

Testimony

On the Impact of the 2011-12 State Budget on Public Libraries in the Southern Tier region and Future needs of our Public Libraries and Library System

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Library systems were created in the 1950's to provide shared services. Shared library services multiply the value of tax dollars by:

- enabling libraries to provide services that they can't afford on local budgets
- allowing residents to use their hometown library card at any library in the region

For example:

- **Shared book and DVD collections**

Residents can search the regional library database online and request books, audio books and DVDs from libraries throughout the region

Residents say: "It's great how easy it is to order a book online & pick it up @ Fillmore and save time and money (gas)"

- **Fast and reliable delivery service**

Residents don't have to travel further than their local library to get access to materials throughout our five counties –

300 days a year Library System drivers are on the road delivering the books and other library materials needed by residents

Library Directors say: "Great delivery service helps our book budget – I don't have to buy 'everything' as someone else will have it"



- **High-speed Internet connections**

"I am going to college online and the library has helped me a ton. I come here and use the computer, because I have no computer at home"

- **"Interlibrary loan** gives patrons access to an extraordinary range of resources." from libraries across the state and nation

Impact of the 2011-12 State budget:

By 2011 libraries had already sustained deep cuts. The cuts in the 2011-2012 budget were the sixth since 2008 – a 21% reduction over the last 4 years.

Impact on System services:

- Services down to bare bones levels - less Information Technology support, fewer deliveries, fewer staff members cataloging and processing materials so that it takes longer for libraries to get their new books and DVD
- Difficult to keep up with changes in technology
- Rural member libraries paying 46% more for shared System services than in 2008
- Libraries paying twice as much to have materials processed (laminated book jackets, spine labels applied) by the Library System.

Library trustees are worried that their services will be priced out of business, especially those who rely on municipal funding. The tax cap will limit the ability of municipalities to fund libraries.

Future needs of our Public Libraries and Library System

Libraries support economic development in every community. In providing the only free Internet access in town, libraries help residents with job hunting, computer classes, support for small businesses, and assisting entrepreneurs.

Communities need libraries:

- Where citizens can get high-speed internet access and online information
"I rely on the library for research and programming"
- Where students get help
"I attend the University of Phoenix online and I get help at the library because I do not have computer skills."
- Where parents find free programs, books and videos and information about ways to save money
"I find ways to squeeze an extra few dollars out of everything. I was very excited to take advantage of my new squeezable resource —the library, which is small but has proven to be fantastic." Cassandra Robbers, Almond

In order to provide the excellent library services that citizens want and need, libraries must implement:

- Library resources available on mobile devices – smart phones, tablet PC, etc
- Hiring of staff with advanced information technology skills
- Children ready to learn: Facilitate early literacy programs
- Digital collections of downloadable audio books, eBooks, music and videos
- Faster telecommunications connecting library buildings to optical fiber broadband networks

A member library director said: "...technology services are the backbone of systems and libraries. All patrons are directly impacted by all these services. My patrons often don't have computers or internet at home; the library is the only way they can do business online, job hunt, and connect with friends and family far away."

Libraries are a high value for citizens. Libraries

- link generations
- are central gathering places for community members
- are safe havens for teenagers who need a place to do homework if home isn't safe or conducive
- are the "first school" for many toddlers who attend story hours
- make the best books published for children available to every family
- offer to job seekers librarians' expertise to help with resumes and applications
- provide services tailored for each community, such as the Elmira genealogy collection
- make special efforts to be accessible to all. The library in Corning is installing a electronic loop that will allow people with hearing disabilities to participate in programs and meetings
- are a point of pride for community residents

In Rushford in rural Allegany County, where Main Street buildings are full of "going out of business" signs, the librarian says that kids come right from the school bus to the library and that people see the library as their only remaining community center.

Another library director says "Our patrons are rural homeowners/renters. There are no large libraries or information sources close by. The library system (of connected services) is used continuously by many."

Libraries in rural areas are essential to the daily fabric of life.

There is a desperate need for restoration of library funds to maintain these vital services. We look forward to working with you and the New York Library Association 1) to maintain the \$79 million level from 2011, and 2) restore library funding to 2010 levels of \$84.45 million. These funds supplement local funds, enable libraries to provide 21st century services, multiply resources, and expand shared services. Shared system services strengthen libraries, build communities and enable every resident to have equal access to excellent library services.

Thank you.