

**Testimony before the NYS Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries and
Education Technology**

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Thomas C. Bindeman
Executive Director
Nioga Library System
6575 Wheeler Rd.
Lockport, NY 14094
(716) 434-6167 x14
Bindeman @ nioga.org

Sheryl Knab
Executive Director
WNYLRC
4455 Genesee St.
Cheektowaga, NY 14225
(716) 633-0705 x121
Snab @ wnylrc.org

Mary Jean Jakubowski
Director
B&ECPL
1 Lafayette Square
Buffalo, NY 14203
(716) 858-7180
Jakubowskim @
buffalolib.org

Good morning (afternoon). I am Mary Jean Jakubowski, Director of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library System (B&ECPL). With me today is Sheryl Knab, Executive Director of the Western New York Library Resources Council and Tom Bindeman, Executive Director of the Nioga Library System.

We come before you today as a united front and appreciate this opportunity to speak with you on the impact that the State Budget has on the libraries throughout the Western New York area and all of NYS.

Libraries play a significant role in communities. They are cultural hubs, centers of education, providers of technology, partners in workforce development, economic engines and yes, they are entertainment venues.

Each week, 2.25 million people visit a library in New York State. In 70% of NY, libraries serve as their community's option for free internet access. 98% of NY libraries have helped someone look for or apply for a job.

Public Library Systems are the drivers of consolidated services...insuring member libraries access to the tools necessary to meet residents' needs. They provide automated circulation systems that enhance the processing, loan and delivery of library materials, by leveraging funds and by negotiating group purchases of materials, databases, and services. Systems provide cost efficient delivery services- moving materials in and between libraries. They provide or enable their members to offer high speed Internet access, technology programming and regionalized collection development. And systems and their members offer continuing education opportunities as well as physical space for community organizations to conduct meetings and training sessions.

Library Systems, such as the Western New York Library Resources Council - one of the 9 New York 3R's systems - provide the means for libraries and other library systems to collaborate and work together to provide services such as Ask US 24/76 - a state-wide information service staff solely by librarians from around the state and backed up by

libraries from around the county. 3R Systems provide libraries of different types the opportunity to share information and build off of each other's strengths so the educational mission of teaching information literacy is grounded in services in every library to assist NY residents from pre-school through college, from careers to retirement. 3R Systems promote collaboration and partnerships developing and leveraging consortia initiatives on a wide variety of topics and services.

Historically, when economic times are difficult the use of libraries increases dramatically. From the Great Depression, through the difficult times of the 1980s and right up to the present economic crisis, the demand by our citizens for quality library service has skyrocketed.

Every day, libraries are being confronted with the crucial task of providing more with less. Current levels of state funding are equal to levels received in 1993. That's 1993...an entire childhood ago. I am sure you would agree there is not much you can purchase today at 1993 prices and I am sure you would also agree; as a result of reduced funding libraries have been impacted significantly having to reduce services, hours and access to resources.

Last year, for the first time in MANY years we received a slight increase in Library Aid. Please know this was sincerely appreciated and on behalf of all of us, I thank you. Please also be assured that this money was not wasted – here's but one example: The New York State Library Association (NYLA) indicates that for every \$1 of State Aid put into a public library system, public library users yield approximately \$12.50 in services – a tremendous return on investment.

Therefore, we implore your consideration to reinstate (restore) library funding to \$102 million. Not for those of us who are in this room, but for the residents of New York State who are demanding our services.

Thank you.