

## **NEW YORK LIBRARIES ARE ESSENTIAL! Library Systems Connect Our Libraries!**

Thank you, Assemblyman Reilly, for allowing us the opportunity to address the Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries and Education. We will touch on the impact the 2011-2012 State Budget has had on the Southern Adirondack Library System (SALS) and the thirty-four public libraries in Hamilton, Warren, Washington and Saratoga Counties. We also will address the important roles the public libraries and SALS play for the residents of our region. We are Alex Gutelius, Director of the Clifton Park Halfmoon Library and Sara Dallas, Director of the Southern Adirondack Library System (SALS).

SALS does not directly serve the public. SALS provides services to its thirty-four member libraries to help them best serve their communities. SALS receives approximately 95% of its revenue from NY State through funding formulas. In 2011, SALS received funding that was reduced approximately by 21.75% from the Education Laws funding levels.

The Southern Adirondack Library System (SALS), due to decreases in library aid over the years and increases in health care and retirement costs, had to make difficult choices in order to provide essential library services to its thirty-four member libraries. SALS eliminated a department, and through attrition and downsizing, reduced its staff by 33%. Grant programs for the member libraries were also eliminated.

Through a cooperative venture with the Mohawk Valley Library System, public libraries in eight upstate NY counties share hardware, software and a network to display the materials owned in all of the public libraries in our region. People can then borrow books, DVDs, CDs, locally and/or regionally. There are delivery vans that move these items from library to library, saving gas and time for the public. In 2010, this courier service moved approximately 6 million items throughout ten counties.

In the ten county region (Albany, Hamilton, Fulton, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Warren and Washington) our public libraries are being used more now than ever before:

7 million people visited a public library

1.3 million people used a public computer workstation to access the internet

We have attached some statistical information to this document that strongly shows that libraries are being used and are needed in our communities.

Why and how are people using the library? Here are some examples from the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Public Library:

Job Searching: The Library has introduced job search assistance classes in the past year which provide one-on-one assistance with online applications, resume writing and sometimes basic computer assistance. I know of one person in particular who specifically came back to the library to thank the staff for their assistance – and indicated that the staff was instrumental in him landing a job (he wanted to remain anonymous).

Universal Class: 258 people have signed up for online courses, which range from MS Office classes to interior design to self-hypnosis. Interestingly, the 258 people have signed up for 257 different classes – evidence of the many ways patrons use our library.

Delivery of shared library materials items is a huge benefit. We have used it to borrow and loan nearly 70,000 items (YTD). This is a huge benefit for our patrons and for the other system libraries, people in our region can capitalize on the large collections and with the SALS delivery services, we can keep costs low for each individual library. This is all seamless for our patrons.

Libraries are being used in record numbers, in Clifton Park-Halfmoon, the circulation is up 10% this year. Over 20,000 patrons attend over 825 programs in 2011 (YTD).

The library is always busy; people are using the library for business purposes. Local business people use the wireless connection and the other computing services available to them. There are times when all the tables and carrels are filled. We have started leaving tables out in the mezzanine area for students who come here to work and study. Unfortunately we don't have numbers for the wireless users.

The library also has rooms available for the public. In addition to the 825 library programs offered to the end of October - organizations and individuals have used our program rooms for over 600 hours (at no charge).

Thank you for your time.

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