

Library Grant Programs in Pennsylvania

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Good afternoon. When Walter Zoller asked me to speak to you, the first thing that came to my mind was a mock oration that I learned parts of many years ago. It included the line, "I come before you to stand behind you to tell you something I know nothing about!" After a bit more reflection and some research, I decided that maybe I could indeed talk about library grants in Pennsylvania.

There are three types of funding available to libraries in Pennsylvania that are administered through our Division of Subsidies and Grants. This division is part of the Bureau of Library Development. The other bureau is the Bureau of State Library, where I work. As you can see, it all gets very complicated. I'm classified as a Library Development Advisor because I provide advisory services to the Federal and state depository libraries, but I don't work for the Bureau of Library Development.

As I said, there are three types of funding. The first is State Aid to Public Libraries. Public libraries must meet certain standards to be eligible and apply each year for this funding. It has absolutely no direct connection to documents service, but I would venture the opinion that since it usually provides about 16-18% of public library income it would be a most unusual public library depository that could easily provide many of the services without it. This aid increased dramatically under Governor Tom Ridge. We were saddened to see him leave Pennsylvania. He was featured in Library Journal as "Politician of the Year." We all like to believe that the fact that his wife, Michelle, was formerly director of the Erie County Library System, a Federal depository library, was one of the reasons for his interest in libraries.

The second type of grant is the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund Grants for Public Library Facilities. These grants must be applied for by the municipality in which the library is located and must be matched at least dollar for dollar. These grants have helped to pay for new roofs, heating, ventilating and air-conditioning systems, and new furnaces. They have helped provide handicap accessibility and even the construction of new buildings and major additions to public libraries. Again there is no direct connection to documents service, but doesn't G.P.O. stress access and preservation of materials through proper environmental conditions? I know of one depository where they doubled the size of the building and moved the documents collection from a basement area to the main floor next to the reference collection.

The third type of grant is the Library Services and Technology Act (formerly Library Services and Construction Act) Grants. Ms. Farrell described the grants administered directly by her agency, the Institute of Museum and Library Services. I'll talk about those grants that are administered by state library agencies. The requirements can be quite flexible. The key element is the Five Year Plan, which is currently being written in each state. This plan can be adjusted annually to reflect changing priorities. This program was formerly a bit less flexible when the U. S. Department of Education ran it for many years. Earlier I said that I don't work for the Bureau of Library Development, but the staff that reads the grant applications and decides on funding used to have offices on the same hall as mine. They moved to another floor a few months ago, but I expect I'll still get calls from them when grant applications involve some aspect of documents service. We've had a good relationship for many

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years and I've tried to help interpret some of the unique needs of depositories.

One of my favorite grants was made to the Documents and Maps Librarians (referred to as DOMA-14) of the State System of Higher Education. This group of fourteen universities includes ten Federal depositories. These universities were all formerly teacher-training institutions founded in the mid to late nineteenth century. The purpose of the grant was to increase access to Federal documents by adding bibliographic records to online catalogs and to explore the possibility of cost savings through the purchase of a single record file from which the appropriate records for each library would be extracted. Because of the variety of ways that records were being manipulated in some of the libraries, the second portion of the program was found to be unworkable. But it was fun to see the various staff members explain why their library had the only way to do the required tasks.

Earlier one of the State System libraries requested a grant to purchase a fiche-to-fiche duplicator. One of the grant readers indicated that this was old technology and that scanning the fiche into e-mail was the latest technology. The library was told to revise its application and was funded to buy a scanning system. Unfortunately, this was "bleeding edge" technology at the time and the vendor had difficulty getting the system to work in the library. Eventually the system was made operational but proved to be far more labor intensive than simple duplicating would have been. I guess you have to be careful what you ask for!

A large public library recently received a grant to improve bibliographic access by adding their Federal documents holdings to their online

catalog. They are now working with the records purchased from a commercial vendor and hope to have them in the catalog before long.

A small public library was recently funded to join a regional network. The library is a Federal depository and will have Internet access through the network. They might use this to search GPO Access or other Federal sites.

A group of eighteen public libraries, a community college and local law libraries received a grant to purchase network equipment and consulting services to improve access to information on the Internet. I happen to know that at least one or two of those libraries are Federal depositories.

A county law library was funded to index and digitize judicial opinions, municipal ordinances and other public documents. They are also to network the materials for public access through the county library system, which includes a Federal depository library.

The current round of applications includes a request for funds to purchase equipment, software and bibliographic records to add Federal documents to the catalog at a small public library depository in an area that is economically depressed. I don't know whether they will be funded but I provided a letter supporting the request.

As you can see, depository libraries have benefited from grant funding in Pennsylvania. The situation isn't perfect but there has been improvement.

My closing advice would be don't be afraid to ask for grants. Follow the instructions very carefully and you just might surprise yourself.