



Frequently Asked Questions:

On Ohio's Regional Library Systems and Your Northeast Ohio Regional Library System



Q What is a "Regional Library System?"

The Regional Library Systems (RLS) are membership organizations partially funded by the State Library of Ohio and by membership dues. The Charge of the RLS is to provide support services such as continuing education and training, technology support and consulting to all types of libraries in a designated 22 county area of Ohio.

Q Has Ohio always had Regionals?

For many years, Ohio had 7 RLS, each of which covered a portion of the state. However, this configuration did not cover the entire state. In 2006, the 7 RLS were dissolved by the State Library of Ohio and the current 4 systems were created. Each RLS (NEO-RLS, SWON, NORWELD, SERLS) covers a 22 county area within the state's 88 counties, thus covering the entire state.

Q Which libraries belong to Ohio's Regionals?

Every school, public, academic and special library in Ohio is considered a "geographic" or basic member of their Regional Library System. Some libraries are dues-paying members and receive special and discounted services as a result of their membership.

Q How are Regionals funded?

A line in the State Library of Ohio's budget provides \$120,000 each (as of 2021) to support the operation of the Regional Library Systems. Each RLS also has their own individual structure for dues and benefits for paying members. The RLS may also charge fees for some services.

Q How is a Regional different from a regular library?

Libraries are funded differently and provide direct service to patrons, such as reference service or story times for children. Their funding comes from the Public Library Fund and is sometimes augmented by local real estate taxes.

Regional Library Systems are funded through a line in the State Library of Ohio's budget and through membership dues. The RLS assists libraries in providing direct service by offering continuing education on a wide variety of topics, hosting events to help libraries prepare for programs such as Summer Reading and by providing essential consulting services.

Q Why are Regionals important?

Regional Library Systems help to provide the continuing education and training needed by library staff in their service to the citizens of all Ohio communities. The RLS augments the services of all libraries through cost-effective technology support and consulting. In addition, the RLS provides material support for libraries that cannot afford to maintain large items for book discussion talks, videogames, etc. Regional Library Systems can also help facilitate coordination of projects among multiple libraries.

Q What would happen if Ohio didn't have regionals?

- Thousands of Ohio library staff members would not receive the professional training they need to serve their communities
- Access to countless story kits, books, video games and other valuable materials would be lost
- Loss of collaboration, cooperation and book purchasing
- Affordable consulting services for strategic planning, board development and staff day planning no longer available

Q Who can be a member of NEO-RLS?

All libraries existing within the counties of Ashland, Ashtabula, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Cuyahoga, Erie, Geauga, Harrison, Holmes, Knox, Lake, Lorain, Mahoning, Medina, Portage, Richland, Stark, Summit, Trumbull, Tuscarawas, and Wayne are eligible for membership.

Q What is a dues paying Member?

Dues-paying Members support NEO-RLS through the payment of annual dues. As a result, they enjoy additional benefits and discounted continuing education programs and services. Discounts are dependent upon the level of Membership selected, Gold, Silver or Bronze and the cost is currently based on a library's FTE count as reported to the State Library of Ohio.

Q Why should my library join NEO-RLS?

NEO-RLS offers multiple opportunities for connecting with colleagues from multi-type libraries and from throughout the region. Whether you are new to libraries or a seasoned professional, the ability to share and promote ideas and learn from each other is energizing, informative and essential to success. Connect with others through Continuing Education opportunities, our Chats, Networks, and Advisory Groups. All libraries are automatically Geographic Members of NEO-RLS if they exist within our 22 county region. Gold, Silver and Bronze dues-paying members are able to take advantage of the many ways to connect through discounted continuing education programs and additional benefits. See our Membership Benefits on our website (www.neo-rls.org) for additional information.

Q What if my library is not in the NEO-RLS region? Can I still attend continuing education programs and webinars?

Yes! We welcome participation from every library. If your library is a member of your regional (NORWELD, SWON, or SERLS) you will receive the Bronze Member discount on programs and services. If your library is not a member of your regional, you will be considered a Geographic Member and pay full price for programs and services.

Q What is a Geographic Member?

Any library in our 22 county region is automatically a Geographic Member. Geographic Members do not pay annual dues and pay full price for continuing education programs, webinars, consulting and all other services.

Q Why are there three levels of dues paying membership?

We realize that every library has different needs and budgetary concerns. Therefore, we have created a dues structure that allows libraries the necessary flexibility to meet their needs and accommodate their budget.

Q How does a library join NEO-RLS?

Each October Letters of Intent are sent to libraries asking for their intention to join NEO-RLS for the following fiscal year (July 1 - June 30). These letters are due back to NEO-RLS by December 31st. Invoices are mailed the following July to those libraries who have declared their intent to join. In addition, libraries can join at any time with a pro-rated membership by contacting us.

Q Can a library join NEO-RLS at any time?

Yes, libraries can join with a pro-rated membership by contacting us.

Q Can you be an Individual Member of NEO-RLS?

NEO-RLS is pleased to offer individual memberships to those who are retired, unemployed, or outside the NEO-RLS region/state so you can easily participate in continuing education opportunities at a reduced cost. Memberships run July 1-June 30 and can be pro-rated.

Q Are there Student Memberships?

Any students currently enrolled in a library and information science program will receive Gold Member benefits at no cost.