

**SECOND DRAFT**

**Creating the Future:  
A 2020 Vision and Plan for Library Service  
in New York State**

Preliminary Recommendations of the New York  
State Regents Advisory Council on Libraries to the  
New York State Board of Regents



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## **Executive Summary**

The Regents Advisory Council Vision 2020 Plan represents recommended strategic directions for New York's libraries and library systems. Developed in partnership with the state's library community, the Vision 2020 Plan affirms the ongoing value of libraries and provides a clear vision of what excellent libraries should look like. The Plan offers models of success that may be emulated by libraries throughout New York, and makes 60 inter-related strategic recommendations for libraries, library systems, the New York State Library, and the Board of Regents.

Several essential themes run through the Vision 2020 Plan. Foremost, there is a recognition that libraries matter very much to the people of New York: libraries represent community and they empower individuals in an open democracy. Libraries are adapting very quickly to ever-changing technology, and have continued to engage both traditional and contemporary methods to sustain their institutional commitment to several core values shared by all types of libraries. These core values include a commitment to free and open access to information for all people; the understanding that libraries and library professionals have the obligation to teach the tools of information literacy so that all users may effectively seek knowledge and skillfully evaluate information as appropriate; and lastly, that the present generation has the responsibility to sustain the principles and institutions of an informed democracy for future generations to come. These themes resonate within this document through each type of library and library system.

The Vision 2020 Recommendations call for a wide range of change, including initiatives to educate the public concerning the role and value of libraries, address the challenge of e-resources, develop enhanced collaborations with other libraries and organizations, support open content, and oppose censorship. There are specific recommendations for the various library types (school, academic, public, and special) as well as for library systems and the New York State Library.

This plan makes it clear those libraries as educational institutions and community centers are central to the well-being and economic development of the state. While it is difficult to establish priorities for funding during difficult economic times, it makes sense to develop those resources – like libraries and library systems – that are part of the solution to the problems we face as a state and as a nation. The genesis of this planning document was the recognition that new state aid was not probable in the near future for libraries. However, it is hoped that this report to the Regents makes clear that libraries and library systems cannot be sustained and continue to be responsive to the evolving needs of our state's residents without increases in financial support. The visible and vocal support of the Board of Regents is essential to the success of this effort.

## Introduction

In April 2010, the New York State Board of Regents challenged the library community to rethink the State's vast array of library services to ensure that they are aligned with modern expectations and expanded functions needed in society, operate with improved efficiency, and are prepared for the future as an essential and vibrant part of the State's educational infrastructure.

Working through the Regents Advisory Council, library users, trustees, and staff have spoken out with regard to their libraries, offering not only affirmation of the importance of libraries, but also numerous suggestions for progress and models of success.

## Purpose

The Board of Regents is responsible for the general supervision of all educational activities within the State of New York. The Board of Regents charters public and association libraries, as well as Pre K-12 schools, colleges and universities, and cultural institutions, both public and private, which operate school, academic and special libraries as a critical component of their educational programs and services. The Board of Regents also oversees the New York State Library and the 73 library systems that tie these libraries and other special libraries, located in hospitals, courts, businesses, government agencies, prisons and other public and private organizations, together into a robust statewide network of some 7,000 libraries. As such, it must also articulate and promote a vision that inspires and promotes excellence in all the educational institutions within its purview.

Though the original charge for this effort was for "Vision 2020," we believe that the future of libraries can be found today, right before us in the remarkable work currently being done by visionary librarians, library staff and trustees who understand the needs of their constituents and respond with innovation and service.

Therefore, the primary purpose of this document is to provide the Board of Regents with a clear vision of what excellent libraries should look like and to offer models of success that may be emulated by libraries throughout New York. Specific Regents' policy suggestions that would move this vision forward are noted where appropriate.



## **Libraries – An Investment in Our Future**

Libraries provide the physical and virtual spaces that are an integral part of an overarching system that provides continuous opportunities for learning from birth to senior age. By empowering individuals in an open democracy, they enable and facilitate the creation of wealth through the spread of knowledge and the promotion of innovation. Library “profit” is demonstrated through both the promotion of economic enterprise and the social return on investment. The role of a library, any library, to the individual is a reflection based upon where a person is in his or her life and the challenges faced at that time.

Libraries continue to undergo tremendous changes as they move to virtual services in response to changes in technology and the expectations of their patrons and as they facilitate not only the use of existing information, but also production of new information through online communities and efforts to preserve local history.

One significant change is the increasing convergence among traditionally different types of libraries in the services they offer. Such convergence includes online access to digital resources, the re-tasking of library space, and the need for staff with skills in virtual librarianship, collaborative learning, as well as more customary types of service.

Because of the continuing centrality, complexity and diversity of today's knowledge creation and information distribution environments, it is important that our students and residents be equipped with digital literacy skills -- how to evaluate and effectively use information from a variety of sources and formats. Literacy – and in particular digital literacy -- lies at the heart of the mission of all libraries.

Regardless of the many levels of technological change, libraries remain the embodiment of Americans’ “right to educate themselves”, a critical necessity in a knowledge economy where everyone must relentlessly improve their skills throughout their lifetime. The library is what makes lifelong learning for *all* residents both possible and practical, including, and perhaps especially, for those with special challenges such as the disabled, homeless and economically disadvantaged. People unable to respond to new challenges and invest in their own abilities are likely to become an economic liability, unable to participate fully in society.

Libraries continue to represent a community investment in a vision of a better tomorrow through sharing information, knowledge and, hopefully, wisdom. They are the repositories for our communities’, our state’s, and our nation’s memory and offer us an institution that reflects the American Dream of self-help and equity.

Today’s libraries are busier and more vibrant than ever because of, not in spite of, the dramatic impact of digital technology. But even though they have a well established and well respected brand, libraries suffer from outdated public attitudes based on misperceptions that are limited to their traditional roles, stereotypes and the constant assault of competing commercial information providers.

## **Universal Recommendations – For All Libraries**

The themes of Access, Information Literacy and Sustainability are woven through all libraries in our state and nation. Though each serves its unique community, all share these values.

## Models for Success:

Over six decades ago the State of New York outlined its vision for universal access for all residents to information through its creation of library systems. This remarkably successful model has evolved to embrace nearly all the libraries within our state, creating a framework and foundation for the fulfillment of this dream. The notion that any and every child or adult may follow their curiosity to its fullest extent, accessing resources from around the world, is today a reality for some, but not all, of our state's residents. Vibrant libraries of all types, enjoying the robust support of their community or constituency and working in partnership with their library system and its collaborative systems are able to bring these resources into their communities. We have the potential to fulfill this vision for all.

## Recommendations:

To assure that tomorrow's libraries continue to be a vibrant and vital part of all New Yorkers' lifelong learning experience, all libraries must:

- Improve the marketing of library services to all clientele and communities by rebranding libraries while addressing the erroneous perceptions about the need for libraries in a digital world. (1)
- Develop better tools for advocacy, and identify library champions at all levels of governance: university and school boards, town and city management, State Education Department, Board of Regents, New York State Legislature and Executive branch. (2)
- Collaborate to integrate services and collections of all types of libraries while developing a transparent and seamless world of library services that are ubiquitous and instantaneous yet personalized and flexible, serving all ages and needs. (3)
- Seek operational and cost efficiencies in light of technological opportunities, energy efficient facilities, and online service delivery methods. (4)
- Develop economic justifications for the investments that governments, communities, individuals and philanthropic organizations are asked to make in libraries. (5)
- Recruit technologically savvy staff and train current staff in virtual librarianship while influencing higher education to appropriately educate tomorrow's service providers. (6)
- Function at the front lines of e-resources (including e-books) purchasing, licensing, digital rights management, digital curation, resource-sharing, and preservation and advocate for the delivery of open content as embodied in initiatives such as the [Digital Public Library of America](#) or the [Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities](#). (7)
- Actively address issues concerning the privatization of information and its impact on traditional models of library services, defending residents' rights to free access, free lending and the inter-sharing of materials among libraries. (8)
- Create collaborative partnerships with all cultural and educational organizations in the state to offer our residents the most comprehensive educational opportunities available anywhere in the world. (9)

## School Libraries (P-12)

School libraries are deeply engaged in the implementation of the [New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards](#)<sup>24</sup>. There is a well documented connection between student achievement and effective school libraries. The role of school librarians is evolving as they teach students information literacy to be savvy information consumers, producers and judges of appropriate content in all formats. School librarians are increasingly collaborating with teachers in designing curricula, developing learning experiences, and providing technical infrastructure that are ideally placed to support differentiated instruction and facilitate special programs for the gifted as well as students with special needs. The school librarian is unique in that he/she addresses the depth and breadth of the entire curriculum, and leads in teaching a 21st Century curriculum of inquiry, problem solving and content creation.

### Models for Success:

The best school libraries are fully integrated into the P-12 learning experience and are building / district wide phenomenon, reaching into every classroom and students' home. Based on the research findings of the recent [Information Brief: The Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement](#) published by the NY Comprehensive Center (August, 2011), it is clear that with the shift to the Common Core Standards and a commitment to five key elements of the Regents reform agenda, school libraries with certified school librarians play an important role in student achievement, curriculum development and instruction. Information and digital literacy is recognized as a critical aspect of every students' education. The school librarian is a true educational partner with every teacher and administrator in providing the best possible learning experience for each child.

### Recommendations:

The Board of Regents and State Education Department should formulate policy and regulation that will:

- Create or adopt a statewide information fluency curriculum framework, aligned with the [New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards](#), which, through certified school librarians and a strong library program, will provide equitable access to information and digital literacy instruction and tools. Such a framework will further the schools' ultimate goal of preparing students, beginning at the elementary level, with the literacy and digital skills and knowledge needed for career or college. (10)
- Expand the existing Commissioner's Regulations (91.2) to require an elementary school librarian in every school to strengthen instructional leadership in meeting the P-12 Common Core Learning Standards, and enforce library staffing regulations in all public schools. (11)
- Create incentives to encourage school districts to actively expand and promote access to the school library collection of online resources, e-books, and web 2.0 tools, available 24/7, to create learning and enrichment opportunities that reach beyond the school day and encourage year-round learning. (12)
- Create incentives to encourage school districts to adopt flexible scheduling to support full academic day access to school librarians, school library resources and information and digital literacy instruction. (13)
- Create incentives for school libraries to collaborate with other libraries and communities (such as public libraries, university and community college libraries) to result in full-time, full-year access to information that will further opportunities for all students. (14)

## Academic and Research Libraries

Academic libraries are the engines that support teaching, learning, critical thinking, research, and collaboration on campus. They provide core support for faculty and student research, development offices, campus information technologies and alumni, and are leaders in the digitization of research resources and the creation of content. Academic libraries are increasingly challenged by digital rights management and digital curation issues, costs of online research resources, and copyright.

### Models for Success:

The best institutions of higher learning understand that their libraries are the heart of intellectual inquiry. Libraries provide or intermediate access to many physical and digital resources for students, faculty and researchers, wherever their location. Libraries also provide digital and physical spaces for collaborative learning and research, free ranging intellectual discourse, cultural expression and housing of historically significant materials. Even in the digital age, the library building as a place -- redesigned to foster collaboration among students, faculty and staff -- maintains an essential role in academia.

### Recommendations:

The Board of Regents and State Education Department should formulate policy and support initiatives that will encourage:

- The development of a statewide/national digital library of shared use, freely accessible digitized books and research materials through the *Hathi Trust* and similar organizations. (15)
- Active participation by New York's libraries in the Digital Public Library of America and the Internet Archive's Open Library initiative, in order that New York's freely available but disparate content can be accessed by all our residents. (16)
- The acceleration of digitization of special collections and their integration into curricula; and making those materials freely available for research. (17)
- The publication of academic research generated by faculty that would be universally available at no cost to the user. (18)
- Leadership in the preservation of digital resources and advocacy for open access and reduced copyright restrictions in the support of digital preservation. (19)
- The continuation and strengthening of collaborations with other communities in support of life-long learning, information literacy and research. (20)
- Collaboration among all academic libraries in the development of print repositories designed to reduce redundancies within collections while maintaining high levels of access. (21)
- Advancement of the primary role of academic librarians in fostering the integration of information literacy competencies into teaching and learning on their campuses to support student academic achievement and to prepare students for the global information economy that will shape their professional and personal lives. (22)

## Public Libraries

Public libraries provide services that cannot be replicated elsewhere. They represent residents' rights to free and equal access to information, a right now under duress with the development of commercial information services, some of which are free but of questionable quality; others of high quality but high price; and where many collections are no longer owned, but rented. Libraries provide a guide through a maze of misinformation for the average citizen. They are a beacon of early childhood literacy, a center for each community's history and culture, a key to the American dream for immigrants, and much more. The

public values its libraries as a meeting place, a gathering place, and a learning place, and desires more business hours; more traditional resources such as children's programs and print books; and more e-resources such as electronic books.

Public libraries are also digital knowledge centers for communities, ensuring residents' equal access to technology. This is especially true as the state transitions to e-government and many residents do not have access to the computers and broadband connectivity. In many areas, especially rural areas, the public library is the only source of broadband internet connectivity for the entire community.

The quality of public library service remains unequal across the state. Reasons for this include community wealth, legal structure and lack of political support.

### **Models for Success:**

Public libraries reflect the highest ideals of the communities they serve. The best public libraries are places where the love of learning is instilled at the youngest age and intellectual curiosity encouraged for all. They provide a path to navigate life's challenges and welcome new Americans. As community centers they actively encourage civic engagement and cultural awareness while remembering the past by the preservation of community history. They actively strive to provide access to their facilities and their resources to all residents, especially for those who are physically or mentally disabled, economically disadvantaged or otherwise facing unique challenges in today's competitive world. Their success is grounded in their basis as a truly democratic institution, governed and supported by the people they serve.

### **Recommendations:**

The Board of Regents and State Education Department should formulate policy and support initiatives that will encourage:

- The further proliferation of the Regents' *Public Library District Model* to require all public libraries to become fully funded and governed through citizen participation and public vote. (23)
- All public libraries to proactively create and collect local content and serve as a catalyst for civic engagement to promote civil discourse and confront society's most difficult problems. (24)
- Collaboration with other libraries and community organizations to develop seamless information literacy initiatives, promote cultural understanding and protect local historical and cultural treasures. (25)
- Creation of digital literacy learning initiatives providing this 21<sup>st</sup> century skill to people of all walks of life, not just those enrolled in schools and colleges. (26)
- The provision of robust early childhood education programs and the provision of homework assistance as a core service; the alignment of outreach services with societal priorities, such as teen services / gang prevention. (27)
- The provision of full access to library services by people with disabilities, including accessible buildings, homebound services, and assistive technology. (28)
- Investment in public library facilities in order to be able to respond to the changing needs of communities -- rewiring of older buildings, creation of larger meeting spaces and small meeting rooms, flexible storage solutions so that libraries can adjust as print to e-format ratios change and energy efficiency improvements to keep operating costs down. (29)

## **Special Libraries (Corporate, Law and Medical Libraries, Historical Society Libraries, etc.)**

Special librarians are invaluable because of their mastery of particular information content; they are charged with the provision of evidence-based, reliable, high quality information in a cost effective way. Historical and museum libraries face special challenges with regard to the digitization, conservation, and preservation of special collections.

### **Models for Success:**

Professionally managed and dedicated to the sharing of information, the best special libraries offer unique collections and expertise of enormous value to the social, intellectual and economic life of our state.

The Board of Regents and State Education Department should formulate policy and support initiatives that will encourage:

- Making special library collections available to other libraries and the public. (30)
- Collaboration with other libraries in the development of statewide licensing of electronic data bases and e-resources; participate in a state digital library / digital repository. (31)
- Innovation in the creation of new services such as the deployment of systems for intelligent processing and correlation of large sets. (32)
- The collaborative development of consistent, cost-effective digital preservation strategies. (33)



## **New York State Library Systems**

New York's network of library systems – school, public, and 3Rs councils -- were created to facilitate collaboration and equalize library services across New York, but are not currently being funded by the state at a level to meet even minimum service needs. Systems provide documented economies of scale, but costs continue to rise and new services are in demand. Library systems should assist their members to adapt more quickly to new user expectations, provide the highest quality professional development and training opportunities to system members, encourage and prepare staff to be at the forefront of innovation, consider changes in governance, mergers, and collaborations, and should collaborate more with the New York State Library. As library systems increasingly shift financial burdens onto member libraries, there is concern that richer regions of the state will come away with superior library services. Also, the new cap on property taxes may make it more difficult for library systems to assess increased member fees.

### **Models for Success:**

The most successful library systems reflect the needs of their membership, providing such services as cooperative purchasing, shared automation services, legal advice, continuing education, collaborative digitization initiatives, and shared virtual reference. They are highly responsive to changes in the marketplace and the profession and prepared to take entrepreneurial risks to bring new initiatives to their member libraries and their constituents. Tomorrow's best library systems will share and consolidate services across library types, geographic boundaries and other governmental (and perhaps commercial) institutions; each excelling in its own area of expertise while continuing to demonstrate a statewide model of collaboration, efficiency and cooperation.

### **Recommendations:**

The Board of Regents and State Education Department should formulate policy and regulation that will encourage:

- Increasing and providing incentives for collaboration among systems and with the New York State Library, as well as with other state agencies. (34)
- An environment of flexible regional solutions without loss of state funding. (35)
- Library systems to be at the forefront of training, professional development, technological innovation, outreach, marketing and branding, and other high-value services needed by member libraries. (36)
- Library systems to explore models of broader and more intensive collaboration with their members through appropriate membership fee structures or charges for special services. (37)
- Library systems to consider restructuring their governance and initiating partnerships for greater collaboration at the regional and state level; up to and including consolidation. (38)
- Library systems – as with all libraries -- to anticipate and develop innovative and entrepreneurial services; discontinue out-of-date services when they no longer provide benefit to their members or the end-users. (39)
- Public Library Systems to proactively encourage and assist their member libraries that are eligible to pursue the Regents' Public Library District model of public governance and support. (40)

## **State Library/SED/Board of Regents**

There is a need for leadership at the state level in the areas of advocacy, issues related to the privatization of information and challenges to the doctrine of fair use, collaborative acquisition and licensing of electronic resources, statewide programs, and electronic content.

### **Models for Success:**

The most vibrant and effective State Library organizations are at the forefront of innovation, providing the leadership necessary to implement new technologies and services by leveraging statewide purchasing power and political clout to assist and encourage the advancement of all library organizations within their state. The focus is on creation and development rather than simply regulation and reporting.

This model of success recognizes that libraries are essential to the educational, cultural and economic future of the state and are treated as full partners in the lifelong educational process of its residents

### **Recommendations:**

The Board of Regents and State Education Department should formulate policy and regulation that will:

- Reaffirm the importance of libraries in the lives of all New Yorkers. (41)
- Enable the New York State Library to make its licensed electronic resources available to businesses having fewer than 100 employees. (42)
- Mandate public library trustee training similar to that required of School Boards. (43)
- Mandate library staff training; make all Public Librarian Certificates renewable contingent upon ongoing professional development, including 10 hours of annual technology training. (44)
- Remove regulatory and legislative restrictions to intersystem and statewide cooperative purchasing negotiations while empowering the State Library to take the lead in negotiating statewide licensing for e-resources. (45)
- Encourage the New York State Library and the state's library systems to develop statewide delivery infrastructure and to investigate the need for a statewide union catalog. (46)
- Promote legislation that protects against filtering and other forms of censorship. (47)
- Require the State Library to continuously review and update outdated standards, guidelines, and regulations. Provide clear and relevant standards, guidelines, and regulations designed to improve library services. (48)
- Provide legal assistance for public libraries seeking district library status. (49)
- Create incentives for collaboration, innovation, and shared services among systems. (50)
- Encourage and reward best practices throughout the state. (51)
- Direct the State Library to develop appropriate training, including the areas of advocacy and development, to be required for all boards and advisory councils to improve governance of libraries and library systems. (52)
- Ask the Governor and Legislature to fully fund the State Library as a part of the State Education Department and as an essential component of the State's educational infrastructure. (53)
- Recognize the Board of Regents' responsibility for its role as statewide library advocate, and avoid viewing library services only through the prism of K-12 education. Libraries and library systems of all types are essential to raise the knowledge, skill, and opportunity of all the people in New York. (54)

## Technology and the Information Marketplace

While library collections may have gone far past the tipping point between physical and virtual by 2020, libraries themselves will continue to evolve into community centers for both technology and intellectual pursuits. Many digital resources, including e-books, are leased, not owned. To counter this, shared cloud or virtual libraries, such as those under development by the [Hathi Trust](#) and [Digital Public Library of America](#) should be developed to serve as surrogate research libraries. The research community must make sure that valuable content is not locked up by commercial interests. There must be greater attention paid to the development of affordable statewide digital platforms, negotiated statewide licenses for electronic books, periodicals, research databases, and similar materials. NOVELNY must continue to grow, and libraries of all kinds must digitize local content.

### Recommendations:

The Board of Regents and State Education Department should formulate policy and support initiatives that will:

- Address copyright, licensing, and digital rights management with one firm voice. (55)
- Encourage the growth of [NOVELNY](#) by adding more sophisticated e-resources for statewide access. (56)
- Identify the current costs of e-resources from all public funds to best determine economies of shared acquisition and use across all schools, libraries, public universities, and state government agencies. (57)
- Foster the development of a common statewide e-book platform and address the particularly high costs of *STEM* (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) online electronic resources. (58)
- Encourage branding of all e-content to demonstrate libraries' value to remain visible and relevant to end users, wherever they may be. (59)
- Encourage all libraries and library systems to anticipate and participate in the development of a single, digital library with rich functionality that serves all. (60)

## Sustaining our Libraries

This plan, with its sixty recommendations, many based on successful models already operational, makes it clear that libraries as educational institutions and community centers are central to the well-being and economic development of the state. While it is difficult to establish priorities for funding when there is so little available, it makes sense to develop those resources – like libraries and library systems – that are part of the solution to the problems we face as a state and as a nation. The genesis of this planning document was the recognition that new state aid for libraries was not imminent. However, it is hoped that this report to the Regents makes clear that libraries and library systems cannot be sustained and continue to be responsive to the needs of our state's residents without increases in financial support. The visible and vocal support of the Board of Regents is essential to the success of this effort.

As a starting point, the Regents should support full restoration of library funding as outlined in the Education Law. To move forward – before it is too late, and libraries are forced to cut staff and hours, or close altogether -- new money for new programs and services, as outlined in this Plan, is needed.

These recommendations should serve as the basis for specific legislative proposals from the Board of Regents and library advocacy organizations to build a foundation of success for our libraries over the next decade.

The people of New York State deserve no less.





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