Introducing the Library Foundation’s new Writer-in-Residence

Jessica Strawser’s novels are a favorite among book clubs. Now she’s sharing her writing and editing expertise with you!

Hurricane-hit school receives books from Cincinnati

An Anderson Township woman answers the call for help thanks to the generosity of Library volunteers.

Vintage Creole recipes from a historic Library cookbook

Dig into the archives for tasty concoctions to celebrate Mardi Gras.
2018 was another amazingly successful year for our Library! For the sixth consecutive year we were recognized as a Five-Star Library by *Library Journal*. We were one of only five libraries nationwide in the $30+ million expenditure category to receive this rating. Meanwhile, the Public Library Service (PLDS) Statistical Report shows our Library was third in total circulation in the United States, behind only New York Public and King County (Seattle) library systems. We expanded weekly open hours at the Avondale, Price Hill, and Walnut Hills branch libraries. And last spring, our community voted to approve a new 1-mill levy to pay for improvements to our buildings.

Looking ahead, we intend to build on our long tradition of success. A major focus for 2019 will be our facilities. While we will not see additional funding from our newly approved levy until April, we are currently moving forward with two major initiatives around facilities improvements.

We have three locations which are not currently handicapped accessible: Madisonville, Price Hill, and Walnut Hills. During our levy campaign, we told you that accessibility was our No. 1 priority and that remains true. Planning for accessibility is underway with local architectural design firm FTC&H doing initial work on the Price Hill Branch Library. A portion of the ceiling fell in this past summer and that building remains closed in the interest of safety. We are offering Library service out of the Cincinnati Recreation Commission site in Price Hill while gathering community input to plan for improved Library space, services, and resources in Price Hill.

Likewise, in Walnut Hills and Madisonville, we will begin focused outreach and feedback efforts for Library facility planning purposes.

In 2019 we will also start the important, strategic work of a Facilities Master Plan. The planning principles confirmed by our Board of Trustees in August 2018 will guide the development of the Facilities Master Plan. Those principles are: transparency, maximized access, customer focus, operational sustainability, inclusion, diversity, excellence, and industry-leading service.

We have engaged the services of a design firm with experience in public library planning to lead the development of this plan. This will be a road map the Library can follow when re-envisioning how best to serve the county through our 41 locations. The Library Board of Trustees approved the hiring of Group 4 Architecture, Research + Planning. Their approach is open and collaborative—they’re experts at asking the right questions to make sure the community’s needs and wants are met.

It is anticipated that the Facilities Master Plan will be completed in approximately 12-18 months. After that, improvement work at branches will happen in phases. A timeline will be developed and shared with you. In the meantime smaller improvements such as new furniture and technology will be purchased as needed and as funding is available.

I look forward to talking with our staff, community, and stakeholders throughout this process to make the best decisions possible for our community today and in the future.
“Early childhood learning has always been a passion of mine,” said Fender, who served as the Library’s director from January of 1999 until her retirement in June of 2018. “We know that children who engage in early learning activities early in life are more likely to succeed in school. And we know that children love to have fun. I see these backpacks as a way to ensure the future success of a new generation of Hamilton County students.”

The backpacks help kids develop problem-solving, math, science, and social and emotional skills. Each backpack has a theme, like Colors All Around and Going to the Market. There are also tips for parents and caregivers to making learning at home easy and fun. Best of all: kids can take the backpacks everywhere, meaning they can learn something new anywhere at any time.

Sprout Learning Backpacks are designed to set kids up for success in school in a fun, engaging way. The backpacks were purchased thanks to a generous donation from the former Eva Jane Romaine Coombe Director Kimber L. Fender.

Sprout Backpacks make early learning portable and fun

There is a new way to get kids excited about learning available at the Library. Families can use their Library cards to check out take-home backpacks full of early learning activities.

Sprout Learning Backpacks are physically located in the Children’s Library at the Main Library and at our Avondale, Forest Park, Groesbeck, and Walnut Hills branch libraries. The backpacks can also be put on hold and sent to any branch location. Just search the words “Sprout Backpack” in our online catalog at CincinnatiLibrary.org.

Public Library named as prestigious Five-Star Library by Library Journal for sixth consecutive year

“I love the library because it’s so easy and convenient to get all the things I want to read, watch, and listen to in the format in which I want them,” raves Nanette Bentley in a recent email to the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. Bentley and other Library cardholders know they’ll receive top-rated service at their branch. The library field’s leading professional publication, the Library Journal, recognized the Library—for the sixth year in a row — by designating it as a Five-Star Library.

The Library Journal’s Index of Public Library Service is a national ranking system comparing U.S. public libraries on the quantities of services they deliver based on per capita statistics for library visits, circulation, program attendance, and public Internet use. The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County is among the top two libraries in the country in the $30+ million expenditure category. The Library is one of only five libraries nationwide in its category to receive a Five-Star Library rating.
Library hires company to put together Facilities Master Plan

A design firm with experience in public library planning will lead the development of a Facilities Master Plan. The Facilities Master Plan will serve as a guide for using funds from a 1-mill levy approved by Hamilton County voters in May 2018. The Library Board of Trustees approved the hiring of Group 4 Architecture, Research + Planning (Group 4) at a meeting Dec. 11, 2018.

Group 4 is based in San Francisco. They’ve done extensive work with the Dayton Metro (OH) Library, Multnomah County (OR) Library, Johnson County (KS) Library, Jefferson County (CO) Public Library as well as libraries in Carlsbad, Calif., and San Francisco. The Library and Group 4 will work with local groups Design Impact and FTC&H to gather ideas from the community.

For more information about the facilities project, please visit CincinnatiLibrary.org and click on “About Us” or call 513-369-6900.

New services now at the Main Library

Cardholders who visit our Main Library will notice many new features in the Atrium of the South building. We’ve installed a 24-bay remote book locker near the Vine Street entrance. You can have your holds put into the locker. You just need your Library card and PIN to open your locker. When you do that, your books will automatically be checked out to you—no waiting! You can also return books to the locker and have them checked back in automatically. Right now, the lockers are available for use when the Main Library is open but in the future, we hope you can use them even when the Library is closed.

We’ve also installed a new laptop kiosk in the Main Library Atrium so you can check out a laptop to use anywhere in the building. And we’ll soon have pop-up activities in the Atrium including a business center and homework help! You’ll also find more featured sections of the collection in the Atrium.

You can always see what we’re up to and ask about new features by visiting us on social media. You’ll find us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn @CincyLibrary.
Why did you want to be the Library Foundation’s Writer-in-Residence?

This role combines so many of the passions that have fueled my literary career: outreach to fellow writers, real-life interactions with readers, and a chance to give back to the library community, which has enriched my mind and spirit since childhood. It’s an honor as well as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and I’m humbled and thrilled to have been selected.

What advice would you give a writer who is just starting out, or one that is feeling discouraged?

In starting out, give yourself permission to take your writing seriously—even if no one around you seems to. Carve out the time and the space in your life; it isn’t easy, but it is worth it. And when the doubts and frustrations creep in, hold tight to what you loved about the craft in the first place. That is what will help you persevere.

What do you love most about being an author? What’s the most challenging thing about it?

There’s not much that beats the high of a good writing day, when the words are flowing and the pieces of the story you’ve been puzzling together start to fall at last into place. The biggest challenge, I think, is how lonely the work can sometimes be, particularly when it isn’t going quite so well.

Why do you think the Cincinnati writing community is unique?

Having been a staff writer and editor for various locally-based publishing venues in addition to my authorial work, I know how few degrees of separation there seem to be between virtually anyone with a similar job title in town. Beyond those close-knit circles, we’re fortunate to have thriving independent bookstores, first-class libraries, and the annual Books by the Banks festival bringing a steady stream of visiting authors; those literary experiences are here and accessible for most anyone who wants them.

What makes a good piece of writing?

In the simplest terms, a good piece of writing pulls you in with a unique voice or hook, and compels you to keep reading until the end. Whenever something reads effortlessly, I can appreciate that it very likely required a great deal of effort and skill to get it there.

Strawser made her first public appearance as the Writer-in-Residence Jan. 30 at the Main Library. In this role, Strawser will conduct a series of writers’ workshops, speak at community events, host a podcast, write a blog, and participate in Library promotions. The Writer-in-Residence program is made possible through the generous support of Naomi Tucker Gerwin and the Library Foundation. You can follow Strawser’s blog, podcasts, and scheduled events by visiting CincinnatiLibrary.org/WriterinResidence.

Jessica Strawser has spent the entirety of her career writing and editing the work of other authors. So her new role as the Library Foundation’s Writer-in-Residence for 2019 is a natural fit for her.

Strawser is a graduate of Ohio University’s prestigious E.W. Scripps School of Journalism. She’s the editor-at-large of Writer’s Digest and the author of two novels, Almost Missed You and Not That I Could Tell. Her new novel, Forget You Know Me, was released in February. She lives in Loveland with her husband and two children.
Diane Wright is one of only a handful of people in Hamilton County who can say they've visited every single one of our 41 Library locations at least twice! Wright just completed her second tour of all the Library locations and, although it took her eight months, she says she made some wonderful memories.

“During the summer months, I was especially impressed by the way the staff provided a safe, welcoming environment to so many children in our community,” said Wright. “Several branches were completely full of children. Symmes Township is just such a powerhouse of a library. The day I visited, almost every quiet study space was full, and as I walked through the building, there were people tutoring, reading poetry, coaching chess, and making fantastic use of all the space.”

Wright began her tour in March and ended in August. She took photos of every branch and spoke to staff at each stop. “At a number of the branches, my breath was taken away by the beautiful details,” recalled Wright.

Wright’s first complete tour of the Library system was in 2005. “I was a mom and a social worker, so I was looking for things I could do for free with my young son,” said Wright. “We loved going to our local library, so I started wondering about the other branches. Just for fun I gave myself a target of seeing them all over the course of a year. It was an amazing way to see our larger community, and to get to know parts of the city I had never visited.”

“Libraries have always been a place of peace and quiet and safety for me,” said Wright. “The older I get the more I appreciate their importance. It’s the only place you can go and spend time without money or documentation.”

To see Wright’s favorite photos from her tour of the Library locations, visit Cinlib.org/DianeWright.

International award-winning novelist Nnedi Okorafor

Okorafor is best known for her stories of African-based science fiction, fantasy, and magical realism. She’s the author of ten books including The Book of Phoneix, Chicken in the Kitchen, the Akata series, and Who Fears Death, as well as Marvel’s Black Panther comic series. The New York Times calls Okorafor’s imagination “stunning.” Watch CincinnatiLibrary.org for more information.
Happening at the Library

St. Patrick’s Day Celebration
Friday, March 15 at 11:45 a.m.
at the Main Library
Celebrate Irish heritage with exciting performances! This traditional holiday event features music by Dark Moll and a performance by the famous McGing Irish Dancers.
Reserved seating is available for Friends of the Public Library members by calling 513-369-6035.

Women’s Health Fair
Saturday, March 16, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
at the Main Library
March is International Women’s Month, and the Library wants to provide the women of Hamilton County with information and vital health resources during this free event. We’re partnering with the YWCA, Women Helping Women, Planned Parenthood, La Leche League, Caracole, the Homeless Coalition, and more. Take free classes during this event including a beginner’s yoga class, a breastfeeding class, and a women’s self-defense class. Visit CincinnatiLibrary.org for more information.

Cincinnati’s Historic Architecture
On display through April 28 in the Main Library’s Joseph S. Stern, Jr. Cincinnati Room
Since Cincinnati’s founding in 1788, buildings have played a major role in the story of the city’s growth. While iconic structures such as Music Hall, City Hall, and Union Terminal are fine examples of widely known historic buildings in the region, countless other structures quietly continue on as vital reminders of our collective past. Explore Cincinnati’s architectural heritage through this exhibit and see images online at Cinlib.org/HistoricCincy.
Thank you to Martin Luther King, Jr. Coalition

The Library Board of Trustees and the Library administration would like to thank the Martin Luther King, Jr. Coalition for their donation to purchase books, audiobooks, and DVDs for the Library’s collection relative to the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the people who were part of the movement for freedom in the 1950s and 1960s.

Demand is high for online coding course at the Library

The Library offers a free online coding course and demand is high. Treehouse offers “tracks” on a variety of advanced technology related topics including coding, web design, and app creation. Tracks are self-paced and progress can be tracked and saved over time.

Right now the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County is the only library in the state of Ohio to offer Treehouse. We have 150 seats available for six-week sessions. Since the Library debuted the service in April of 2017, more than 1,100 cardholders have taken Treehouse courses.

Treehouse licenses are supported, in part, from a generous contribution from The Johnson Foundation. To register for Treehouse, visit Cinlib.org/Treehouse.
The Library Foundation welcomed six new board members.

Jeanette Altenau currently serves as the Director of Community Relations for TriHealth. Jeanette currently serves on the Board of Directors for Cincinnati Arts Association, Cincinnati Ballet, Interact for Health, Marvin Lewis Community Fund, and Spirit of Cincinnatus. Jeanette has received numerous awards and recognitions, including the Dedication Award by the Northern Kentucky Branch of NAACP; the Cincinnati USA Convention and Visitors Bureau Spirit of Cincinnati Champion Award; the Cincinnatus Award, and The Friars Award. She is also a two-time Emmy nominee and in 2012, and was recognized as one of the “100 Minds – Thought Leaders in the Greater Cincinnati Region”.

Laura Mitchell is the superintendent of Cincinnati Public Schools and has extensive experience with fundraising, partnerships, facilities planning, and grants. She was featured in the Learners and Leaders video series produced by the National Association for Elementary School Principals and served on the Governor’s Commission on Leadership Collaboration.

Diane Cunningham Redden is currently head of CBRN & uniform sales for the LION Group Inc. She's served on numerous boards and committees including the Ohio Governor’s Council on Aging Advisory Board. She is also the Honorary Chairwoman of the Hamilton County Republican Party and is serving as a member of the Library Board of Trustees.

Kate Rippe is a Cincinnati native and the founder of Rippe Financial Group, specializing in planning for businesses and business owners. She has previously served as the committee chair of DM2030 for Association for Corporate Growth and is currently serving on the Community Advisory Committee for UC Health.

Casey Ruschman is a products and services manager for Duke Energy. Ruschman was part of the Cincinnati Business Courier's Forty Under 40 Class of 2018, a YWCA Rising Star 2017, and was named in the “Next Generation of Community Leaders” by Venue Magazines in 2017.

Noah Stern is a partner at the law firm of Dinsmore & Shohl LLP. He specializes in healthcare law and tax law, with additional expertise in corporate governance. Noah often consults nonprofits on matters ranging from unrelated business taxable income issues and excess benefits transactions to mergers and acquisitions. He has been named one of the Best Lawyers of America for tax law eight years in a row.
The following gifts were received between Jan. 1, 2018 and Dec. 31, 2018. For more information about donating to the Library Foundation and to see Pet Memorials and Memorial Tributes, visit our website at CincinnatiLibraryFoundation.org.

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United Dairy Farmers
Carmen Eldridge, who had recently moved to Anderson Township from North Carolina, heard from her daughter that the librarian at Castle Hayne Elementary in North Carolina, Lori Winner, had put out a call on social media for books for her students.

Winner wrote, “Our school was hit hard by Hurricane Florence. We are a 100 percent free breakfast and lunch school during normal circumstances and Hurricane Florence displaced many of our students. Some of them are living in hotels, campers, and multiple families per home as our community rebuilds. Our school has also grown from 600 students to 1,100 students for the remainder of the school year as we are housing another elementary school that lost their building to the hurricane. They could not bring their library collection so my 12,000 books are being checked out by 1,100 students.”

Winner went on to write that they had to cancel the fall book fair and they don’t have the funds right now to purchase books. She put out a request for books such as Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Dork Diaries, Baby-Sitter’s Club, Pete the Cat, Fancy Nancy, Pinkalicious, and humorous graphic novels.

“I like to think of the library and reading as an escape from reality for my students,” Winner said.

“The students are gravitating towards these funny, laugh-out-loud titles for obvious reasons. They just need to laugh and be kids.”

Enter Eldridge, who is a new Anderson Township Library Association volunteer. She shared the request with the ATLA group and they gathered books that were discards (frayed, written or colored in or just too many copies of a specific title) but were still readable if not sellable.

“I am a retired educator and my husband was transferred here with Duke Energy,” said Eldridge. “We have a home in Wilmington near Castle Hayne (on the coast of North Carolina) that wasn’t affected by the flood,” said Eldridge. “I transported nine boxes of discards to Castle Hayne when we went for Thanksgiving. I will take more at Christmas. They were ECSTATIC!!!!”
Thank You, Friends of the Public Library

Friends’ members play a critical role in our ability to support The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. Members are ambassadors, advocates, volunteers and much, much more. All 2,267 Friends’ members are important—their gifts allow us to fund Library programming and promote literacy. Space prohibits us from listing all of you, but we recognize your generosity and salute your community-mindedness.

Thank you especially for those Friends at the below membership levels. Learn more by visiting cincylibraryfriends.org.

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TALES FROM THE ARCHIVES

Let the good food roll with Creole recipes from Lafcadio Hearn

Mention Mardi Gras and people automatically think all things Cajun in New Orleans. However, the Creole people of the city also contribute to the holiday’s culture. This fact was highlighted back in the 1800s by a one-time Cincinnati writer.

Greek-born Patrick Lafcadio Hearn immigrated to Cincinnati at the age of 19. He worked as a reporter for the Cincinnati Daily Enquirer and The Cincinnati Commercial, and briefly as private secretary to the Cincinnati Public Library’s Director at the time, Thomas Vickers. Upon leaving Cincinnati, Hearn moved to New Orleans, then Martinique, and finally settled in Japan in 1890. He died in Tokyo in 1904.

Hearn always wrote about the diverse cultures and lifestyles he witnessed. While living in New Orleans he penned the first cookbook documenting the Creole cuisine. La Cuisine Créole was published in 1885 and is a collection of recipes from leading chefs and noted Creole housewives who helped make New Orleans famous. Here are some recipes from the book:

**Louisiana orange flower macaroons**

Take a coffee cup of the freshly gathered petals of the orange, cut them with a pair of scissors into two pounds of dry, sifted white sugar; this keeps their color fresh. Beat the whites of seven eggs to a stiff froth, and add to the orange flowers and sugar. Drop this mixture on white paper in small cakes, and bake in a slow oven; do not let them brown.

**Eggs, au gratin, for Lent**

Boil the eggs hard, peel and cut them in slices, and lay them in a deep dish in close circular rows. Make a sauce of a tablespoonful of butter, the yolks of four eggs, a little grated cheese and half a cup of sweet milk. Stir this over the fire until it thickens, pour it over the eggs, strewn some bread crumbs on the top, and bake for about ten minutes; then send to table hot.

To read Lafcadio Hearn’s Creole cookbook online, visit Cinlib.org/Creole. You can also search the Digital Library for Hearn’s book Gombo Zhèbes: A Little Dictionary of Creole Proverbs, as well as his other books and writings.