

Prepared Statement before Standing Committee on Libraries and Education

Technology November 29, 2012

Ira Simon, Board President Ramapo Catskill Library System

Good Morning:

I am Ira Simon, a resident of Monticello, New York. I currently serve as the President of the Board of Trustees of the Ramapo Catskill Library System where I have been a Board Member and Officer since 2004. Prior to that I was a member and officer of the board of the Ethelbert Crawford Library in Monticello, and was the President of the Sullivan County Public Library Association from its inception in 1998 through 2004.

In my capacity as a Board Member of the Ethelbert Crawford library I had the opportunity to discover the impact that RCLS had on the services our local library was able to deliver to our local patrons. Access to the seemingly unlimited collections of all member libraries through the ANSER System and Inter Library Loans enabled our small community the resources of a vast system. Our initial foray into computerized technology was made possible with seed money from the system, and the maintenance and continuous upgrades to the system were developed by RCLS. Staff and Trustee training was developed and implemented by the system. Specialists in Children's Services, Outreach, and Development met with our staff to develop programs and design critical programs for our patrons.

As a Board Member of RCLS, I discovered that these services were replicated forty eight times over, to varying degrees, at each member library throughout the system.

During the nine years I have served on the Board for RCLS I have witnessed the continuous erosion to the funding levels established by law in 1990. The result of this diminishment of resources has been a consolidation of services within the system, coupled with the elimination of certain programs. Finally, with no alternatives, and much debate, the trustees have implemented service fees to member libraries to offset the shortfall caused by funding cuts.

This gradual shift of the responsibility of support from a state mandate, to localities, seems to me to be unfairly burdensome. Local sources are already supporting their libraries. The trend of reduced system funding seems to have no end in sight. Inevitably our service fees will increase if we are to continue offering the services that are vital to the patrons of the libraries in our system. It is imperative that Library Systems are insulated from the uncertainty of inconsistency, and supported as Education Law intended.

Thank you.