



Assembly Hearing on
Funding Public Libraries
in New York State
November 29, 2011

Testimony of Jason Kramer
Executive Director, NYSHEI

I come before you on behalf of the public and private academic and research libraries of New York. These libraries – from the small community college to the elite research university – are the information infrastructure of New York. While these libraries lie outside the targeted focus of this hearing they are both affected by public library funding, and committed to solidarity with our friends in the broader library community.

Assemblyman Reilly, your peers like to avow their support of libraries, but actions speak louder than words.

Total library aid has been cut in each of the past four years. Many like to claim these cuts were necessitated by the economic collapse of 2008, but that seems a convenient excuse. Current year funding of \$79.8 million is \$3 million less than was appropriated in 1999.

A review of state budgets of the past fifteen years reveals a stark truth. Through periods of good and bad economic news, state spending surges ever upward. In contrast library aid is stagnant - at best (see illustration A).

If library aid remained the same percentage of total state spending it was in 1997-98, today total library aid would top \$173 million, or \$94 million more than is currently appropriated. If library aid merely grew at the rate of inflation, which has averaged 2.49 percent annually over the past fifteen years, today library aid would top \$115 million, or \$42 million more than is currently appropriated.

By any measure, New York is failing its libraries.

The academic and research library serves the different needs of a different clientele, but suffers from the same neglect.

An exceedingly small portion of state library aid trickles through to academic libraries. This funding, known as Coordinated Collection Development aid (CCDA), is intended to foster collaboration and

efficiencies in library collections. There is a mere \$1,570,000 appropriated for CCDA in the current year. That money is divided among the hundreds of college and university campuses.

CCDA funding is set by a formula that has gone unchanged since 1984, and has not been fully funded in years. Every week 20 million researchers, students, entrepreneurs, and innovators seek the information housed in academic libraries. Yet the Empire State only supports this information infrastructure with .0011 percent of the state budget.

When the aid formula for that sole source of academic library support was created a gallon of gas cost \$1.20. I do not believe it is too much to ask that the CCDA formula be funded and updated to a level matching changes in the consumer price index.

CCDA was established before sweeping technological changes altered the flow of information. While we are grateful for this small support, we believe a statewide electronic model of collection development would be more cost effective than CCDA's regional model.

The blue-ribbon Commission on Higher Education, after poring over 50 white papers, the testimony of 200 expert witnesses at four public hearings, and hundreds more pieces of research and scholarship, issued in 2008 a report as yet unheeded.

The Commission concluded that "access to electronic information should be expanded throughout the State by facilitating college and university libraries replacement of individual licenses with state-wide shared licenses."

Our academic and research libraries strongly support this recommendation and can attest to its impact in the 32 other states that have taken steps toward similar ends. Here in New York, with our unrivaled higher education sector, we believe the impact of such a simple action would be enormous. Obviously you and your colleagues in the legislature agree for when given the chance to vote on a bill to this affect, unanimous bipartisan support has been the result.

Finally, I ask you to consider one way to expand library services at no cost to the state or the libraries: secure taxpayer access to publically funded research.

New York taxpayers annually fund more than \$50 million in basic and applied research and projects. This public investment often leads to results that are published in a variety of academic journals.

Because taxpayers underwrite this research they have a right to expect that dissemination and use will be maximized for public benefit, and that they themselves will have access to the published results.

While publically funded research in New York is small compared to the federal investment, the federal government has taken significant steps toward open access policies.

A sterling example of the benefits of open access is the Public Access Policy adopted by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In establishing free public online access to articles reporting on the results of research for which they paid, taxpayers have a remarkable resource. PubMed Central is a databank of more than two million full-text articles accessed by more than half a million users every day.

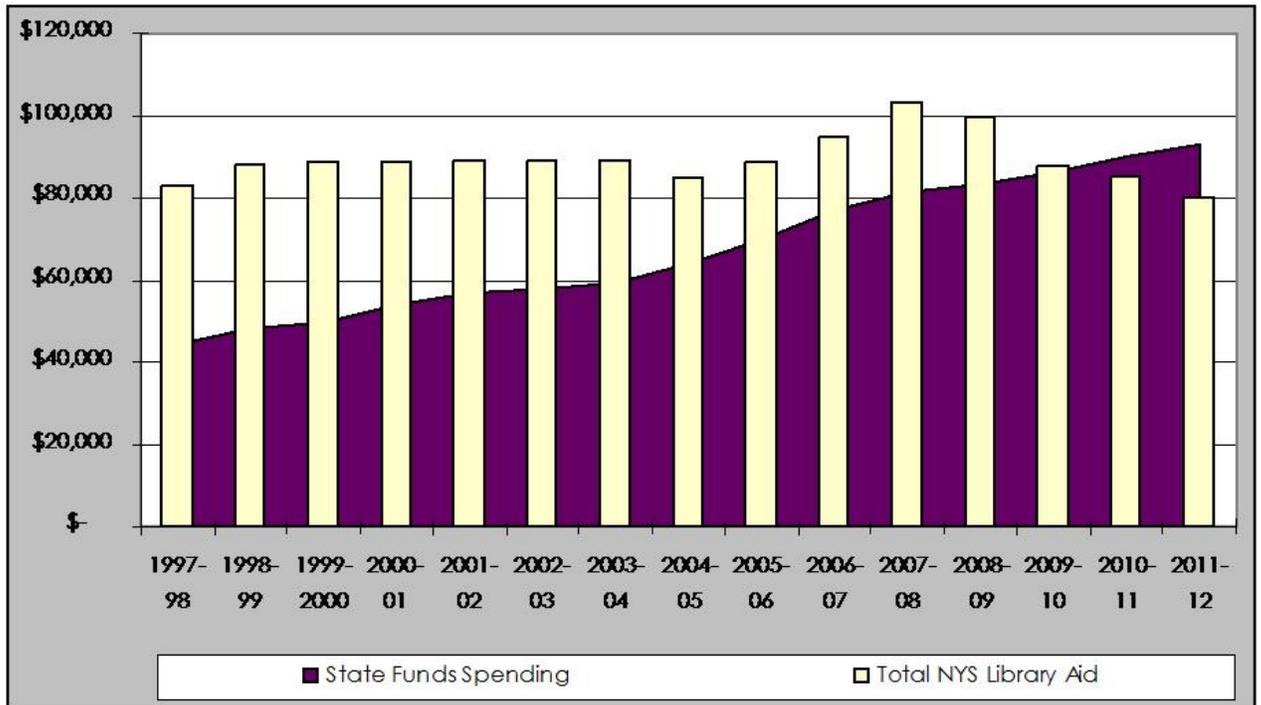
SUMMARY

New York has not adequately supported its libraries. NYSHEI recommends the following:

- increase library aid to 2007 levels and maintain growth on par with increases in the consumer price index,
- Update, index, and fully-fund the formal for coordinated collection development,
- Promote the statewide pooling of electronic information as per the recommendation of the Commission on Higher Education, and
- Secure taxpayer access to publically funded research.

Thank you.

Illustration A.



State funds spending is in the billions. Library aid is in the millions.