

Statement of Jeffrey Cannell, Deputy Commissioner for Cultural Education, New York State Education Department

Good Morning Chairman Reilly and thank you for having us today. My name is Jeffrey Cannell and I am the Deputy Commissioner for Cultural Education. I am pleased to be here today to testify on behalf of the Board of Regents, Commissioner John B. King, Jr., and the State Education Department. I am joined today by Assistant Commissioner Bernie Margolis, our State Librarian.

I want to first thank you for the increases in state aid provided to our libraries and library systems in the last state budget. We understand that these have been challenging fiscal times, and your investments in libraries and library systems are an acknowledgement of their importance not only as educational, local and cultural institutions, but as contributors to our economic recovery.

New Yorkers love libraries. New Yorkers used a public library over 115 million times last year and took home over 163 million items, ranging from traditional books to the latest in e-books.

The Regents are in the midst of an ambitious Reform Agenda, and libraries have played a part by providing critical teaching and learning resources and opportunities to support the Regents goal of ensuring that all students graduate high school ready for college and careers.

Libraries provide critical early literacy services, and offer job training resources for adults, including English basic literacy skills. These services, among many others, make libraries a key component for the sustained success of New York's public education system.

In my testimony, I will discuss some programs and services libraries and library systems are providing to their local communities, and how libraries are using collaboration and technology to better leverage resources.

STATE-SUPPORTED LIBRARY SYSTEMS – THE BACKBONE

Before I delve into that, I want to take just a moment to put the state's libraries and library systems in context, because it does illustrate in part the grand collaboration inherent in the library system.

Many New Yorkers are not aware of the state-supported library and information infrastructure that stands behind and supports their local library. This state-supported infrastructure includes the New York State Library, the three types of library systems (public, school and research/reference) and over 7,000 individual libraries.

Because of the State Library and state-supported "library systems," New Yorkers may freely access library materials and services that many communities would not otherwise

be able to afford. The State Library and the library systems use public and private funds to help libraries collaborate and better leverage and extend local resources. This important state-supported partnership results in library services being delivered more equitably across New York State. This collaboration also brings library services to New Yorkers with special needs, such as persons with physical and learning disabilities, the educationally disadvantaged, and others with difficulty in accessing traditional library services.

As a result, collaborative services delivered through the three types of library systems benefit all New Yorkers. Students, parents, entrepreneurs, authors, researchers, teachers, health practitioners, job seekers and others capitalize on the rich resources our libraries bring to New York's information infrastructure.

NEW YORK'S LIBRARIES – MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS

The breadth and depth of programs and services offered by libraries and library systems are vast. In addition to the traditional programs and services that one thinks of when they think of a library, there are many innovative programs throughout the state that we are proud of and serve as examples of library efforts to engage with the community. Here are a few:

- At the Fayetteville Free Library you can make an appointment to visit with a librarian for job search help. A child can create a three-dimensional model of their latest invention and a band student can participate in live musical performances. By the way Fayetteville has just been selected as one of the top 30 public libraries in all of the United States.
- The Port Washington Public Library runs a Job Search Bootcamp with the support of Assemblymember Michelle Schimel. This intensive 8 week program is designed to share every technique needed for an effective job search. The end result is a good job!
- In New York City, a fantastic partnership between the Queens, New York, and Brooklyn libraries brings new and expanded resources to the city's public schools. With an emphasis on on-line learning this partnership brings to schools a new connection to local library branches and recognizes that educational opportunity extends beyond the school day and the school building.
- The New York Heritage Collection is a creation of the nine Reference and Research Resources Systems which cover the entire state and have come together to make available local newspaper resources from across the state as well as photographic and local history and genealogy resources. These are all available on-line with easy searching to connect people with their past and to celebrate all things New York. And they are available to the public at no charge.

- The Bausch & Lomb Research and Development Library was described, in a recent nomination for the Special Library of the Year Award, as playing “a critical role in helping our scientists develop new products by giving them access to key scientific information. We are lucky to have access to literally thousands of publications on paper and electronically. More importantly, our library (here in New York) is a global resource for Bausch & Lomb, helping our teams around the world ultimately bring innovative eye health solutions to market to help people see better – to live better.”

As many of you know, the New York State Library, in partnership with the New York State Museum and New York State Archives, just completed a successful statewide tour of the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, the only Emancipation Proclamation document in President Lincoln’s own hand. Over 30,000 New Yorkers viewed the exhibition which also included a copy of the speech delivered by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Proclamation in New York City, in September 1962. This historic document is in our hands due to the wisdom of the State Legislature, which appropriated \$1,000 in 1865 to purchase the Emancipation Proclamation for placement with the State Library. The exhibition text authored by Commissioner King; historian Harold Holzer, and Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at New York Public Library Director Kahlil Muhammed provided an opportunity for public education about this important part of the American story and the role we have is sharing these important resources.

These are just a few examples of the exciting things happening in New York’s 756 public libraries and in the over 6,000 school, academic, law, health, corporate and special libraries which provide an enviable array of library and information services for New Yorkers. I could go on and on, because in my job as Deputy Commissioner for Cultural Education I have the pleasure of learning and seeing firsthand the many exciting programs and services New York libraries are offering to meet the needs of their communities.

LIBRARIES ARE LEARNING SPACES & LEARNING PLACES

As highly visible and accessible community anchor institutions, libraries provide both formal and informal learning spaces – in the library and online. This is true for whichever community a library serves- a town, a city or village; an elementary, middle or high school; a community college or major university; or a hospital or corporation.

Technology has become a key aspect of library services. Libraries strive to ensure digital inclusion for all our citizens – so every New Yorker will be digitally literate or digitally fluent and able to freely access online information and online educational opportunities, regardless of where they live or their economic circumstances.

Consider that:

- 72.5% of New York's public libraries are the only free source of Internet/broadband access in their communities. Over 17,000 public access internet computers are today available at over 1,000 public libraries.
- 94.6 % of New York's public libraries offer computer related training to help people, of all ages, in many languages, acquire 21st century technology skills.
- Libraries are leaders in expanding Wi-Fi and broadband access for the public and are paving the way with partnerships to expand capacity for all potential users.
- New Yorkers with disabilities rely on the library for special equipment and materials to make the fullest use of the Internet services they need.
- Libraries continue to push the envelope on increasing the connect speeds and capacity for Internet/broadband access. Now over 25% of New York's libraries have Internet connect speeds greater than 10Mbps. Federal support from E-rate and grant funds is being used to improve access speeds across the state.

In order to be competitive and to support local needs, libraries will need even greater capacity and even greater speeds to offer the robust Wi-Fi, videoconferencing and other broadband services now both expected and required by the public.

I would like to re-introduce you to Bernie, and ask him to discuss critical issues facing libraries today.