Van Wert County: One public library system
82. Vinton County: One public library system
83. Warren County: Five public library systems
84. Washington County: One public library system
85. Wayne County: Two public library systems
86. Williams County: Two public library systems
87. Wood County: Eight public library systems
88. Wyandot County: Two public library systems

Source: Ohio Public Library Information Network <http://www.oplin.org/content/find-a-library>.