

Your Library Questions Answered

Source: Rob Wang
Chippewa River District Library
Programs & Outreach Coordinator

“Doesn’t the city or county provide funding for the library?” “If the library is running out of funding, how can they provide all the events and activities for the Summer Reading Program?” “I didn’t realize the last election was also for operating the library.” These are statements or questions I receive almost every day, and all can be easily answered.

“Doesn’t the city or county provide funding to operate the library system?” No. On May 20th, 1998 the Library of Michigan officially recognized the Chippewa River District Library as a legally established district library system, making it its own independent governmental agency. On December 21st, 1998 district voters approved a millage of up to 1.75 mills to operate the district library system for ten years. That millage is what funds the two in-district branches: Veterans Memorial Library in Mt. Pleasant and Faith Johnston Memorial Library in Rosebush. Over 70% of the in-district branches operating budgets come from that millage, which expires at the end of this year (the funding runs out). Through a contract with the library district, Isabella County only provides funding for the four out-district branches (Weidman, Winn, Blanchard, & Shepherd). No county money can be used to operate the in-district branches, and no district money can be used to operate the out-county branches.

“If the library is running out of funding, how can they provide all the events and activities for the Summer Reading Program”? The Summer Reading Program is almost

entirely funded by grants and donations. We were fortunate enough to secure grants from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, Art Reach of Mid-Michigan, the Friends of the Library, and the Mt. Pleasant Area Community Foundation to fund this year's Summer Reading Program. Very few library resources are used to fund the Summer Reading Program.

"I didn't realize the last election was also for operating the library". On May 6th the Chippewa River District Library System asked voters to approve a millage that would have funded a building expansion, building renovations, and operations for the next twenty years. The community stepped forward and said now is not the time for a new building project, and we listened. So, on August 5th, 2008, the Chippewa River District Library System will ask voters to simply re-approve the same 1.75 mills for ten years originally approved by voters ten years ago. This millage is for operations only. Without this operating millage the library district's current funding will run out. Once that funding runs out, the Chippewa River District Library System will have to close Veterans Memorial Library in Mt. Pleasant, and Faith Johnston Memorial Library in Rosebush. Once the two in-district branches close the library district will most likely lose its contract with the county, resulting in the four out-district branches closing as well, leaving our community without public library services for the first time since 1910.

I hope this answers your questions, or at least clears up some of the confusion. As always, if you have any questions regarding the upcoming millage election or how the library system works you can call 773-3242 or click crdl.org.