



2022 Ohio Summer Library Program Report



Athens County Public Library offered Nature Journaling with a naturalist from Burr Oak State Park.

One of the busiest seasons for public libraries is usually the summer library program. While public libraries adapt to help students retain skills and knowledge over the long summer break, it also marks a special time for the youth of the state to nurture habits for life-long learning. The increased participation in 2022's SLP is a positive sign that Ohioans are emerging from the pandemic with strength and resilience. It's a wonderful program for readers of all ages and interests with broad impacts in every community that celebrates SLP, and the State Library of Ohio is proud to support year after year.

Wendy Knapp, State Librarian
State Library of Ohio

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Ohio public libraries and their communities embraced summer programming with renewed enthusiasm in 2022. Easing of pandemic restrictions and a fun, inspiring theme made summer more joyful and exciting for many. While the lingering effects of the pandemic apparently continued to impact turnout, summer library program (SLP) participation has been trending upward statewide, and overall program and event attendance rose significantly from 2021. Library staff and patrons alike deeply appreciated the widespread return to in-person indoor programming. Notably, many librarians reported a welcome sense of getting "back to normal."

As always, individual libraries' experiences varied significantly, but around Ohio, public library staff continued to demonstrate creativity and intentionality in program planning, decorations, and all aspects of SLP. As a result, patrons showed up, based on feedback from the 224 Ohio public library systems responding to the 2022 Ohio SLP evaluation survey.



Programming Inside and Out

Many Ohio libraries used the Collaborative Summer Library Program's "Oceans of Possibilities" theme and developed programs about waterways, aquatic life, conservation, and other water-related topics, along with eye-catching decorations that transformed library buildings into fanciful undersea ecosystems. At Union Township Public Library, Julie Carpenter shared that "the readers were engaged and excited about The Wave Foundation bringing sting rays for a visit, two magicians following the ocean theme, a chef that introduced us to cooking and eating octopus and squid, a conservationist that shared ancient fossils left in our area by flooding, artwork, exciting activities and reading hundreds of books!"

Kelly Edwards at Bexley Public Library called 2022 "a great year for getting us back into the habit of offering an in-person summer reading program...Patrons loved all the crafts and hands-on activities and having something to do every day this summer. One family came in for the first time just to see what the library had to offer and ended up coming back at least once a week all summer."



"While this wasn't a complete return-to-normal summer, we were so pleased to be able to offer a summer reading program experience that felt much more robust... and to receive such a positive and strong response from our community."

Morgan Hidy
Worthington Libraries



Alger Public Library patrons enjoyed a visit from Exotic Zoo.
Photo by Raquel Massie Photographer.



Whalemobile at Way public library

709,187 was the total reported attendance* at Ohio library programs and events related to SLP (both in-person and online) in 2022 which included:

476,269 at Children's Programs

43,018 at Teen Programs

72,381 at Adult Programs

117,519 at All-Ages Programs

30% increase over total reported program attendance in 2021 (543,549) and 36% decrease from the total reported program attendance in summer 2019 (1,110,010). Participation numbers for 2020 were not collected.



All 224 responding libraries provided an SLP for children, 97% provided an SLP for teens, and 92% provided an SLP for adults.

"We felt like we were back up to pre-COVID hustle. We had a great and busy summer!! The theme was awesome. Everyone liked it. We created some great new partnerships with local businesses and got lots of money donated for the program. Pretty fantastic!"

Rikki Unterbrink
Shelby County Libraries

* These numbers are total attendance at responding libraries' SLP-related library programs (storytimes, performers, parties, etc.), including online/virtual and in-person programs. The numbers may include individuals attending multiple events because libraries were not asked to report unique attendees.



312,354 participated** in an Ohio public library's summer library program in 2022 including:

208,145 Adults

34,223 Children

69,986 Teens

16% increase over total reported participation in 2021 (269,755) and 34% decrease from total reported participation in 2019 (477,349).

**Participation is defined by individual libraries and collectively represents the number of people who registered for, attended, or completed the SLP. This definition enables year-to-year statewide data comparisons.

60% of responding libraries include anyone who registers is defined as a participant; 26% include anyone who does at least one thing (check out/read a book, complete an activity, attend an online program, submit a raffle entry, etc.) is a participant; and 5% indicated that only people who complete the program are counted as participants. The remaining 9% define participation in other ways.



Athens County Public Library Glouster Branch's summer kickoff program. Kids made their own rainbow fish and helped decorate the library for the ocean theme.

Programming continued

At Bellevue Public Library, Charlene Tolbert reported that patrons "particularly enjoyed our Glow Party finale, where participants of all ages learned about deep sea creatures and bioluminescence while experimenting with glow-in-the-dark paints. After the experiments, attendees danced with glowsticks and celebrated being able to have large in-person gatherings again!" Juliana Berning at the Mercer County District Library, Zahn-Marion Township Branch, shared that the library offered an ocean themed scavenger hunt along the new Marion Community bike path.

Lauren Edmonds reported that Pickerington Public Library launched a Library on the Go vehicle and outreach program including pop-up libraries, visits to farmers' markets, and activities at YMCA summer camps. Lindsay Brandon-Smith shared that "Ashland Public Library continued programming at the Guy C. Myers Memorial Bandshell every Wednesday. Having programs in the outdoor space (when weather permitted) allowed the library to engage larger audiences. Attendees learned about animals, experimented with science, learned about instruments, met some pirates, and more! Our Bookmobile and Outreach team traveled to multiple events including Art in the Park, Books in the Park, Traveling Book Club, and other community events, which helped the library reach people countywide."

Maggie Noble at Grafton-Midview Public Library noted that "children are responding positively to programs where they get to actively participate. Whether it is a dancing lesson with Princess Ariel or making a Balloon Chair with newspaper

and tape, children are wanting to do things where they are the architect and can express themselves creatively." And Maureen Stratton, also at Grafton-Midview, described the library's Up, Up & Away! Balloon Event & Starlight Movie, presented "in collaboration with a local church in the community that holds an annual summer festival, and a local family that owns a hot air balloon business. Hundreds of festival goers were treated to an up-close and personal experience with a hot air balloon from inflation to partial lift off, and, after the sunset, the Pixar movie *Up!* was shown on an outdoor movie screen. It was amazing to watch the crowd as the balloon was inflated, and it proved a great opportunity to work with our community to make lasting summer memories!"



"It has been a summer of increases—in amount of registration, participation, programming, attendance, foot traffic, joy, and more!"

**Kristine Spyker
Auglaize County Libraries**



Children at the Wyoming Branch, Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library built their own vehicles in a Cardboard Car Drive-In event.

Reimagining the Reading Challenge

Some libraries reported excellent program participation but low follow-through on summer reading/activity challenges. Several mentioned the phenomenon of people who register for SLP and are not heard from again. Libraries are increasingly experimenting with new ways of registering (or not registering) and tracking (or not tracking) participation, such as offering an open-ended reading/activity challenge with no specific completion endpoint or allowing participants to set their own goals. Annamarie Carlson shared that Upper Arlington Public Library “does not have a formal registration process. Anyone who picks up a log can participate. We count registrants as anyone who earned their first prize.”

Lisa Soper described the summer challenge at Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library (CHCPL) as “designed to encourage curiosity and self-directed learning, very open

ended.” Among the self-selected goals of young CHCPL patrons: One little girl made a goal to read more books and create her own story; another child had a goal with their mother to visit all 40 branches or as many as feasible. When they came in for their first button, they had already visited 5 different libraries. Another child made a goal to see a new kind of animal, and drew a picture of the buffalo she and her grandmother visited at Big Bone Lick State Park.

Another patron-directed summer challenge was developed this year by Shelby County Libraries. Rikki Unterbrink described her library’s new format for babies through 6th graders: families were invited to choose two goals to accomplish for June and two for July. Library staff suggested one reading goal and one activity goal, but the decision was up to each family. Kids selected the prize they wanted to receive for completing each goal – plus, the parent got to pick an adult prize

for themselves, for helping their children achieve their goals. Rikki shared that this “choose your own reading adventure”-style innovation was super popular with families, and with the library staff, who liked that the kids had to help pick the goals and prizes because it increased follow-through. All patron responses to this new format were positive.

For another outside-the-box approach to prizes which proved popular with patrons, Sarah Jacovetty wrote that patrons at St. Clairsville Public Library loved the library’s Charity Basket. When patrons read books, they got a ticket per book to put into prize baskets, including a charity basket for the local fire department. Readers contributed tickets to donate fire extinguishers and smoke alarms to the fire department, which then distributes them to community members in need.

“We were excited to get things a little back to normal this summer but found ourselves a little overwhelmed by the number of patrons that had the same idea!! It was an amazing summer and so good to see everyone old and new to us.”

Lisa Crutchfield
St. Paris Public Library



Coral craft at Alexandria Public Library



Barberton Public Library summer reading t-shirts which kids tie-dyed at the Summer Reading kickoff

Summer Reading, Summer Feeding



Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library's Cheviot Branch hosted weekly Meal Box Pop-Ups, where families could pick up a meal box for kids and teens.

In addition to SLP, Ohio public libraries continued to support children and communities by distributing meals and snacks through the USDA Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), or by providing outreach or programming at non-library SFSP sites, or by distributing food through locally funded (non-SFSP) arrangements.

In many communities, a meal or snack really enhances summer programming turnout and engagement, and provides a very important support for children and families experiencing food insecurity. Distributing food also benefits the library by facilitating access to new user groups, especially underserved and marginalized populations; increasing visibility of the library as a community asset; and providing opportunities for new partnerships. And, distributing food benefits the whole community; a community is only as healthy and thriving as its most vulnerable members.

According to Ohio Department of Education records, 157 individual Ohio public library locations were SFSP sites in 2022. This is a slight drop from 2021, when 162 libraries served as SFSP sites (162 was the greatest number of Ohio public library SFSP sites in any summer to date). It's notable that SFSP participation remained historically high even with the expiration, at the end of June 2022, of pandemic-related USDA waivers that had allowed libraries and other sites to provide grab-and-go packaged meals, rather than require children to eat their meals on-site.

Beyond SFSP, libraries pursued partnerships and local opportunities to provide food. With support from the community, Forest-Jackson Public Library offered sack lunches to all who attended any program. Way Public Library started offering weekend food bags in partnership with the Islamic Food Bank of Toledo. New Carlisle Public Library began a new program called Story Snacks: families stop by on Friday afternoons to pick up a weekend food pack and a free book. The library partners with the New Carlisle Church of the Brethren, IMPACT Bethel, and the Rotary Club to provide this opportunity.



New Carlisle Public Library began offering Story Snacks in August. This new program lets families select a new book to keep, in addition to a weekend food pack of non-perishable snacks.

"Patrons really appreciated our efforts this summer to provide snacks for the children. One parent thought that she would have to choose between food and gas for her car to get to work. She came into the library and was so appreciative when she saw that we were offering snacks for the children. It felt good to know we were doing our little bit to help."

Kim Bautz
Greene County Public Library

Feeling Normal Feels Great

Dozens of survey respondents used the word “normal” – sometimes in quotes, as we are still figuring out what the word means in this lingering, semi-post-pandemic environment – when reflecting on the ways in which 2022 felt successful. As Sybil Wendling at Avon Lake Public Library expressed it, “summer 2022 felt much closer to a normal summer – program participation, library visitors, and general atmosphere were refreshing!” Libraries welcomed back patrons who hadn’t participated in any public events since before the pandemic and met new people who were checking out the library for the first time, frequently at the invitation of a library user. Martha Scheer at St. Marys Community Public Library commented on the ripple effect of word-of-mouth and social media: “We have not only gotten to know the children better, but their parents and even their grandparents! Many parents have taken their children’s pictures with our summer decorations. Those pictures are going out on social media to friends and family, and I am sure people are asking where they found that pirate ship. So our library is being shared with others who never step in the door!”

Taryn Lentes at Athens County Public Library stated that “it was extremely rewarding to see both new and old faces making their way back into the libraries. We have served the public throughout the pandemic in many ways, but the opportunity to gather

for summer programming made our impact hit home even more. Our Coolville branch shared this story: A young boy who has frequented the library since he was a toddler came in with some new faces. His friends were visiting from out of town and he brought them to be introduced to us. ‘I wanted to bring them to the library because it is a cool place to come.’ I asked him what was the coolest thing about the library. His quick reply was ‘The librarians of course! And the second is the computers.’ We are cooler than the computers!”

Responses to the state SLP evaluation survey indicated that summer 2022 was significantly more busy, successful, and rewarding than the previous two years. As libraries start to plan for summer 2023, this look back at 2022 demonstrates that, whatever the theme, Ohio public libraries give their communities oceans of possibilities – for fun, learning, and opportunity – every summer.



“For several patrons, this summer marked the first time they came to a program since the beginning of the pandemic. Patrons made friends with their trivia team members. People laughed and learned and made connections.”

**Elizabeth Smith
Grafton-Midview Public Library**



The Pioneer Branch of Williams County Public Library hosted a STEM Camp for children.



Young patrons show off their crafts at the St. Marys Community Public Library Summer Reading Kickoff Party.



Barberton Public Library used a donation to make summer reading t-shirts which kids tie-dyed at the summer reading kickoff and at an outreach event at the Akron Metro Housing Authority. Children's Services Manager Alison Huey reports that it was fun to see the kids wearing their shirts throughout the summer!



Oceans of Art Possibilities, a community art show at Huron County Community Library in Willard. The community worked on the bottle cap mural all summer. Each bottle cap glued onto the mural was one less piece of litter potentially harmful to waterways.



Beverly Meyer, the Music Lady, led songs from the sea at Way Public Library.

This report describes 2022 Ohio public library summer library programs. 224 of 251 Ohio public library systems reported their 2022 SLP results using the Ohio SLP Evaluation Survey. Evaluative comments and suggestions from this survey are shared with the Collaborative Summer Library Program, Regional Library Systems, Ohio State Parks, Ohio State Fair, Greater Cleveland Aquarium, and Ohio Renaissance Festival as appropriate. Additional comments or suggestions about Ohio Summer Library Program resources are welcome at any time.

Contact library consultant Janet Ingraham Dwyer at jdwyer@library.ohio.gov or 614-644-6910 to share your feedback, or if you would like a copy of the complete survey results.

Permission to quote from surveys was granted by each survey respondent quoted. Permission to publish photos was granted by libraries submitting them.



Participants in a Trash to Treasure program work on outdoor pillows at Kingsville Public Library.



Napoleon Public Library decorated the entire building for the ocean theme and transformed its children's area into a beachside Snack Shack!