



**THE  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
**Press Release**

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## 2008: A Record Breaking Year for the Public Library

Circulation Figures, Reference Use, Program Attendance, & Use of Online Resources Reach All-Time High

The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County was **THE place to be in 2008—its busiest year ever**. Circulation reached an all time high at 15,627,452 (with residents borrowing over 750,000 more items than in 2007). Not only did circulation increase, but so did reference use (with more than 2 million reference questions asked in 2008 – a 27% increase). Program attendance was also up with 324,328 attending Library programs in 2008, an increase of 6.7% over 2007. The number of visits to the Library reached more than 5.6 million. Use of the Library's online resources also reached an all-time high with 87.3 million uses in 2008.

**What's behind all of the increases?** Two key factors seemed to be driving this growth in use. First was the introduction of the new Main Library service model in early 2008. Full implementation of this service model proved to be incredibly successful with circulation, reference use and program attendance all increasing at the Main Library, which was recently named the busiest public library buildings in the nation. The second key factor was the economy. Libraries nationwide saw increased demand as their customers sought ways to save money and places to learn new skills. The Library offered both with a huge range of free services including free Internet access, free wifi (made possible through generous donations to the Library), free access to word processing, job resources, and an outstanding collection of books, magazines, music and movies available to borrow at no cost. "What we saw was a demand for these services that, in some cases, exceeded our capacity – especially in technology," noted Kim Fender, Executive Director of the Library. "Computers system-wide were in use every day, all day."



### Among the improvements added in 2008 were:

- Self-service checkout at the Main Library and the 10 highest circulating branch libraries became available, as did online credit card payment for Library fines.
- Centralized renewals made phone renewals fast and convenient, while keeping phone lines open and branch staff free to assist customers in the branch.
- Free wifi expanded the Library's Internet capacity without the need to purchase additional computers.
- The addition of productivity software at every Library location contributed to the ever-increasing demand for computers.
- The new KidSpace web page, launched in October, includes many interactive features to engage children in using the Library. Online book resources dynamically build reading skills. Puzzles and games teach problem solving in fun ways.
- The Library continued its efforts to improve kindergarten readiness with Early Learning Express. This new service, funded with a Library Services and Technology Act grant and funds from the Friends of the Public Library, sends Library staff and books to home-based child-care providers across the county.
- Homework Central, a new service implemented as part of the Main Library for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century reorganization, opened at the Main Library as a location for students to work with volunteer tutors after school. Avondale and Price Hill branches became the first branch libraries in the Library's system to have homework centers as well, through an agreement with the Urban League, which provides staffing for the two Centers for Excellence.

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### **Library Usage is Up, But Funding is Down:**

“With so many success stories and a clearly demonstrated need from the community, it’s difficult to accept that many of these vital programs and services and possibly even branch libraries, may have to be cut in 2009,” said Ms. Fender. She went on to explain that, “although the Library switched to a new funding model in January 2008, the State economy has continued to falter and the income to our Library declined even further in 2008 dropping nearly \$1 million. When added to the nearly \$5 million lost in 2001 and 2002 and the new estimate for 2009 which shows a further decline of \$3.2 million, our Library’s annual State funding is down by approximately \$9 million or almost 16%!”

“Our Library has been a good steward of public funds,” she continued. “For the past several years we have worked hard to find savings, cutting hours by 10%, reducing staff by more than 100 positions, postponing capital projects, reorganizing the Main Library resulting in \$1 million operating costs savings, but despite these efforts our expenses continue to increase.”

Ms. Fender concludes, “In good times and in bad, the Library has been here for our residents, offering the full range of services needed at convenient and accessible locations. It is crucial that we keep our Library top quality, so that today’s children can read and learn within our familiar walls. Our community depends on it.”

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