



NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY

HEARING: "To examine the impact of the 2011-2012 State Budget on public libraries across New York State"

November 29, 2011

Good morning, I am Kevin Winkler, Deputy Director for Public Service at The New York Public Library (NYPL). The NYPL system provides library services to the New York City boroughs of the Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island, as well as four world-class research libraries – the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, the Library for the Performing Arts, the Science, Industry and Business Library and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am joined by George Mihaltses – Vice President for Government and Community Affairs. Before I begin, I would like to thank Assembly Speaker Silver, Committee Chairman Reilly and the members of this committee for your support of libraries in the past and for your continued support.

Today's hearing focuses on the impact of the State's 2011-2012 Budget on the public libraries across New York State. I will highlight the impact on NYPL's 90 locations and on the services we provide to over 48 million people each year, both in-person and online.

The State's adopted FY11-12 Budget provided \$79 million in State aid for libraries and library systems statewide, with \$16.597 million to NYPL. To NYPL, this represented a \$1.2 million decrease over FY10-11 funding and a \$4.632 million decrease, or 22%, since FY08. These State cuts are compounded by a loss of \$20.7 million, or 14%, in City funding cuts to the Library over the same period. As a result, since FY08, the Library has seen a reduction in 459 active positions (full and part-time), or 19% of the workforce. Additionally, since FY08, Library hours have been reduced 10%, from an average of 51.7 to 46.6 hours per week. The magnitude of these cuts was felt across the board in the Library, including the elimination of \$2.5 million in Library materials. The absence of Member Items, which contribute significantly to the Library's ability to refresh and enhance our collections, has also had an impact. I'd like to take a few moments to highlight a few of the critical programs that have been impacted as a result of the reduced support to libraries in the FY11-12 State Budget.

- NYPL's **Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library** provides specialized services for people who are physically unable to read standard print. Last year, the Library provided braille and special format audiobooks and magazines to over 12,000 patrons. Users include individuals of all ages, as well as institutions such as nursing homes, senior centers, and agencies that work with eligible clients. The NYPL circulated 364,912 special format books and magazines, answered telephone requests from patrons, and registered 850 new patrons. We are the only public library site in New York City providing free braille and talking book service, and as of January 1, 2012 NYPL is to serve all eligible Long Island residents as well. State funding to this essential service has been reduced by 22% since FY08. As a result, the Andrew Heiskell Library has lost 6 full time positions, including a full time Youth Services Librarian and full time Outreach Specialist. A single staff member's time is divided between youth services, programming, outreach, and public service efforts. In FY11 Heiskell participated in half the outreach opportunities as compared to FY08 (61 in FY08 vs. 29 in FY11). With funding restored, essential technology training could be increased to this special group of New Yorkers and adequate promotion and support of BARD, our free digital audiobook download service that fewer than 10% of our patrons are currently taking advantage of, could be established.
- The **Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture** is the nation's preeminent archive documenting the global experience of peoples of African descent. As the Library's primary repository for materials relating to Africa and the African Diaspora, the Schomburg Center's collections alone number over ten million items, including 840 manuscript collections, over 225,000 bound volumes, 106,000 microforms, 500,000 photographic images, and 9,500 serials from the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, South America, Africa, Europe, India, and Australia. One of the most heavily used repositories of its kind, the Schomburg Center hosts over 130,000 annual visitors and provides direct research services to more than 30,000 professional, student, and independent researchers each year. State funding to this critical research institution and vibrant cultural center

has also been reduced by 22% since FY08. The budget cuts to the Schomburg have resulted in a 30% cut in staffing and 25% in the overall budget. The flagship youth enrichment program -- Junior Scholars -- saw its funding cut by over 60%.

- NYPL also provides vital resources to students at the **City University of New York (CUNY)** through State funding which supports collections particularly targeted towards CUNY students. Budget cuts to this program have resulted in the loss of books as well as reduced access to microforms and digital materials for CUNY students and researchers.
- NYPL's **Correctional Services Program** has, since 1984, delivered library service to incarcerated New Yorkers and provided inmates with information on useful, and in many cases essential, community resources upon release. Last year, we provided access to books for 10,177 adult and adolescent inmates on Rikers Island through our mobile and standing libraries. Our Correctional Services team also does outreach to the City's State and Federal prisons and facilitates Daddy and Me and Baby Lapsit programs. The FY11-12 State Budget reduction greatly impacts this small, two-person team, which delivers critical services to the New Yorkers who have the least amount of access to information and services. Specifically, State funding to this program and coordinated branch outreach has also been reduced by 22% since FY08. As such, we are reduced to one Outreach Coordinator, and two incarcerated service librarians, to do all of the work pertaining to older adults, the incarcerated and the differently abled. Should funding continue to be reduced in the coming year, we are strongly concerned about staffing levels as well as the ability of the Library to continue to produce *Connections*, a directory of resources in New York City available to help former inmates when they are leaving correctional facilities. Currently, the publication is free to those incarcerated in New York State prisons and local jails, and to agencies that help to provide service to former inmates.

Clearly, the greatest impact of state budget cuts has been felt by the most vulnerable groups served by the Library: children,

seniors, immigrants, non-English speakers and, especially, those living below the poverty line. In Manhattan, Staten Island and the Bronx, NYPL serves 47% of the city's population with household income of less than \$25,000.

However, despite the downward trend of State funding, NYPL continues to experience a system-wide surge in use and need. It is critically important that State library funding rise to meet this demand. Last year alone:

- 27.9 million items were circulated and even more were consulted from among our collection of over 50 million books and other materials;
- 47,676 New Yorkers attended job-related classes at the Library;
 - These classes remain vital to New Yorkers who are out of work, looking to change careers or start a new business. Our librarians and volunteers provide a one stop shop for job-related assistance.
- More than 44,921 programs and classes were offered system-wide; with an attendance of 967,288.
- There were over 2,200 ESOL sessions given in FY 11 with over 38,000 attendees.
- There were 16,800 after-school programs with 286,185 attendees.

Conclusion

New York City's libraries play a vital role in delivering essential library services and information to the people of New York, especially those with otherwise limited access to books and information resources. Our libraries are packed each and every day. However, our ability to sustain current hours and services is dependant upon adequate City and State funding.

In years past, you have championed funding of this State's libraries, recognizing how essential the services are that libraries provide to New Yorkers. We are truly grateful for this support. With more investment towards library services, NYPL can provide even more robust programming, dedicated staff resources and necessary collections materials.

Once again, thank you for this opportunity to testify. We remain available to answer any questions that you may have.