



**THE
PUBLIC
LIBRARY**

of Cincinnati
and
Hamilton County

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April 20, 2009

Senator Bill Seitz
Ohio Senate
Senate Building Room 143, 1st Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Senator Seitz:

I understand that Joyce Rogers is again contacting you concerning the proposed merger of the mailing services of the Cincinnati and Cleveland libraries for the blind and physically handicapped. I wanted to be certain that you had accurate information about this proposal and the changes it would mean for the patrons of the Cincinnati Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Currently, Ohio residents receive service from two libraries for the blind (LFB), one in Cincinnati and one in Cleveland. Since 2000, funding for this service has been reduced by more than 30%. In preparing our budget last summer it became apparent that it was no longer feasible to operate this service in the same way. After meeting with our colleagues in Cleveland and with the State Librarian, it was determined that merging the mailing service was the best solution for keeping the best level of service available. The State Library's budget was, accordingly, submitted with the two LFBs merged into one in Cleveland. Before submitting the budget, I did meet with the Cincinnati chapter of the National Federation of the Blind. Their two concerns: keeping adaptive equipment and a browsing collection available locally were both addressed in our plan for the merger. Indeed, the browsing collection would remain in its current location at the Main Library and the number of library locations offering adaptive equipment would be increased to provide better access to more people.

Patrons place requests for materials from LFB via toll-free phone or over the Internet and the items are mailed to and returned from their homes at no cost. After observing the use of this service for several years we have found that it is very rare for a patron to actually come into our Library and check out the talking books. Knowing this makes it possible for the mail service to be operated from one central point eliminating duplicate costs for space, computer equipment, and other operating costs. These savings can then be used to increase staffing and marketing of the service resulting in a faster, more efficient service with increased utilization.

Should the General Assembly decide to separate the current budget request into two libraries for the blind, both Cincinnati and Cleveland will be forced to make substantial cuts to staffing and service hours. Cincinnati's public library and Cleveland's public library currently subsidize this service, something we can no longer afford to do.

We believe that having one Library for the Blind in Ohio operating from Cleveland will provide excellent service to the whole state. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Kimber L. Fender
Executive Director