

Sally Eller, Trustee of FLLS, and President of Board of Trustees, Ford Library in Ovid. The Ford Library is a small, rural library serving the Towns of Ovid and Romulus in Seneca County.

Today I would like you to understand how crucial the State funding is to the libraries of the Finger Lakes Library System and to the Library System itself. I represent many of the smaller libraries of the system, in particular the 5 rural libraries of Seneca County. Since 2009 each of the 5 libraries of Seneca County has experienced substantial growth in the use of all services they provide to our residents. This is particularly true for the use of the Public Access Computers. Many of our library users do not have computers at home, or they cannot afford to buy high speed internet service. They come to the libraries to use the computers to apply for jobs online as nearly all jobs today require an online application. Note these recent comments from the library director at the Ovid Library: "Every day we assist with online applications because every business uses a different online application format. We also offer resume paper, resume editing assistance and appointments for one-to-one help to actually type up a resume. A few patrons - at least 3 in the past month - have found success finding a job, although this is not a very high percentage of the many that send out applications. In addition, we assist a few times a month with applying for unemployment benefits, and see a few people each week who are taking online courses." Last year, one of our Seneca County residents worked with the librarians and used the computers at both the Ovid and the Waterloo libraries in her search for a job. She received assistance in searching for job opportunities, preparing her resume, and in completing the online employment application. Maria was thrilled to be hired for a position at a local small business, and as a result, she and her family no longer needed State financial assistance. Our libraries could not provide these computer services to our public without the support of the Finger Lakes Library System. The Library System allows us to buy our computers at a quantity discount, and we depend on our Library System for maintenance and for IT support. We could not afford these services if we had to buy them from the private sector. If funding cuts to our Library System continue, our library users will be cut off from their access to computers which are essential to them finding employment, studying for courses and for exams such as Civil Service, and for general information and communication needs.

Of course, the service that most people associate with libraries is the lending of books. This is certainly the most used service of our libraries, and it is one that would not be possible without the funding and support from the Finger Lakes Library System. Our circulation of books, periodicals, and media has tripled at the Ovid Library over the past 2 years. Our circulation, and that of all the Seneca County libraries, is greatly enhanced by the recent cooperative agreement among the 5 libraries for a common card for all the Seneca County libraries. This program, called "Seneca Shares", is very popular with library users across the county. One library card is "good" at all the 5 libraries, and books, magazines, DVDs are moved from library to library as the patrons request them. We could not do this without the Delivery Service provided by the Finger Lakes Library System. Five days a week a van and driver

provided by our Library System moves books and materials from one library to another. This service is provided across all the 33 libraries of the Finger Lakes Library System, so our library users have access to thousands and thousands of books. None of our libraries could afford this service on their own. In addition to the delivery service, the electronic "card catalog" which is maintained across all the libraries by the Finger Lakes Library System is essential to our library users and staff. This system, called Polaris, allows our users to select books that they want from other libraries, either using the library computers or their computer at home. Records for the books and materials at each library are maintained by using the Polaris System. The Polaris System at each library is subsidized by the Finger Lakes Library System, and if the remainder of the 2011-2012 state aid is not restored or if further cuts are made in 2012-2013, each library would be hard pressed to find the funds to continue this essential service. In 2009, the percentage of county residents living below the poverty level was 12.5%, and our local tax payers are doing all they can to support our libraries. The restoration of full state funding to libraries and library systems is crucial to keeping the doors of our libraries open.

Realizing the important need for improving Early Childhood Literacy in south Seneca County, the 3 small rural libraries there worked with the support and guidance of the staff of the Finger Lakes Library System to obtain a grant from a local, private foundation to fund and staff story times for children ages 0 to 5 and their parents in each of the libraries. This program has brought many new families into our libraries, with great enthusiasm from the children and parents. From Ovid: "We have a new story time family who is thrilled to have found our weekly story time. Mom loves the interaction with other adults - she has 3 young kids - and her oldest has fallen in love with story time." To maintain this program after the grant is completed, we will need state library aid for staffing and materials and we will need support, training, and advisement from Finger Lakes Library System.

What I would like you to understand today is that the rural libraries of Seneca County could not provide the services that our residents of all ages have come to depend on at their local libraries without the fullest possible aid from the State for our libraries and for our Finger Lakes Library System. I applaud your efforts to restore the state aid to libraries and library systems in the 2011-2012 budget, and urge you to continue to aggressively support these vital resources of our upstate rural communities.