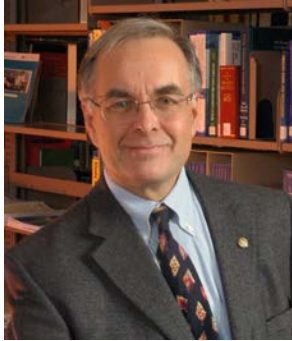


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Library Director Carlton Sears to Step Down

YOUNGSTOWN (July 20, 2011/FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE) – Carlton A. Sears, director of the Public Library of Youngstown & Mahoning County announced to the Board of Trustees today that he would be stepping down as director after 15 years of service, which have been highlighted by a myriad of accomplishments. Sears will stay until March 30, 2012, to ensure a smooth transition.

Overview of Sears' Career at the Library

Carlton A. Sears came to the Mahoning County library system in February of 1997, bringing with him innovative ideas and a genuine love of libraries and the communities they serve. He quickly became active in key organizations and integrated the Library into many facets of the community. His vision of the Library as an integral, truly essential, institution in the Mahoning Valley has become a reality.

“Those that know me know that public libraries are more than a profession to me,” Sears says. “For the past 38 years that I’ve worked in the field, public libraries have been an extraordinarily good fit with my personal passions: engaging individuals and communities and helping each to see their possibilities and realize their potential.”

Over the years, Sears also kept his focus on improving Library services in cost-effective ways and reaching out to those in need of the help and services a library can provide.

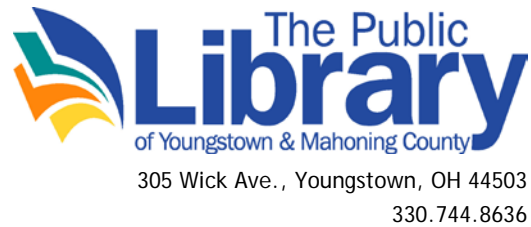
From his earliest days as director, in developing plans and working on building projects, Sears has included the community in discussions aimed at improving what the Library does and the communities they serve. The Library continues to reach out to hear the hopes and ideas of residents, incorporating them whenever possible in plans and actions.

Why He Is Stepping Down

Why make the decision to leave at this time? “The Library’s financial footing is the strongest it has been in many years. It is a respected institution in the community. Among its peers, it is highly regarded. The Library is well-positioned to move forward on a number of stimulating projects that have been anticipated for many years,” Sears explains. “In many ways, this is a wonderful time to be this Library’s Director. The very things that make it such a good time to stay also make it an optimal time to recruit. The decision to announce my retirement now has been made with this in mind.”

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He adds, “The person coming into the position will need time to get to know the community, the staff and Board before they must contend with levy and contract issues. Making this decision now gives a new director the opportunity to do so.”

Sears’ Future Plans

His passion for engaging the community and helping it grow, transform and reach its full potential remains a driving force with Sears. And this Valley will continue to benefit from his work as he assumes new responsibilities. Sears will be joining in the efforts of the small but catalytic nonprofit, nonpartisan Harwood Institute for Public Innovation.

The Harwood Institute inspires and guides people to step forward and take action rooted in their community and stay true to themselves. Harwood works with individuals, organizations and communities to turn outward and develop their ability to make more intentional choices and judgments that lead to impact. By actively partnering with organizations such as United Way Worldwide, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Harwood Institute is taking this approach to scale to allow everyday people to use these ideas in their own communities

“My interest in working to advance individuals and communities has evolved over time. At the Library, I have used the approaches and tools of the Harwood Institute as a framework for decision-making and to engage groups across the county in authentic conversation,” Sears notes.

“The work of the Harwood Institute is transformative and tangible. It fits extraordinarily well with my personal aspirations. Were it not for the opportunity to devote my full energies to their endeavors, I would not be leaving a profession I love, and colleagues of whom I’ve grown quite fond, at a time of such great possibility,” he adds.

Accomplishments During Sears’ Tenure

During his time at the Library, Sears has implemented the strategic plan in a way that has strengthened the Library and its services and materials, making the system more relevant than ever to this community.

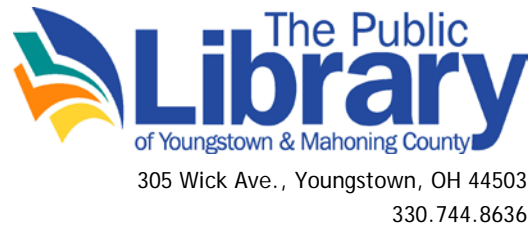
Under his leadership, many programs and projects began which have far-reaching impact on the health of a community.

- Early Literacy Program and ‘Baby Brilliant’

At the core of this Early Literacy program is a focus on applying the latest research in baby brain development to the work the library does with children and those that care for them. The program models behaviors and provides resources that enhance a child’s ability to learn to read

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at the most critical early years. The newest branches built in recent years have areas dedicated to Early Literacy.

-Smart Money Initiative

The purpose of the Library's Smart Money program is to assist families in building a better financial future through programs, exhibits, financial literacy kits for children, and to partner with local agencies that provide assistance in resolving money issues. The Smart Money project has been funded largely through a grant from the American Library Association's Smart Investing @ Your Library program and the FINRA (Financial Industry Regulatory Authority) Investor Education Foundation.

"In 2008, when we received the first Smart Money grant, we had no idea that the economy would change so drastically and that more people than ever would be in need of the Library's financial resources and services as they struggle with saving money, balancing their budgets, making the best spending choices, and so much more," Sears notes. "Financial literacy has become a necessity in these times. The Library is fortunate to be working with many community partners who also want to help strengthen the economy in our area and the financial well-being of our residents. Together, these partners are making a difference in people's lives."

- Teen Services

A program that serves teens in grades 7-12, TeenXTreme, had its beginnings in 2001 under Sears' leadership. Teen librarians find creative ways to reach young people, whose use of libraries sometimes diminishes during the teen years.

-New Libraries

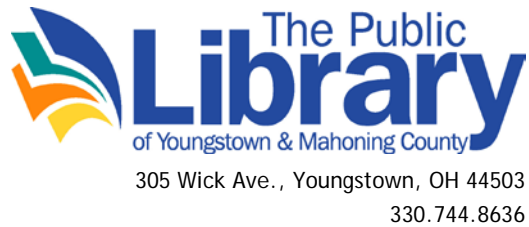
During his tenure, Sears has directed construction of five libraries, in keeping with the goals of the strategic plan: Poland, Austintown, Springfield, Newport, and East. And he intends to complete planning for a new branch serving the Jackson Milton area of the county. In each area where new branches were opened, Library usage has dramatically increased, demonstrating the need for library service.

-Technological Advances

Over the past 15 years, Mahoning County's libraries have been brought to the technological forefront. All buildings were wired for high-speed Internet, making the library the primary public place for Internet access. A website was launched that today provides a depth of services seen in few libraries. Classes are offered to those new to computers. A new mobile app was recently introduced for all web-enabled smart phones.

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-Enhancing Library Finances

Sears brought about new, innovative ways for the Library to grow its finances, such as cafes in new libraries, a Book Store and Gift Shop operated by a restructured Friends of the Library, the rental of meeting rooms for private functions, and applications for a number of innovative grants. These supplements have enhanced the Library's budget, which was especially important when the economy dipped.

-Public Outreach through Communications Initiative

Communication has been of key importance to the director, who had the insight to initiate a campaign which placed the Library squarely in the public eye, communicated and strengthened its relevance to the community, and reinforced what Library patrons are always heard saying, "I Love My Library."

-Redesigned Vehicle Delivery System

The vehicle delivery system of the Library was redesigned under Sears' direction resulting in dramatically increased productivity. The redesigned system was featured in the recently published book, "Lean Library Management: Eleven Strategies for Reducing Costs and Improving Customer Services," by John Huber.

-Community Activities and Recognitions

The interest Sears has in helping a community grow and prosper is evident in his participation on important area organizations, such as the Wick Neighbors/Smoky Hollow revitalization project. In 2005, Sears received the Urban Library Council's (ULC) national award, "The Urban Player Award" for his involvement in this project. The ULC recognizes individuals who have provided exceptional leadership in both the library and its community. This award focuses attention on the Library's role in enriching the urban communities they serve. "Carlton's part in the development of Smoky Hollow is a wonderful example of the vital role library leaders can play and are playing in civic arenas," said Martín Gómez, then-president of the ULC.

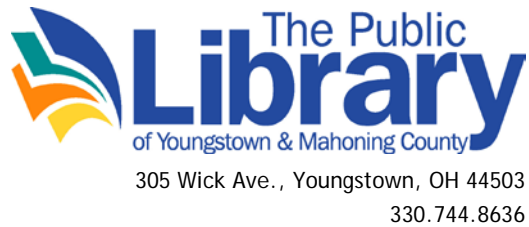
Sears was honored in 2010 for exceptional personal and professional accomplishment with the Alumni Citation Award at Wittenberg University. He was in the class of 1972.

The Library director was profiled in a 2008 Harwood Institute report, "Public Innovators: Forces for Social Change and Civic Renewal." This report was prepared with the support of the Kettering Foundation. The report notes, "Over the past decade, he [Sears] has transformed the Mahoning County library system into a catalyst for change and revitalization."

Sears has served a number of community groups, as follows: Executive Board and founding board member, Wick Neighbors, Inc.; member and past-president, Rotary Club of Youngstown;

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Executive Committee member and past president, Advisory Board, Salvation Army of Mahoning County; Founding member and co-chair, Mahoning County Financial Stability Partnership Finance Committee; American Library Association and its Library Administration and Management Association; Public Library Association; Urban Libraries Council including past chair, Award of Excellence in Public Library Management; Ohio Library Council, Former Treasurer of the OLC Board, currently on its Government Relations Committee; served as a consultant on “21st Century Libraries” projects in Anchorage, AK (2009), Scranton, PA (2008), Newark, NJ (2007), and Jacksonville, FL (2006), in conjunction with Himmel and Wilson Library Consultants; member and finance committee chair, First Covenant Church, Boardman.

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