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**Economic Benefit Study Released**  
**New Study Shows Southwest Ohio Libraries Give Back**  
**Nearly FOUR Times More Than Their Operational Costs**

A new study released today at the Ohio Statehouse demonstrates that the public libraries in Southwestern Ohio are a great value. The study makes use of data collected from nine public library systems in Butler, Clermont, Hamilton and Warren counties in Ohio that reveals an annual economic benefit of nearly four times greater than the amount invested in these library operations.

The report from Levin, Driscoll & Fleeter in Columbus concludes that, using a conservative measure of value the libraries' cumulative expenditure of about \$74.5 million returned a quantifiable direct economic benefit of \$238.6 million, or \$3.81 for each dollar expended in 2005. The study also recognizes that these libraries add significant value to their users and communities that cannot be assigned a dollar value including, "improved economic prospects and an enhanced quality of life."

This is both the first collaborative effort between these libraries serving the Southwest Ohio region and also is the first of its kind in Ohio. Participating libraries are: Lane Public Library and Middletown Public Library in Butler County; Clermont County Public Library in Clermont County; Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County in Hamilton County; and Franklin-Springboro Public Library, Lebanon Public Library, Mason Public Library, Salem Township Public Library, and Mary L. Cook Public Library (Waynesville) in Warren County. Levin, Driscoll & Fleeter is a well-known firm specializing in state and local budget and tax policy.

A total of 91% of the funding for these nine libraries comes from the State of Ohio. Five years ago state funding for libraries was cut significantly due to an economic downturn, and then frozen at that level through mid-2007. During this same period demand for library services has increased while funding has been reduced. "The nine library partners undertook this study in order to translate the libraries' value into financial terms," said Kim Fender, Executive Director of the Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County. "Conducting this study was part of our joint strategy to provide strong empirical data demonstrating both the great value of libraries and also what excellent investments they are."

"Where else can you get this kind of return on your investment?" said Lynda Murray, Director of Government & Legal Affairs for the Ohio Library Council. "When you begin attaching numbers to library services and resources the findings are quite impressive. Since the libraries range in size and communities served, it's a nice cross-representation." Through actual figures this study demonstrates the value of services received by library users from the use of books, music, films, reference material, and electronic databases, as well as the estimated value received when librarians answered reference questions. The study also includes the value obtained from the use of library computers, meeting rooms, and from computer training programs, tutoring, and test proctoring provided by the libraries. Some of the findings from the study are presented below, but the full report can be viewed at: <http://9libraries.info/>.

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**LIBRARIES MAKE A HUGE IMPACT** Residents in Southwest Ohio borrowed over 22 million in items in 2005, including over 12.7 million books and periodicals from nine public libraries in Butler, Clermont, Hamilton, and Warren Counties.

- About 1.5 million people reside in these four counties, and the public libraries there registered over 840,000 library cardholders.
- Almost 7 million customer visits occurred at the public libraries in these four counties from Southwest Ohio during 2005.
- In addition to these in-person visits, library users made over 1.2 million “virtual” library visits to electronic databases maintained by the nine public libraries in 2005.
- A total of 506,376 residents attended 23,457 programs presented in 2005 by these nine public libraries.
- Community organizations in Southwest Ohio held 6,219 meetings in 2005 in facilities in these nine public library systems.

**LIBRARIES IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE** “The analysis understates the \$3.81 return per dollar investment by not including indirect benefits.” Many immeasurable benefits are derived from use of information tools provided by the public library.

**Libraries Are Good for Businesses**

- Businesses obtain information about markets and suppliers.
- Job-seekers find information about careers, resume preparation, and interviewing.
- Library programs in support of businesses and job seekers include workshops on starting and running a small business, inventions and patent issues, finding a job, job application techniques, and related job skills topics.
- A study of Florida libraries (Griffiths 2004) estimates that the state’s \$449 million investment in its public libraries yielded direct economic benefits to business in the form of savings in the cost of time, direct benefits from library services themselves, and direct expenditures to Florida businesses of \$2.1 billion. By applying the same ratio in the computation of benefits, Southwest Ohio libraries would benefit area business by about \$350 million.

**Libraries Are Good for the Economy**

- Investors access these libraries’ sophisticated proprietary investment resources to guide their investment decisions.
- Library programs on financial planning and budgeting assist customers in preparing for the future
- Consumers find money-saving do-it-yourself resources; students obtain scholarship information through the library.
- Customers spend money in nearby businesses when they visit the library. A recent study of the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh estimated that library customers spend \$9–15 million in nearby businesses when they visit public libraries in that city (Carnegie Mellon University Center for Economic Development 2006). By comparison, Cincinnati’s Main Library alone recorded over 2 ½ times the number of customer visits last year than Pittsburgh’s main Carnegie Library, suggesting expenditures by library customers would significantly exceed results shown in Pittsburgh.

### Libraries Are Good for Education

- Improvement in the level of literacy—These libraries worked with school teachers, home schoolers, parents, and directly with children to encourage reading through summer reading programs, programs to train parents to teach reading, and outreach visits to pre-schools and schools. They even provided books to correctional facilities.
- These libraries provided storytimes for toddlers and pre-schoolers to develop reading readiness and pre-literacy skills.
- Literacy programs included English as a Second Language workshops, GED training and testing, and adult literacy tutoring.
- These libraries partnered with area hospitals and health-care organizations on programs to educate families about nutrition, exercise, disease prevention, and other health issues as well as to provide up-to-date health information in print, and online.

### Libraries Are Good for Society

- Increased access to library resources for those who can't get to the library—These libraries all provided outreach programs to bring the benefits of library services to handicapped and homebound patrons. These services included the free delivery of circulating materials, regular outreach visits to nursing homes and similar facilities, and the provision of special materials for blind patrons.
- Enhancement in the level of cultural awareness in society—Library programs offered free access to many opportunities for cultural enrichment such as exhibits, writers workshops, crafts, musical, dance and other artistic presentations.
- Programs promoting tolerance and understanding through the celebration of cultural diversity—These libraries worked with many other athletic, business, charitable, civic, governmental and cultural organizations on a variety of projects for the mutual advancement of the libraries' mission and the mission of their partner organizations. In these win-win arrangements, the libraries advertised the benefits of many other organizations to their patrons, and at the same time those organizations affirmed the libraries' role as their communities' information resource.

### Libraries Are Good for Government

- Development of an informed citizenry that strengthens democracy—Public libraries offered free venues for many organizations to hold meetings and gatherings by civic groups, making participation in community activities available in accessible and safe locations.
- These libraries provided voter registration, distribution of election information, served as polling places, and hosted meet the candidates programs, commemorative veterans events, and patriotic, historical and genealogical programs.
- They hosted volunteer income tax preparation programs for low-income and senior citizens.

### **VALUE EXCEEDS SUM OF PARTS**

In summary the report states that, "Consideration of the different elements of value provided by the Southwest Ohio libraries suggests that the whole of the libraries' value exceeds the sum of the individual components. The combination of a variety of activities, opportunities, and services created interactions in which each activity increased the

effectiveness of other activities. The use of library meeting rooms attracted potential customers to the library. At the same time, the attraction of the library as a repository of useful or entertaining materials attracted customers who recognized the convenience of the library as a meeting venue. The opportunity to borrow movies also exposed customers to the advantages of reading. Programs for children or teenagers made reading more attractive to the long-term benefit of the communities' literacy and job skills. By attracting children to the libraries, they also exposed adults to the libraries' civilizing influences as well. Thus, the libraries delivered a complex package of inter-related services, programs, and positive externalities. No single measure captured the extent of this package's value."

**9 Libraries Website-** A podcast of the press conference at the Ohio Statehouse will be included on <http://9libraries.info/>. The full report is available on this website, along with information on each library.

**For more information, contact:**

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**Clermont County**

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