

## THE INDIANAPOLIS FOUNDATION

### LIBRARY PARTNERS

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#### A UNIQUE BEGINNING

In 1989 an anonymous bequest of nearly \$15 million was made to The Indianapolis Foundation, creating the Library Fund, which would be used to support Marion County libraries. This group, which would come to be called The Indianapolis Foundation Library Partners, was made up of the Indianapolis Marion County Public Library (IMCPL); the libraries of all of the public, private, and parochial high schools in Marion County; and the libraries of Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), Marian College, and the University of Indianapolis. The donor stipulated that that The Indianapolis Foundation “shall give preference to projects which cannot be met by the operating budgets of the recipient institutions.” Further, the donor expressed a hope that, “in exercising its discretion, the Foundation will emphasize provision of books and other library materials rather than the employment of personnel and the construction of buildings.”<sup>1</sup> Thus the proceeds of the Library Fund were to be used for new, innovative, and collaborative projects. Core library operation expenses and building projects were excluded. This remarkable gift created a resource, now valued at approximately \$25 million and producing approximately \$1.25 million a year, that is truly unique. Since its beginning in 1989, the Library Fund has made over \$16 million in grants to Marion County libraries. This resource in turn fostered a collaborative environment among the libraries and librarians in Marion County that is also unique.

In this article we describe the history of The Indianapolis Foundation Library Partners, its current programs, and its growth over the years.

#### HOW THE LIBRARY FUND AND THE LIBRARY PARTNERS OPERATE

The Library Fund is an endowed field-of-interest fund of The Indianapolis Foundation, now an affiliate of Central Indiana Community Foundation, Inc.<sup>2</sup> The Indianapolis Foundation Board of Trustees reviews and approves grants from the fund to libraries identified in the bequest. The foundation assigns a program officer to work with these libraries. Recognizing that it did not

have library expertise, the foundation looked to librarians for assistance. The Indianapolis Foundation Library Partners was created as a result. The group advises the Indianapolis Foundation on policy and best practices in library and information literacy services and makes recommendations on the spending of the Library Fund.

The Indianapolis Foundation Library Partners currently has representatives from thirty-three high schools, IMCPL’s twenty-three branches, six academic libraries, and three special libraries through a cooperative agreement with IMCPL. Its steering committee, made up of individuals representing all of the different types of libraries, provides oversight for the organization and recommends grants to The Indianapolis Foundation Board. In the beginning, the organization, particularly the steering committee, had many challenges. Unexpectedly and suddenly, a dissimilar and unfamiliar group of librarians were faced with a wonderful opportunity. In many cases the members of the group knew only those from their own type of library, and often the needs of one type of library were not well understood by others. In addition, the amount of time and energy required to put the organization together and make it work was large.

Over nearly fifteen years of working together, a familiarity has developed between the librarians in the county. Collectively the librarians have come to have a better understanding of the Indianapolis community and its needs. Many member librarians have developed leadership skills as a result of their involvement with the group and by developing and managing grant projects. Time commitments are still an issue, though individuals somehow always seem to come forward when they are needed.

#### 1989 TO 1995: FIRST GRANTS AND FIRST STRATEGIC PLAN

The first grant from the Library Fund provided \$10,000 to begin Read Aloud, a still thriving IMCPL program. Read Aloud creates incentives for parents to read to their children. In its first year in 1989, it involved 23,000 people from 7,000 families who were mostly from low-income neighborhoods.

In 1991 the first cooperative proposals were granted, including subscribing to OCLC First Search for the academic libraries for \$66,650, and collection enrichment for the high school libraries for \$120,000. The first grant that all the eligible libraries participated in was Project Einstein to receive CD-ROM products, a workstation on which to use them, and training on their use. For some libraries the \$233,200 from Project Einstein introduced much-needed new technology, and for others it added more materials and equipment. The training and oversight of the equipment purchase and installation was by Indiana Cooperative Library Services Authority (INCOLSA), the state library network.

The early grants, while focusing on resources and equipment, also inspired and motivated librarians to reach for new goals. These and other early grants tended to be focused on the needs of individual libraries. Even collaborative grants tended to collection needs of individual libraries rather than truly collaborative endeavors. Additionally, the grants tended to be focused on acquiring things rather than looking at programs and impact on users and the community.

This began to change in 1994 when the library partners of the Library Fund were challenged by Kenneth L. Gladish, then Executive Director of The Indianapolis Foundation, to think strategically and define the difference that the librarians could make in Marion County with well-planned use of the Library Fund. He encouraged librarians to seek input from diverse community organizations and to identify the needs and hopes of the Indianapolis community groups.

The planning process that resulted focused on the information consumer. Librarians analyzed social service providers' long-range plans; met with leaders of organizations that serve the aging, young, central city residents, and other similar organizations, and held one-on-one meetings with civic and community leaders and influential citizens. Two documents resulted as the group's guide for the future: a strategic plan for 2010, and a two-year action plan. The values, vision, mission and goals from the planning process guided the group for the next several years.

The vision statement addressed the question, "What is the difference that the libraries will have made to benefit Marion County residents by 2010?" The four-point statement provides direction on issues related to information access and life-long learning. Accordingly, the Library Fund libraries have an ongoing mission to enhance the ability of information users to access high-quality collections and resources that (a) support and enrich individuals and organizations and (b) improve the quality of life in Marion County. In turn, goals state outcomes that support this vision. Some goals may never be entirely achieved, but the organization contin-

ues striving toward them. The goals focus on information quality, financial resources, and cooperation and partnerships.

In 1995, at the end of the first six years of the Library Fund, the libraries of Marion County had received almost \$2.97 million in grants. More importantly they had completed their first strategic planning process and had begun to address how best to provide the stewardship for the remarkable gift. This involved a close look at the community and the beginnings of a focusing on assessment and community impact as a measure of the effectiveness of the program.

## **PUTTING THE 1995 PLAN INTO PRACTICE**

The Library Partners were now focused on the information consumer, and the grant proposals would now address at least one of the four strategic goals and its objectives. From 1996 to 2000 the Library fund provided \$8.54 million in grants. Of this, about \$667,000 went to the college and university libraries for collections and technology, including one to the Ruth Lilly Medical Library for technology to allow electronic medical information to be delivered across the state and another to the IUPUI University Library to create the Electronic Atlas of Central Indiana, a web site of map and GIS data. IMCPL received \$702,000, but in an important development, over \$250,000 of this was to work with community partners — The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, the Indianapolis Museum of Art, and the Eiteljorg Museum. High schools received grants of \$3.58 million, \$2.24 million of this was for technology and \$1.33 million was to enhance collections. These grants to the high schools allowed all schools to automate, install instructional technology and improve collections. "Covenant Christian High School Library minus the Indianapolis Foundation Library Fund grants would be like taking a giant eraser and wiping out 50% of the collection, all wireless laptop computers, Smart Board, digital cameras and various other pieces of technology. That same eraser would also alter the knowledge of the present and former librarians as well as that of the principal and several teachers who have benefited from attending professional development as well as other workshops that were sponsored by The Indianapolis Foundation Library Fund," explained Revenna Richardson of Covenant Christian High School.

The most important new project during this period was the Marion County Internet Library that was funded by two two-year grants for a total of \$2.34 million.<sup>3</sup> The Marion County Internet Library (<http://www.ilibrary.org>) broke new ground in several ways. It is a cooperative database project that provides access to databases not just to the foundation partner libraries, but to all school, public, and academic libraries in Marion County. This was the first project to truly serve

the entire county. The project is managed by IMCPL but has its own steering committee that has representation from all types of libraries. The project spends about \$600,000 a year on databases to supplement the statewide database-access provided through INSPIRE, the Indiana Virtual Library. Another innovation of the Internet Library was its use of a paid consultant to provide training and day-to-day coordination with vendors.

Professional development grants for librarians were also established during this period. The Minde Browning grants, named for a past president of the Steering Committee and active leader in the group, fund librarians' attendance at conferences and support programs and speakers in Indianapolis. A small grant program was established which allows libraries to request up to \$5,000 for innovative pilot projects. Funds were also used to build infrastructure and to support the organization. These grants had an immediate positive impact upon the libraries. Dee McConville, of the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, attributes the museum library's ability to automate its cataloging and circulation because of Indianapolis Library Foundation funds.

Consultants were funded to support the development of some large grant projects and to help identify additional funding opportunities. As a final part of the infrastructure, it was in this period that the name Indianapolis Foundation Library Partners was adopted. This marked the coming together of the group and a growing sense of identity.

Finally, in this period the first Summer Youth Program grant was funded. This is an annual \$20,000 contribution to a partnership of more than a dozen local funders supporting a variety of programs that involve reading and literacy in Marion County. While the dollar contribution of this program is small, it involves librarians in the decision making for the broader program and gives them a new picture of the community and its needs.

## TEN-YEAR ASSESSMENT

In 2000 a major review of the Library Fund was commissioned. This review was conducted by Himmel & Wilson, Library Consultants and involved a six-month study with interviews of librarians and library users. The resulting report began with the following statement:

The residents of Indianapolis/Marion County are very fortunate to be the beneficiaries of a unique gift that produces unique results. Participation has resulted in projects that are highly relevant to library users. . . . In addition to notable outcomes that are directly related to specific projects, the existence of the Library Fund has produced high levels of cooperation and service that make libraries in Marion County among the most exciting in the nation.<sup>4</sup>

The Himmel & Wilson report went on to make several recommendations. The most important were:

- Restructuring goals so that they are client/community, not library, based. While recognizing that libraries have their own institutional goals, grants should require that libraries demonstrate how these institutional goals serve clients and/or the community;
- Involving those Marion County Libraries that are not formally part of the group in their projects and programs;
- Broadening the base of volunteers to avoid "burning out" actively engaged librarians. Special efforts should be made to grow library leaders in Marion County; and
- Benchmarking and more formal evaluation should be built into grants, not added on.

The Himmel & Wilson report resulted in a reassessment of the Library Partners goals and grant-making priorities. This led to more user- and community-based focus with goals stated in terms of community impact. The report also led to more focus on outcomes. There was some initial discomfort as librarians were asked to justify what were to them self-obvious goods, but in general the result has been more effective and focused programs, as well as measures that have meaning to those outside of the library community.

The current grant making goals identify four target groups: (1) students in the context of their families (50-60% of the budget), (2) adults and college students facing obstacles to obtaining and using information (20-25% of the budget), (3) library staff and their decision-makers (10-15% of the budget and the Minde Browning Fund), and key community partners (10% of the budget including small grants).

As part of the goals document each target group has stated desired results, examples of measures to assess success, and potential partner groups. For example, desired results for the youth target group are:

- Children will enter kindergarten ready to learn
- Students will read at or above grade level, and
- Families have the skills to make effective use of information at all life stages.

Examples of measures include items such as circulation/library use and attendance at programs by targeted groups, school reading-level data, and Indy Reads and IMCPL summer reading statistics. A number of potential partners were identified, with childcare centers, preschools and parenting groups; Indy Reads, Even Start and other literacy programs; and teacher training institutions named among the possibilities.

## CURRENT PROJECTS

A number of the established grant programs are being continued. The Marion County Internet Library continues to be funded, but it established a clear focus on expanding use in high schools not taking advantage of the Internet Library's databases. This resulted in the hiring of a second consultant to work with media specialists to teach teachers how to use the databases.

The growing demand in the education world for accountability for student achievement has influenced the focus of the high school collection grants. The primary goal of the 2003-05 \$360,000 grant is to improve student achievement of Information Literacy Standards and various Indiana State Academic Standards through collaboration with teachers, collection development and staff development for collaborative teams. Therefore, the current grant focuses not only on statistics about the physical collection in the library but also on how students, teachers, and media specialists are interacting to meet academic standards. "The Library Partners grant program has helped me work collaboratively with teachers and other library media specialists. Working collaboratively in planning with teachers before they bring their students to the media center has helped us develop more meaningful research projects based on academic standards," explained Diane Zentz of Warren Central High School.

A new tool, Rubric for Collaboration Planning Sheet (<http://www.indianalearns.org/collaborativeRUB.asp>), created by consultant Elaine Life allows library media specialists to analyze lessons planned cooperatively with classroom teachers. By comparing the level of collaboration by department from year to year media specialists can determine if the level of collaboration is improving.

In 2001 IMCPL received a grant of \$1 million to provide technology for the new Central Library and \$1.655 million for an endowment match.

Investments were also made in the library professionals in the county. To face the impending shortage of school library media specialists The Indianapolis Foundation approved a \$109,000 grant designed to assist the Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) to "grow their own." The Instructional Media & Technology Education Specialist (IMATE) grant will train ten successful IPS classroom teachers selected for their demonstrated ability to collaborate, knowledge of technology and commitment to good teaching to be school library media specialists. All IMATE cohort members attend classes at the IU School of Library and Information Science at Indianapolis. Tuition and textbook fees are paid for with grant funds. A mentor works closely with each IMATE who also receives funds toward the selection and purchase of resources to

support a resource unit in their school. The IMATE cohort will complete school library certification requirements by the summer of 2004 and be ready for placement in IPS school library media centers. IMATE will increase IPS's capacity to retain a diverse and high quality teaching staff.

Recognizing the need for ongoing professional development, the Library Partners developed an *Academy for Leaders in Indianapolis Libraries and Media Centers* to empower educator-librarians to provide leadership in and for learning environments in a manner which creates opportunities for library users to achieve an ever-rising level of information literacy. The mission of the Academy is for experienced library professionals to see themselves as life-long learners, always growing to meet the changing needs of the profession. The program is intensive and involves a commitment of over two weeks during the course of the year. This project was based on the successful experience of several other local organizations; it is project-based and built on proven professional development practices.

The inaugural class of *The Academy for Leaders in Indianapolis Libraries and Media Centers* was launched in July 2003 and will conclude in April 2004. Fifteen professionals from school, public, academic, and special libraries were selected for the first Academy. The goal is for participants to complete the experience feeling empowered by the collaborative skills they have practiced and by the supportive relationships they have developed with library colleagues. In addition each participant's library and its patrons will benefit from the results of the projects completed and the best practices implemented partnering and cluster coaching will be used to guide participants through a stage-by-stage process to promote, design and deliver a learning project, which achieves impressive real world results. The Field Project includes the collaborative design, piloting, and evaluation of a unique information literacy program for a carefully identified audience of library users. Each academy project is chartered with input from the participant's senior leader and is approved before implementation. The field project experience includes applying for a Library Fund Small Grant to fund the field project.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Indiana Foundation Library Partnership librarians and libraries have been truly blessed by a great act of philanthropy. Spending more than \$16 million over nearly fifteen years is probably not the hardest way to develop collaboration, but the history of the Library Fund shows that strategically committed resources clearly can change the way librarians deal with themselves and their community.

Over time The Indianapolis Foundation Library Partners has gone through several phases in its development. In the first phase libraries looked first to their own self-interest and used the Library Fund resources to enhance their ability to provide services to their local users. Over time, librarians came to understand their colleagues and to appreciate community-wide problems. Judy Cashe of Arsenal High School, explains, "There is a sense of cooperation now that didn't exist before between the universities and IMCPL and the Public Schools and the Private Schools. I feel we all respect each others point of view and have benefited from seeing things through others eyes."

Out of this some truly collaborative projects developed. With the passage of more time and with some prodding from the foundation, librarians developed a stronger sense of the communities' needs. This has brought both a broader view of how libraries can contribute to their communities as well as a broader view of the skills and expertise that is required to make these contributions. It has brought both an investment in ourselves and more outreach to other organizations in the community. Sharon Shockey, Beech Grove High School, sums up the most important outcome of the Library Partners when she says, "Connecting with others and knowing what issues and plans they have has a tremendous impact on me as a professional—that has no monetary value but is probably one of the most important contributions of the Library Partners. . . . The 'shared vision' makes us all work even harder to achieve what is expected of us. We are no longer just one person working in a secluded building without knowledge of what others are achieving!"

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Library Fund Trust, quoted in Himmel & Wilson, Library Consultants, *The Indianapolis Foundation Library Fund: An Evaluation Prepared for The Indianapolis Foundation and The Indianapolis Foundation Library Partners*, February 10, 2001, Milton, Wisconsin, page 3.

<sup>2</sup> In this article, for the purpose of simplicity, we will refer only to the Indianapolis Foundation. The Indianapolis Foundation, an affiliate of CICF and the Library Fund, is under the responsibility of The Indianapolis Foundation Board of Trustees.

<sup>3</sup> Bevilacqua, Ann; Lynn Hobbs, and David W. Lewis, "Marion County Internet Library," *Indiana Libraries* 1999 18(Supplement 1):31-5.

<sup>4</sup> Himmel & Wilson, Library Consultants, *The Indianapolis Foundation Library Fund: An Evaluation Prepared for The Indianapolis Foundation and The Indianapolis Foundation Library Partners*, February 10, 2001, Milton, Wisconsin, page 1.

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