

*This workshop summary was written by Nicole Swerhun, Workshop Facilitator, and was subject to the review of participants at the workshop. One suggested edit was received, and has been incorporated. If you have any questions or comments on this summary, please contact Nicole ([nicole@swerhun.com](mailto:nicole@swerhun.com) or 416-999-2665) or Maggie McFalls, Community Engagement Coordinator, Office of External and Government Relations, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh ([feedback@carnegielibrary.org](mailto:feedback@carnegielibrary.org) or 412-622-8877). As discussed at the workshop, summaries from all 4 public workshops held during Part 1 of the Community Conversation, as well as website feedback, will be posted on the Library website.*

## **I. WORKSHOP OVERVIEW**

Terri Wolfe, Library Board member, welcomed participants and thanked them for coming. Nicole Swerhun, Facilitator, reviewed the proposed agenda (Attachment 1), and asked all participants to introduce themselves (over 60 people attended, see Attachment 2). Mary Frances Cooper, Deputy Director of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh then delivered a presentation that briefed participants on “where we were”, “where we are”, and “where we’re going”. The presentation is available online at <http://www.clpgh.org/about/future/conversation.htm>. Participants had an opportunity to ask questions of clarification, before moving into a working session that sought feedback on the following questions:

1. Why do you think it is important that the Library is financially and operationally healthy?
2. What do you think are the two biggest challenges to achieving this? What are your suggestions on how to address these challenges?
3. What are the two or three things you value the MOST about Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh?
4. What opportunities do you see for library users and the broader community to play in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the library?

The working session took place both through small table discussions as well as a full room (plenary) discussion. This draft workshop report is intended to reflect the key messages delivered, and is not a verbatim transcript. It includes both the verbal and written feedback received at the workshop.

## **II. FEEDBACK RECEIVED**

### **1. Why do you think it’s important that the Library is financially and operationally healthy?**

Participant feedback focused on the following themes:

- *Financial and operational health is important so that the library can continue to serve the community.* Specific comments included: “Because we cannot sit back and accept branch closings, specifically in regions that are utilizing the library”; “So it can continue to keep all branches open”; “Because it is a place of refuge and learning for Pittsburgh

youth and seniors”; “free access to information”; and to “help keep Pittsburgh population educationally viable”. Other comments around this theme included: the importance of continuing to provide the community with learning opportunities that are accessible to all ages, especially young people/students;

- *Because the Library is a proud institution of Pittsburgh. We would not have the marvelous plays by August Wilson without the library. How many other budding writers depend on the library? Or film makers, musicians, computer experts? So many depend on the libraries.*
- *A long term solution is necessary to weather more temporary economic challenges.*
- *A financially and operationally healthy library is important for the livability, literacy, and civic participation/democracy of the community. One participant noted that “the Library helps keep kids off the streets!!!”*

**2. What do you think are the two biggest challenges to achieving a Library system that is financially and operationally healthy? What are your suggestions on how to address these challenges?**

Participants worked first in small groups to identify challenges, and also discussed suggestions on how to address those challenges. A number of common themes emerged, as listed below.

CHALLENGE	SUGGESTIONS
<p><b>Continuous public funding</b> – <i>“We’re not likely getting increased funding and likely could get a decrease”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lobby RAD and the State.</b> Focus political pressure to designate more funding to the library. To do this we need better marketing of the Library. A library is one of the most thriving institutions in the city - tell stories of playwrights, others who were educated at library. Don’t <u>tell</u> people the library is great, <u>show</u> it. Whether it’s about August Wilson or anyone else. Invite people to come in and tell their stories. Ask people why the library is special to them to get the community more involved. Also the Library needs to create a brand. People can then carry a library bag, wear a library fleece, etc.</li> </ul> <p>“RAD was established to provide assured continuous funding for basic civic institutions. In the very top tier at the time of the establishment of RAD was the CLP. When people voted for the RAD tax, they had CLP in mind. Over time RAD support of the CLP has been diluted by a myriad of other grants that are not at the same base level. RAD must step up to its first obligation of fully funding CLP even if this means other organizations of secondary importance are not funded. The log rolling that has taken hold at RAD must come to an end.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tie library funding to education funding – make the case that libraries support education.</b> I think the largest pot of money is still at the state not at the county. Even though the state is practically bankrupt, they’re going to spend extra on education. To me libraries are education – where to kids go after they leave school. Library representatives need to work with elected representatives to get this</li> </ul>

message across. I'd recommend a slogan for CLP that's something like "Libraries ARE education" to tie library funding to education. That being said, the City school system is having their budget drastically reduced and they're closing libraries in elementary schools and middle schools. If this trend continues, the Carnegie Library system becomes even more vital.

- **Explore opportunities to access tax dollars**, for example a portion of tax on gas; we could petition for check off box on existing tax forms for making a donation to the library.
- **Create more fundraising opportunities**. For example, hold large events to be run to support the Library. We could consider something like "FARM AID" and get 10-12 cities all with not enough money for libraries. Is there promoter who might be interested in holding an event – across state, across country?
- **Reduce costs by cooperating with others**, for example, working together with non-profits on programs so not duplicating services.
- **Need to increase public awareness on the funding gap**. Educate on the issues, use graphics to show the gap in funding. The advertising folks at the library are too polite. Other ads involve actors pretending to be customers – that works. We're too soft about it. We don't need quiet librarians, we need to tell people – "stadiums get as much from RAD as we do". Why aren't sports teams partnering with us (e.g. where \$0.25 per ticket goes to library)? Many aren't aware of the financial difficulties of the library – come to schools and tell teens and other students about the situation, spread awareness.
- **Approach capital donors and ask them to remove limitations on capital funds** (for example, could show them success at Homewood – it's a model in modernization rather than building new structures).
- **Work with private organizations and local businesses on collaborative marketing events**. This could be something similar to the pink bracelet campaign on packages of Oreos. Imagine a Heinz Ketchup bottle with a picture of the Carnegie library on it – people would pay an extra \$1 for it. The Library could also work with local dairy farmers on a "save your library campaign".
- **Sell photos**. The Library has an amazing set of assets that captures the photographic history of this region. Could any of that be done as prints, especially exceptional pieces, and sell at event to highest bidders?
- **Highlight the economic benefits of the library**. Divide visitors into income and look at per visitor stats – the Library returns \$6 to the local economy for every \$1 invested.
- Focus on private funding rather than tax dollars – focus on corporations, professional organizations – this is wealthy town
- **Find a leader**. We can take our model and look for national leadership (e.g. Carnegie Institute in New York).
- **Let community members know what they can do**. "I've done what's on the library website, I've sent letters, got donor card – what else can I do?" Let the community know what they can do coming out of here to continue to be an activist on behalf of library – especially in terms of social networking. Use social media to advance the cause.
- **Connect with community to save costs**. People are willing to volunteer to repair buildings, provide materials, etc.

<p><b>New technology &amp; evolving delivery of library services</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New technology is influencing things. It creates competition for the library – people are going on the internet for information, can download books. This also creates new demands on the library, because people want to access the internet through libraries. <b>The Library needs access to special expertise that understands technology and can provide advice, and it also needs a way to provide education and outreach to the public encouraging them to use libraries in new ways.</b></li> <li>• <b>Use new technology for each library branch to do their own outreach.</b> Maybe each library branch could think of a particular focus.</li> <li>• <b>Complete some kind of general survey about what the public might like to have that the Library doesn't currently provide.</b> For example, people used to be able to go into the PITT library and research journals, however now many are online an accessible only to students, faculty or staff. Is that something where CLP could deliver (e.g. through partnering with the law board or medical board, engineers, etc.)? Funding could come to get access to things that are now not provided by the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. That access could create new constituencies for the CLP.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Making libraries more present in public's mind</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increase public awareness</b> – many are not aware of what's available at the library (music, books, etc.).</li> <li>• <b>Create an event (maybe outdoors?) that draws people in.</b> Could be a parade, a festival. The Theme of the event could include technological "glitziness" that introduces new things offered by the library.</li> <li>• <b>Advertise on buses (for example).</b></li> <li>• <b>Need two-way communication between the library, the general public, and library users.</b> Get input from them, what draws them into library?</li> <li>• <b>Every branch needs a citizens council or "friends of" group.</b> People who use library know that group exists, are welcomed into it.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Governance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I understand the CLP Board has become more corporate in its orientation over time, which has led them to CMU and RAND for advice. Which seems to drive wedge between top-down corporate decision making and involvement of community. But we if look to where the funding comes from, it's likely the bottom-up community efforts and political pressure that will make sure the library gets its fair share of funding (like pressure to RAD board). I'm not against corporate models, but <b>we need an examination of bottom up community involvement.</b></li> <li>• <b>Establish this community process on ongoing basis</b> – long term problem needs long term conversation</li> <li>• Board constructed so always majority of public officials, until 1994 effectively privatized with addition of 12 and then 8 holding corporate seats. <b>If library wants public funding, may need more public representatives to the board.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Involve new demographics</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tap into new demographics to support the library and involve them in fundraising (especially young professionals).</b> This could include creating membership clubs that hold "Behind the scenes events" at places like the Library or the museum and offer chat sessions with professionals. Could have progressive dinners at branches so people</li> </ul>

get to know other libraries and the resources they have.

- **Every organization in the city has to do its part to keep young people in city after they graduate.**
- One idea is to make libraries young, vibrant, hip, and cool places to be. Look at monthly newsletters (by email), holding baby showers where anyone that had a baby in the last year can come to the Library for the “shower” and start their child in the reading readiness program.

### 3. What are the two or three things you value most about the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh?

Participants indicated that they most value:

#### *Accessibility and spirit of democracy*

- Allows all members of our communities to access information. Keeps the spirit of democracy alive. Provides children access to a larger world and a broader view of the world.
- Serves kids and seniors as place of learning, a place where we can all go to learn and get information, freedom of democracy, free and equal access to information for all.
- Encourages civic participation and creativity, provides trustworthy and valuable information to all.

#### *Resources*

- Various resources provided for educational purposes
- The librarians
- The computers
- The books
- Community meeting place/space
- Music library, employment services, information, electronic services, computer usage for low income folks, maintaining historic books and archives, work of librarians
- Books and other invaluable access to information
- Use of computers, the books I get to read for free

#### *Physical space*

- Many libraries in different neighborhoods, accessibility
- Give the community a means of coming together in a positive atmosphere
- Public/community space that's free
- The space

#### *Services*

- Services to children and teens
- Trainings and other services
- Internet service, programs for children
- Wealth of multimedia materials, internet access
- Can go into library and touch the world, there when needed
- The programs (Bound Together Book Club),

#### 4. What opportunities do you see for library users and the broader community to play in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the library?

- *Create/belong to a “friends of” library group.* Have a “Friends of Library” letter printed once a year along with books purchased with this money, also a website.
- *Donate.* Raise the amount of donor cards (\$30-\$50 etc.). Embrace children to help maintain the library – collect pennies, make them a vital part of “helping” at an early age. Reach out to schools and parent groups to spread awareness and ask for financial donations. Have a place to donate gently used books and hold a huge outdoor book sale each year. Donate your time – volunteer.
- *Develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for the Library through relationships, not just usage.* Get people more invested through their involvement in special events, volunteer programs, contests, and other means to bring outsiders into the inner workings of the Library.
- *Engage the board in a better interface with the community it serves.* Impress on public officials the importance of community participation in board decisions, apply public pressure to find an Executive Director that has an interest in keeping all branches open and healthy.

### III. NEXT STEPS

Nicole Swerhun, Workshop Facilitator, wrapped up the meeting by asking participants to please submit any written comments – either today or online until the end of May. She let participants know that the draft workshop report would be distributed to them for review prior to being finalized, and that the final reports from all of the workshops will be available on the Library website. She also encouraged everyone to continue to participate in the Community Conversation process – and hoped to see them during Part 2 in July 2010.

## ATTACHMENT 1 – Workshop Agenda

A Community Conversation

### STAGE 1 WORKSHOP

Monday, May 17

6:30 – 8:30 pm

St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, 419 S. Dithridge St.

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- 6:30 pm      **Welcome**  
Terri Wolfe, CLP Board Member
- 6:32            **Introductions & Agenda Review & Introductions**  
Nicole Swerhun, Facilitator
- 6:40            **Community Briefing**  
Mary Frances Cooper, Deputy Director, CLP
- Questions of clarification*
- 7:15            **Discussion**
1. Why do you think it's important that the Library is financially and operationally healthy?
  2. What do you think are the 2 biggest challenges to achieving a Library system that is financially and operationally healthy? What are your suggestions on how to address these challenges?
  3. What are the 2 or 3 things you value MOST about the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh?
  4. What opportunities do you see for library users and the broader community to play in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the library?
- Any other feedback?*
- 8:25            **Next Steps and Wrap Up**
- 8:30            **Adjourn**

## **ATTACHMENT 2 – Participant List**

The following participants signed in at the meeting (alphabetical by last name):

Holly Anderton, CLP staff	Kitsy McNulty
Rebecca Altes	Brendan Malloy
Tara Beichner	Michael Marino
Donald Bell	Kathy Maron-Wood, CLP staff
Alice Boright	Alice Mitinger
John Clark	Bill Newland
Mary Anne Crecelius	Bonnie Newland
Elizabeth M. Delorian	Jessica Palmer
Phyllis DiDiano	Armand Panson
James Eash	Allyson Pope
B.J. Emereck	David Primm
Ellen Estomin	Joyce A. Schlag
Tony Evancic	Barb Siegal
Jerry Funderwhite	Mary Ann Slater
Maureen Girty	Tom Slater
Patricia Glosser	Richard Slaughter
William R. Harrison	Thomas Smith
Scot Izzo	Margie Spenser
Patte Kelley, CLP staff	Gretchen Stiehl
Alan Komm	Michelle Traficant, Senator Jay Costa's office
Bruce Kraus, City Council, CLP Board	Joseph Ventress
Dan Kubis	Lynne Ventress
Jacqui Fisk Lazo, CLP Board	Grenn A. Walsh
Fred Logan	Betsy Watkins
Kathryn Logan, CLP staff	Linda Wozman

### **Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh**

Mary Frances Cooper, Deputy Director  
Sheila Jackson, Assistant Director, Main Library Services  
Maggie McFalls, Community Engagement  
Karen Meharra, Manager, Volunteer Services  
Mary Monaghan, Assistant Director, Neighborhood Libraries  
Karlyn Voss, Director, External and Government Relations  
Suzanne Thinnis, Communications Manager  
Trina Walker, Director, Communications and Creative Services

### **Facilitation Team**

Nicole Swerhun, Facilitator  
Bob Sonnet, CorCom Inc  
Rami Bensasi, CorCom, Inc.