



**Impact of Library Funding Cuts
New York Reference and Research Resources Councils**

**Testimony before the Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries and Education
Technology
November 29, 2011**

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak on behalf of the state's nine Reference and Research Resources Councils – or NY3Rs as we are known.

Everybody has a story about how libraries help. But here's a story about a librarian in a small rural library in upstate New York and how the NY3Rs systems helped her deal with a dire medical diagnosis.

Ellen had helped people in her community find health information in her library and online for years. So when she was diagnosed with thyroid cancer, she knew where to turn – CLIC-on-Health, a website created by NY3Rs and available to everyone. Its trustworthy medical information, vetted by local medical librarians, gave Ellen the information she needed to prepare herself for her first visit to the oncologist. She said, "I researched this via CLIC-on-Health and was prepared for my doctor visit with many questions that I would not have had otherwise. Many treatments later, and, thankfully, I am clear. Knowledge of the disease and treatments made things much easier."

This is just one example of the many services New York's Reference and Research Resources Systems provide. We count among our membership more than 900 college, museum, medical, business and other specialized libraries as well as library systems representing more than 750 public libraries and 4400 school library media centers. For 45 years we have been working behind the scenes to help those libraries work together for the benefit of their communities.

But funding cuts by the state are having an impact and are threatening the strong structure that makes information readily available to everyone in our state.

Over the last two years, funding for NY3Rs has been cut 22%. On top of that, most of the NY3Rs have still to receive a third of their funding for this year. If **that** funding is not received, then the total cuts will be closer to 50%. These steep cuts to a service that was already underfunded are having an impact in libraries across the state.

Sadly and ironically, many of the services that have been cut are those that helped libraries of all types work together and save money. Some examples:

- 25% or more cut in funding for shared e-resources for libraries in hospitals, many located in rural areas.
- A shared medical librarian service to a few rural hospitals had to be dropped completely.
- 22% cut in funding that helped libraries get both clinical and consumer health information for users, like in the CLIC-on-Health story above.
- 20% cuts in training programs for librarians and library staff. NY3Rs is one of the best sources for training. It makes good economic sense to do it collaboratively, as we do, rather than each library seeking training on its own. We keep libraries up-to-date on the latest new technologies, so the public can be better served. Without the NY3Rs training, local libraries will need to bear the burden themselves, or do without.
- 25% cut in “resource sharing” grants to libraries. These grants are used to coordinate purchases among libraries, buy equipment to use for interlibrary loan, digitize unique local resources to place on the web [a great source of primary documents for K-12 students], and for other services that help libraries collaborate and share with each other.
- Reduced the number of local historical newspapers being scanned by 50%. Digitizing a community’s local historical newspapers is one of our most popular services with towns, colleges, and public libraries because the newspapers are used by so many people for a wide variety of purposes.
- Reduced or cut delivery services used to send books and other materials to facilitate sharing of resources.
- Some regions eliminated on-site and software assistance to small museums and archives, many of which have no other access to these services.
- Loss of jobs in every region of the state. Cuts in system funding have also meant cuts in staff. At a time when our regional economies need jobs, state funding cuts to NY3Rs have resulted in an average cut of one position from each NY3Rs – not a lot overall, but still a loss to the local economy.

In its wisdom more than 50 years ago, the New York Legislature – recognizing the value of information long before anyone used the phrase “information society” – created New York’s library system infrastructure. NY3Rs, school library systems, and public library systems are the “poster child” for collaboration. We work together to help libraries – and communities – do more while saving money.

The state should not be destroying that collaboration – tearing it down bit by bit, starving it slowly. This is the time to recognize and reward that long standing collaboration among libraries. If the state is serious about collaboration, it should be rewarding the one group that has made it happen consistently for 50 plus years.

New York’s Library Systems -- Essential for New York’s Libraries

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