

Assembly Committee on Libraries and Education Technology Public Hearing on Funding Public Libraries in New York State

November 29, 2012

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Executive Director

Ramapo Catskill Library System

Access to knowledge is the superb, the supreme act of truly great civilizations. Of all the institutions that purport to do this, free libraries stand virtually alone in accomplishing this mission.

Toni Morrison

In the increasingly competitive global market place success is largely dependent on one's level of education and access to information. The future success of our State rests upon the extent to which we can assure that our children are provided an exceptional education and are able to benefit from a superior information infrastructure.

As public spending comes increasingly under scrutiny, it is those institutions that embrace cooperation, provide consolidated services, exhibit clear responses to regional needs and demonstrate the highest return for every dollar spent, that will emerge as the most worthy of public funding. Since 1959 the Ramapo Catskill Library System (RCLS) has operated in this manner.

In the last couple of years it appears as if this notion is being heralded as a paradigm shift that will improve how the State operates. Yet from its inception, over 50 years ago, RCLS along with the library systems throughout the State embraced the concept that cooperation and consolidation is a means to improving the quality of life for New Yorkers while keeping costs under control. Library systems are the "poster children" for cooperative and consolidated services.

RCLS, working cooperatively with our member libraries, has been able to maintain a basket of consolidated services that continues to help our members provide high quality local services while keeping local expenditures in check. Together we have established a network covering nearly 2,500 square miles that allows for resource sharing and equity of access. Through a public-private partnership we have established a fiber-optic communication network that connects all of our libraries. During the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, this network ensured that our libraries in Rockland County were able to provide public Internet access to their residents when these services were lost in three states. Our delivery service is able to transport library materials to and from our members for under \$0.20 per item. In the decade from 1990 to 2000 we were able to help all of our libraries automate their services.

Attached to this testimony is a document that shows the return on investment (ROI), the value of the services we provide to our members for every dollar spent. This is a conservative calculation and shows that we provide \$6.61 for every dollar spent on all of our services except automation, where the value is \$3.45 for every dollar spent.

Libraries are part of the education and information infrastructure within the State. They offer much needed resources to those who cannot afford to buy books or purchase Internet access. They offer government services such as the ability to file a tax return online. They offer entrepreneurs the resources to start a business or to grow their business. They offer preschool children opportunities to learn to read and develop a life-long love of reading. They offer Summer Reading programs that help children to maintain or improve their reading level over the summer vacation. They offer people access to computers to apply for jobs. They provide people with a space to meet and engage others in their community. They are a focal point during a civic crisis, such as Hurricane Sandy. Libraries make a difference in people's lives.

Library systems support the work of libraries and help to reduce local tax expenditures while maintaining high quality services. Library systems are models of cooperative and consolidated services. Together libraries and library systems form a key element within both the education and information infrastructures of New York State.

We need your support! We understand that the economy of the State requires prudent spending; all we ask is that State Aid to libraries is treated in the same manner as Aid to schools. Let us work together to make sure that New York State returns to its leadership position within the Nation and the world. Let us work together, as the Governor has asked to "improve student achievement," "increase parent and family engagement," "help high-need and low-wealth communities" and "manage educational funding and costs" by supporting State Aid to libraries.

Together we can make a difference!

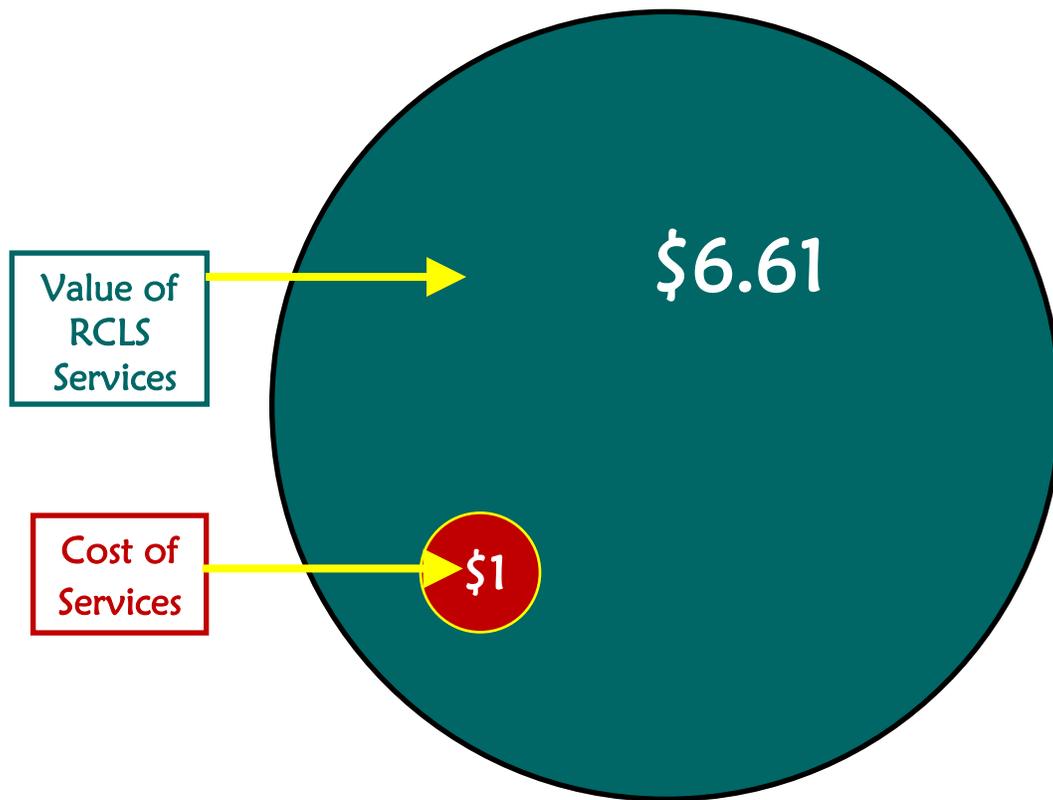


RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI) FOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY RAMAPO CATSKILL LIBRARY SYSTEM

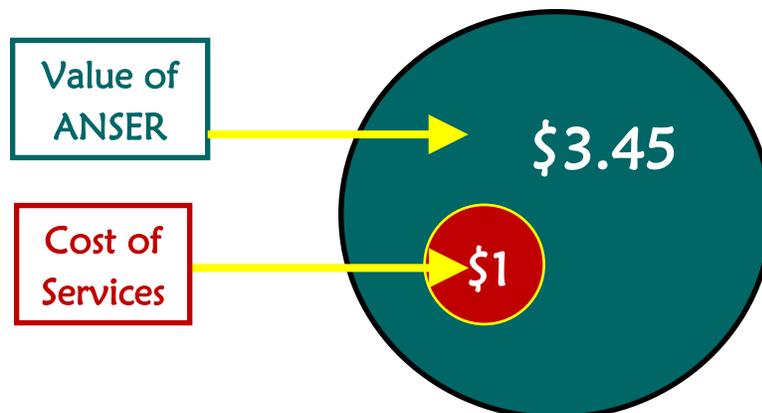
MONETARY VALUE OF SERVICES FOR EVERY DOLLAR SPENT

RCLS Services

Continuing Education, Consulting, Cataloging, Delivery, Digital Content



Automated Network Services (ANSER)



Value of RCLS Services:

Continuing Education	\$ 108,225
Consulting Contacts (excluding automation)	\$ 213,825
Cataloging	\$ 403,604
Delivery Services	\$ 6,430,802
Digital Content	\$ 5,777,000

Grand total value of services \$12,933,456

RCLS Revenue:

Basic State Aid	\$ 1,638,091
Central Library Aid	\$ 248,302
Revenue from member library service fees	\$ 70,273

Grand total revenue \$ 1,956,666

RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

Value of services	\$12,933,456
Total revenue	\$ 1,956,666

Return in value for every dollar of revenue \$6.61

Value of Automated Network Services (ANSER):

11 Small libraries at \$44,000 each	\$ 484,000
11 Medium libraries at \$56,568 each	\$ 622,248
11 Intermediate libraries at \$76,978 each	\$ 846,758
13 Large libraries at : 13 X \$90,640 each	\$ 1,178,320

Grand total value of ANSER \$ 3,131,326

Member library ANSER Fees: \$ 906,522

RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

Value of services	\$ 3,131,326
ANSER fees	\$ 906,522

Return in value for every dollar of revenue \$3.45