

October 14, 2015

From: Chris Wilkinson, The HSA Library and Resource Center
To: Board of Directors, The Herb Society of America
Proposed: To establish a library-only membership for non-HSA members

It is no secret that library usage is changing, with online resources gradually gaining favor over print. Does this mean libraries and their books are becoming obsolete? Not necessarily, but to remain relevant, libraries must seek new and innovative ways to serve their patrons and adapt to the changing needs. The HSA Library and Resource Center is no exception. According to statistics from Library World-our online library management service-circulation at our library is declining.

- The library has 3,161 holdings
- Unique and specialize books not always available at public libraries
- There are 151 library members
- During 2012, 163 books were checked out
- During 2013, 139 books were checked out
- During 2014, 49 book were check out by 9 members (2 were staff)

Can we change this trend? We can certainly do a better job of promoting the library and connecting with our existing members, but we also need to grow the number of library patrons. To achieve this goal, I would like to propose a library-only membership.

Who would benefit? The library is visited by area residents, 283 in 2014 and 240 in 2013. A majority are young couples asking how to plant and care for their first herb garden. Their resources are generally low and an HSA membership is not in their budget. However, I believe they would make good use of the library if a low cost membership was available to them. They would be able to conduct research, introduce their children to the delights of gardening through our collection of children's books and learn how to start and/or maintain their herb garden. As the new library-only member's usage increases, it is anticipated that these members will upgrade to a full HSA membership. It is a matter of showing, rather than telling, the value of membership.

A second group of individuals are members of either Holden Arboretum or Cleveland Botanic Garden. Though both of these organizations are part of the AHS reciprocal garden program, the 90 mile exclusion is enforced by both organizations. This means if you are a member of HSA your HSA membership is not honored for free or reduced admission to either organization. This reduces the value of HSA membership to our local residents.

The library-only membership would support the strategic plan to promote HSA Headquarters (Vineyard House) as a regional and member resource.

How will it work? I propose a \$20 membership that will allow borrowing privileges and the library newsletter, limited to individuals in the Lake and Geauga county area only. The financial impact on the

organization is low. Library-only members would not receive *The Herbarist* or HSA newsletter. There would be no shipping of books for local library-only members. Administrative costs and effects would be minimal. The membership can be managed in Library World, by establishing a code to identify full members from library-only members. A current credit card will be required for Library-only members to cover the cost of books and materials if they are not returned by the due date.

I ask for your support in our attempts to grow both the organization's membership and the number of library patrons by approving this request for a library-only membership.

Respectfully,

Christina Wilkinson
Librarian, HSA Library and Resource Center