



Every child and teen who signed up for Summer Reading at Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library received a free book. Here, young patrons at the Blue Ash branch ponder the wide selection.

OHIO Summer Library Program 2024 REPORT



State Library
of Ohio

Ohio's public libraries led the way to grand adventures last summer, creating opportunities for everyone from babies to seniors to explore and discover. The 2024 Collaborative Summer Library Program (CSLP) slogan had it right: adventure does begin at the library!

Library workers spend countless hours planning for the summer library program (SLP), sometimes as early as October and November. Come summer, they roll out impressive lineups of offerings including special programs, outreach, creative decorations, and a self-directed challenge for community members to meet a goal, whether a specific amount of reading, or a selection of learning activities including reading, library programs, community involvement, and creative work, or self-selected goals. Participants register or simply pick up a reading record or program booklet to complete over the summer, then return regularly to the library for prizes, incentives, programs, events, and fun.

Each year, the State Library of Ohio asks Ohio public library systems to report on their summer activities and results. Based on data from the 231* library systems responding to the 2024 Ohio SLP evaluation survey, participation in reading/activity challenges at Ohio public libraries decreased slightly from 2023, while event attendance at all age levels was significantly higher in 2024, with a particularly noteworthy increase in attendance at programs for teens.

* 20 of 251 Ohio public library systems did not respond to the 2024 survey, so their SLP participation and program attendance are not included in this report.



Ashland Public Library's mascot Finny waves at the camera during Fun Fridays, a partnership with The United Way of Ashland County.

2024

396,842 participated** in an Ohio public library's summer library program in 2024 including:

256,473 Children

43,558 Teens

96,811 Adults

1% decrease from total reported participation in 2023 (399,818).

Summer library programs for teens and adults have become nearly universal, with **97%** of responding libraries offering SLP for teens and **91%** offering SLP for adults.

** Participation is defined by individual libraries and represents the number of people who registered for, attended, or completed the SLP. This loose definition is used annually and allows statewide data to be compared from year to year, accommodating individual libraries' definitions of participation.

"What a summer! We saw more people overall, and more new faces, than we ever have... Families were very appreciative, which was reflected in both our end-of-summer survey and our stats. We had the highest participation and completion counts we've ever seen, with an amazingly high 94% prize pickup rate for kids and teens."

Annamarie Carlson
Westerville Public Library



Children enjoy the Summer Reading kickoff event at the Clifton Branch of Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library.

1,141,842 was the total reported attendance*** at Ohio library programs and events related to SLP (both in-person and online) in 2024 which included:

679,173 at Children's Programs

62,528 at Teen Programs

126,122 at Adult Programs

274,019 at All-Ages Programs

- **22.5%** increase over total reported program attendance in 2023 (931,788)
- Teen program attendance jumped nearly 50% from 2023 (42,448). Attendance in all categories rose significantly in 2024.

“The number of registrants that we had this year in children's nearly doubled from last year. It was very encouraging to see so many little readers in the library checking out so many books!”

Mary Jacobson
The Wagnalls Memorial Library



“The number of kids participating in the reading portion of our program was way up, as were families just hanging out and making the library part of their summer days.”

Martha Wall
Selover Public Library

*** These numbers are total attendance at responding libraries' SLP-related library programs (storytimes, performers, parties, etc.). It is not expected that these numbers indicate unique attendees because of the likelihood that individuals attended multiple programs.



Erica Carlson and Sedgie the Hedge captivate a big crowd at **Selover Public Library**.

Programming: Adventures of All Kinds



Many Ohio libraries used the Collaborative Summer Library Program’s “Adventure Begins at Your Library” theme or a variation. Outdoor programs, intergenerational programs, and big community events were popular, and libraries produced an impressive range of programs and events of all types and for all ages, proving adventure can be had anywhere and by anyone.

Cassie Palmer at Kate Love Simpson Morgan County Library shared an adventurous program: “We partnered with Ohio Department of Natural Resources and created a program around the Muskingum River Lock System. ODNR talked with participants about the history and how the locks work. They also provided pontoon boat rides through the lock and back, so the participants could experience how the

locks work. While waiting for their turn on the pontoon boat, library staff did a “build your own boat” STEAM activity with the kids, who had so much fun creating boats from a table full of craft/recycled materials. We even had several baby pools available for the children to test if their boats really worked.”

The Lane Libraries also created an innovative, outdoor, partnership-based program, according to Celeste Swanson: “This summer, we offered a Camp Lane Fishing Program for families. The Fairfield Optimist Club provided free access to its pond and fishing poles for the program. Several Optimist members also helped the kids fish. We also received a generous donation of bait from Hamilton Bait and Tackle. The program was a huge success, with over 65 attendees.”

“We had a lot of collaborative, multi-generational programs that were very well-received. Our patrons of all ages got to participate, and they really appreciated that!”

Esther Sorg
Wilmington Public Library

“We’ve expanded into adult programming in our Summer at the Library program over the last couple of years and this year it really came into its own through a lot of hard work from some of our adult programmers. From outdoor adventures to adult storytimes fitting the adventure theme, it was great to see people of all ages taking advantage of our offerings.”

Taryn Lentec
Athens County Public
Libraries



Iditarod musher Karen Land visited the Sherwood Branch of Defiance Public Library with her sled dog Noggin (resting behind Karen). She talked about her adventures for a rapt audience and demonstrated how she operates her sled.



Programming: Adventures of All Kinds continued

At Huron County Community Library, Charlotte Cunningham reported that “the North Fairfield branch emphasized the outdoors and movement with weekly cardio drumming for kids and outdoor crafts using items found in nature, learning about racing in the Iditarod, playing in giant piles of bubbles at a foam party, and meeting a dragon trainer and his students. The Greenwich Library had Storytime Adventures Around Town for the littlest summer readers, held at area businesses and points of interest. Outdoor craft and sensory adventures had kids learning about dog racing in Alaska, discovering Australia with a special visit from Bluey, and trying unusual foods from other countries and cultures.”



St Paris Public Library enjoyed eight weeks of story times, art classes, cooking classes, story walks with crafts, and teen centers. One art class featured reverse coloring with black sharpies.



Defiance Public Library hosted Adventure Archives and drew a crowd! Adventure Archives is a YouTube channel about backpacking, hiking, and camping. After the program, the YouTubers and attendees went out to the Fort Grounds at the confluence of the Maumee & Auglaize rivers adjacent of the library to take this photo.

Partnerships: Creating Excitement Opportunity Together

Collaborating with other organizations, businesses, and individuals in the community can enhance library programming in marvelous ways. Partnership-based programming might mean giving up some control and letting the community take the lead, but that's not a bad thing! The risks are modest and the rewards can be exhilarating. Libraries that build partnerships expand their capacity to reach and serve community members. They learn about and support the work of other organizations in their town or region, and the partner organizations learn about and support the library. And all benefit the children, teens, adults, and families who participate.

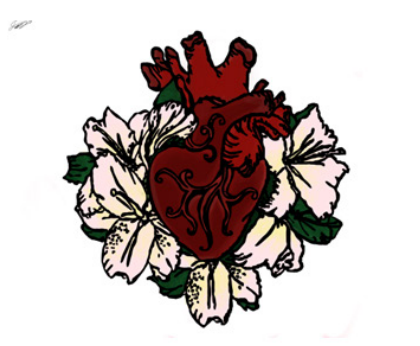
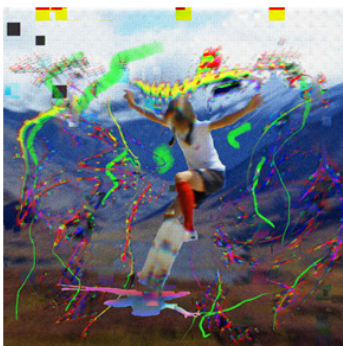
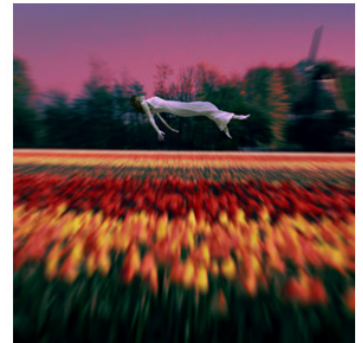
Ohio public libraries worked with an array of partners in summer 2024, including neighboring libraries, schools, parks, civic associations, YMCAs, restaurants, and many more.

Shelby County Library leveraged multiple partnerships with the school district, fire department, county fair, Soil and Water Conservation District, Parks District, Scouts, and Rotary Club. Rikki Unterbrink reported that the library is “amazed and overjoyed with the amount of love and support our community partners give to us every year. Many of these partnerships are continuous throughout the year. We work hard to say ‘yes’ to anything we are asked to do and have reaped huge rewards when our local businesses, agencies, and schools say ‘yes’ back.”

Like The Lane Libraries with the local Optimist Club and Kate Love Simpson with ODNR, many libraries worked with partners to create exciting adventures for their communities. Kathleen A. Steele at Herbert Wescoat Memorial Library wrote that “we have a local kayak and canoeing site within our

“This summer, Ashland Public Library rekindled partnerships from previous years. We teamed up with Ashland County Parks and Ashland City Parks to bring a treasure trove of outdoor programming, StoryWalks, and Little Free Libraries to the community. Our collaboration with the United Way of Ashland County continued with their Fun Fridays, where our crew set up camp with library materials and exciting giveaways to ignite a passion for literacy. The spirit of adventure and discovery was alive and well with the joy of reading.”

Lindsay Brandon-Smith
Ashland Public Library



Bucyrus Public Library hosted Create Camp for young adults led by Youth Services Manager Kolter Kiess and four high school assistants. These images are among the digital artwork created by participants and displayed at a Digital Art Show at the end of the program series.

Partnerships: Creating Excitement and Opportunity Together continued



Briggs Lawrence County Public Library hosted "Adventures Down Under with Bluey" for 200 attendees at the Proctorville Branch and Main Library. Teen volunteers wore the Bluey and Bingo costumes. Attendees were invited to join Bluey and Bingo for crafts and games including headbands, Granny glasses using pipe cleaners, Bluey charades, and Keepy Uppy.

county called Raccoon Creek Outfitters. I inquired if they would like to talk about the adventures on the creeks. They brought a kayak and other items used for traveling on the water. They let the children sit in the kayak and showed the proper use of equipment. This was their first time to ever present and they did a great job." Juliana Berning at the Zahn-Marion Township Branch of Mercer County District Library shared that the local fire department gave free fire truck rides to all school-age children who reached a specific reading goal. New Straitsville Public Library took a very different, but equally delightful partnership route; according to Linda Walters, "With our local New Again Thrift Store, adult participants were given \$5 to purchase an outfit and accessories. A style show was held and prizes awarded. It was a huge success."

Emily Kimball reported that Sandusky Library worked with several partners to bring low/no-cost, high-impact programs

to the library: "We partnered with Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve to have a naturalist come and share about Ohio's coastal animals. We partnered with the Cuyahoga Valley National Park to have volunteers educate us on the history of the park and what activities are there to experience. We partnered with Riley's Angels, a local therapy dog group, to let kids read to their dogs. We also partnered with the Northcoast Concert Band, a local musical group, who brought in instruments and gave kids a chance to try different musical instruments and gave a demonstration of each one."

From the Justice Mobile holding a legal clinic at Tuscarawas County Public Library to Bowling Green State University lending authentic period costumes for a Titanic Tea at Pemberville Public Library, partners were a key to successful, creative programming across the state.



"We had a lot of wonderful community partners who lent their skills and expertise to lead programs. Building strong relationships with the individuals and organizations in our community lets us be a hub where our patrons can experience a little bit of everything their area has to offer."

Taryn Lentes
Athens County Public Libraries



Young patrons at Burton Public Library participate in a skyscraper engineering challenge with the Great Lakes Science Center.

Appetite for Adventure



Pemberville Public Library had a full house for its first Titanic Tea, featuring a formal dining room, period costumes and music, a photo prop, and 3D-printed party favors.



Young patrons show their book selections at Oak Hill Public Library.

Beyond programming and reading challenges, many Ohio public libraries support children and communities by distributing meals and snacks through the USDA Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), now branded as SUN Meals. According to Ohio Department of Education and Workforce records, 152 Ohio library locations served as SUN Meals sites in summer 2024. Libraries made up 10.8% of all 1407 SUN Meals sites in Ohio. This is the highest ever proportion of libraries to all other sites, and the 4th summer that at least 1 out of every 10 SFSP sites in Ohio was a public library. Selover Public Library was among the many feeding sites designated as rural and eligible for a new USDA provision to distribute non-congregate (“grab and go”) meals; Martha Wall noted that “many people appreciated the free summer meals, which we were allowed to do as grab-n-go with enough lunches for a week at a time.”



Patrons at Perry Cook Memorial Library enjoyed creating ocean dioramas from recycled materials.



Briggs Lawrence County Public Library hosted a Kick-Off Party in Ironton. Children’s Librarian Jan Gullet reported that the 250 attendees enjoyed crafts, games, face painting, meeting princesses, an inflatable obstacle course, and ax throwing for adults. The event also featured community organizations, businesses, and an animal presentation from the BARKer Farm.



Appetite for Adventure continued

Libraries that are not geographically eligible for SUN Meals or that choose not to participate in the USDA program find other ways to support and feed their communities. Michelle McMorrow Ramsell at Tuscarawas County Public Library System described TUFF Bags, a local group that sends home weekend groceries during the school year: “In the summer, they distribute bags full of food once a week that have more than the normal weekend food. Our Main library served as a distribution site in our parking lot.” Tuscarawas County Library also partnered with Friends of the Library to provide healthy snacks at all locations for two hours each day. Annamarie Carlson shared that Westerville Public Library “partnered with our local food pantry, WARM, which allowed us to distribute weekly make-and-take kits to over 2500 kids this summer across 15 free lunch sites across our city.” And Lisa Crutchfield reported that St. Paris Public Library utilized the local food pantry for snacks and a local food source for Friday night teen centr dinners.



Young patrons selecting a free book at Clifton Branch of Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library.

“For many years we have provided a free book for every participant who joins our summer program. This year we piloted a new initiative to increase Summer Reading’s reach in under-resourced communities by investing more equitably in book giveaways. Research shows the incredible importance of home libraries in the future success of children, so we set a goal to distribute an additional 5,000+ books in communities that may have limited access to books. These books were distributed at the Library as well as through community events and partner organizations. We distributed more than 6,500 books through equity giveaways.”

Lisa Soper
Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library

Impact Beyond Measure

The annual SLP evaluation survey has evolved over the past 10 years away from quantitative and toward qualitative questions. While the survey continues to request participation numbers, and the report highlights the statewide summer challenge participation and event attendance figures, much more meaningful information about the impact of summer library programs is captured in anecdotes, success stories, descriptions of partnerships, and reflections by library workers about what they did and experienced in the summer that made them feel proud to represent the library and serve the community.

In that spirit, this note from Danielle Weiser-Cline at Kingsville Public Library is an appropriate closing for the 2024 Ohio SLP report, along with recognition that these moments at Kingsville Library echo similarly profound everyday moments that people across Ohio experience at their libraries every summer and every day:

“This year’s Adult Summer Reading Program achieved some great success that could hardly be measured in



As part of the annual Parade of the Hills festivities in Nelsonville, librarians at the **Nelsonville Public Library** (Athens County Public Libraries) led patrons in creating puppets to march in one of the parades.



Youth Services Manager Whitney Mahle reported that **Marion Public Library** offered Summer Reading for adults for the first time in a long time, and the adults participating were thrilled. To encourage Summer Reading registration for all ages, the staff had a weekly challenge of adult vs. youth registration. Staff from the department that had the most registrations each week got to dye their hair a fun color and pick the "loser's" hair color as well.



A local expert on Angora rabbits visited several branches of the Athens County Public Libraries this summer.

Impact Beyond Measure continued

a graph or on an Excel sheet. There is the story of the older widow who had been attending craft class quite regularly. As it got closer to county fair time, her attendance became less frequent. However, once the fair had ended, she returned to class, excited to share several stories with her classmates during craft class. She had taken one of the skills she had learned in craft class and taught them to her granddaughter. The two of them worked on a project together, entered it in the fair, and won first place. There is the patron focused on returning to craft class as her goal in therapy after breaking her hip, and the patron who had been hospitalized for weeks, thanking the class upon her return stating, "it was the first time in my life where I ever felt like I was missed ". Securing funding would be so much easier and more successful if there was a way to quantify the elevation of the human spirit. In the meantime, Kingsville Public Library's success story will be that we were a part of that elevation and got to see it happen."



Participants pose at the Adventures in Gardening & Scavenger Hunt program at Oak Hill Public Library.



Montpelier Public Library hosts an art show each summer. Usually the library sends home kits with a small canvas, paint brush and some paint, but this summer, to try something new and to address an excess of bookends, the library sent each participant home with two bookends to decorate. Patrons loved it, and returned over 50 sets of creatively reimagined bookends to be displayed.



Grafton-Midview Public Library's youth services department was transformed into a land of adventure for the summer. Youth Services Manager Pam Myers cut the pieces for the lanterns, then children assembled them and added their names when they registered for summer reading.



Young artists show off their drawings after a visit with Richard Cowdrey, author and illustrator of *Fiona the Hippo*, at **Meigs County District Library**.