

## Assembly Committee on Libraries and Education Technology

Public Hearing to examine the 2016-2017 State Budget's impact on the mission of New York State libraries in the 21st Century

December 13, 2016

Robert Hubsher  
Executive Director  
Ramapo Catskill Library System



The public library has been historically a vital instrument of democracy and opportunity in the United States.... Our history has been greatly shaped by people who read their way to opportunity and achievements in public libraries.

Arthur Meier Schlesinger

A library is not a luxury but one of the necessities of life.

Henry Ward Beecher

The future success of New Yorkers rests upon the extent to which they have access to education and a superior information infrastructure. We must assure that our children are provided an exceptional education, adults have access to continuing education and everyone is able to access the information they need to achieve their educational goals, improve their quality of life, succeed in their jobs, start or expand their businesses, create new art, services, or goods and support their innovation in science and technology. **Libraries are an integral part of the education and information infrastructure and a key component of a successful New York State.**

I am the Executive Director of the Ramapo Catskill Library System (RCLS) a Public Library System, serving 47 member libraries in a region that spans nearly 2,500 square miles. As such I will focus my comments on RCLS.

There are 23 Public Library Systems – 16 Cooperative, like RCLS, four (4) Confederated (Buffalo & Erie, Clinton-Essex-Franklin, Monroe and Onondaga) and three (3) Consolidated Systems, which are the libraries in NYC. I will not get into the details of the funding for these types of systems, but an outline of the funding details about each type of System can be found at: <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/libtypes.htm>

State Aid funding formulas are defined in Education Law, with the current formulas established 26 years ago (1990).

Just over 90% of all State Aid for libraries goes to Library Systems. Those funds are used to leverage consolidated and cooperative purchasing and services to reduce the cost of local operations.

In spite of the restoration of \$4 million in the FY2016 -2017 State Budget for Library Aid, funding for libraries and library systems remains below the level it was eight (8) years ago (FY2009/2010). Based on the formulas for Library Aid in Education law more than \$111 million in statutory Aid has been withheld since FY2007/2008.

In order to deal with capped and subsequently reduced funding from the State, over the last 17 years RCLS has been required to reduce staffing by 20%, eliminate programs and services and introduce a member library service fee to offset revenue shortfalls. This service fee comes from the funding stream of our member libraries via the library taxes assessed against local property owners.

The \$4 million restoration of State Aid this year allowed RCLS to reduce the service fee, while maintaining our overall level of service and staffing and introduce a pilot project to work more cooperatively with the school libraries in our service area.

The pilot project involved 27 students at the Chester Academy High School, aged 15 and over, who participated in a program to help them develop a more realistic view of the current workforce. The program covered the expectations of

prospective employers and potential career paths, for college and non-college bound students.

This pilot project was a resounding success and we are seeking to find ways to expand the program to other high schools.

The Project was initiated in response to a meeting with the Commissioner of Education, MaryEllen Elia, that I was privileged to participate in along with the Executive Directors of the Upper Hudson and Westchester Library Systems. During this meeting the Commissioner talked about her interest in increasing the cooperation between schools and public libraries.

Without the State Aid funding restoration we would not have been able to implement this pilot program.

Since 1959 RCLS has been offering consolidated and cooperative services which help our member libraries meet local needs while keeping local expenditures down.

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 ROI calculation is based on a very conservative calculation and shows that we provide \$4.43 in value for every dollar spent on all of our services except automation, where the value is \$3.01 for every dollar spent.

Coordinating purchasing of electronic resources which are available to all of our member libraries lowers the cost per library by a factor of 2.5 to 2.75, a substantive saving.

In 2015 our delivery service transported over 3.363 million items to and from our member libraries at a cost of \$0.14 per item, compared to the United States Postal Service library rate of \$2.59 for any item up to one (1) pound.

New York State's Library Systems were established to respond to local and regional needs while offering the highest return for every dollar spent. This was true at their inception and continues to be their primary focus. Over nearly 60 years library systems embraced the singular purpose of reducing the local cost of operation by embracing cooperation and providing consolidated services. In an economic environment where taxpayers are carefully scrutinizing all public expenditures, State Aid to libraries and library systems represent an investment with a high rate of return, not an expenditure.

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.

Libraries and library systems need your continuing 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, 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 continue to make a difference!

## A FEW LINKS TO ARTICLES ABOUT THE VALUE OF LIBRARIES

Will Librarians Be The Overseers Of The Information Age?

<http://www.edcircuit.com/will-librarians-be-the-overseers-of-the-information-age/>

Libraries serve wide range of purposes and people, some homeless

<http://www.startribune.com/libraries-serve-wide-range-of-purposes-and-people-some-homeless/404135976/>

Smartphones Can't Replace Libraries

<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2016/11/10/why-academic-libraries-arent-just-expensive-vanity-projects-essay>

Do we need librarians now that we have the internet?

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/making-sense/column-need-librarians-internet/>

Book Reading 2016 – Pew Research Center Report

<http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/09/01/book-reading-2016/>

The Future of Libraries

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/future-libraries-180959925/>

Public libraries serve the homeless more than just books

<http://www.scpr.org/news/2016/08/11/63487/social-public-libraries-serve-the-homeless-more-tha/>

Seven Surprising Benefits of Maker Spaces

<http://www.slj.com/2016/08/technology/seven-surprising-benefits-of-maker-spaces/>

Being a librarian now means also being at least a part-time social worker

<https://timeline.com/being-a-librarian-now-means-also-being-at-least-a-part-time-social-worker-f56c0c87da96#.q7dwnrp2n>

Younger Americans and Public Libraries - Pew Research Center Report

[http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/09/10/younger-americans-and-public-libraries/?utm\\_source=Pew+Internet+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=2bc9c8d888-Younger+Americans\\_Libraries\\_091014&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_79a7fe984b-2bc9c8d888-394888862](http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/09/10/younger-americans-and-public-libraries/?utm_source=Pew+Internet+Newsletter&utm_campaign=2bc9c8d888-Younger+Americans_Libraries_091014&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_79a7fe984b-2bc9c8d888-394888862)



## **Hudson Valley Future Careers Program Summary Report**

Grace Riario

This is a 7-week program with the goal of preparing High School students, aged 15 and over, to develop a realistic view of the current workforce. The program covers both the expectations of a prospective employer and potential career paths, for college and non-college bound students.

Participating students must complete a project where they choose an industry or career path. The student will present the reason for her/his interest in the field; a sample of a real life job description; and complete an interview with one or more people currently holding a position in the chosen field.

Each week, students have the opportunity to meet and ask questions of a professional from different career fields. They met with Ken Jones, Orange County Sheriff Office, Robby Sciullo, HollowBrook Golf Club, Ryan Mayo, Take Flight Aviation, Craig Jacobs, Electrician and John Schneider, RCLS ANSER Manager.

During the last week of the program, students participate in mock interviews. The interviews were done by the following professionals: Amanda Petricone, Blaser SwissLube; Denise Panebianco, Orange Bank; Erica Freer, Citizens Bank; Brooke Kithcart, Mediacom; Ashley Malkemus, Mediacom; Deborah Francis, NY Life Insurance; and Annmarie Buckley, Alden Road Associates.

At the end of the program each student received a certificate of completion.



# 2017 RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI) FOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY RAMAPO CATSKILL LIBRARY SYSTEM

## MONETARY VALUE OF SERVICES FOR EVERY DOLLAR SPENT

Calculations are based on statistics for 2015 and the 2017 approved Operating Budget

**RCLS Services - Continuing Education, Consulting,  
Cataloging, Delivery, Digital Content**

**Value of RCLS Services**  
\$10,663,310

**Cost of Services**  
\$2,409,473

Value of services for  
every dollar spent.

**\$4.43**

## Automated Network Services (ANSER)

**Value of RCLS Services**  
\$3,525,506

**Cost of Services**  
\$1,169,630

Value of services for  
every dollar spent.

**\$3.01**

## Value of RCLS Services:

Continuing Education	\$ 98,840
Consulting Contacts (excluding automation)	\$ 272,670
Cataloging	\$ 401,749
Delivery Services	\$8,542,468
Digital Content	\$1,347,583

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Grand total value of services **\$10,663,310**

## RCLS Revenue:

Basic State Aid	\$ 2,030,310
Central Library Aid	\$ 307,433
Revenue from member library service fees	\$ 71,730

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Total revenue **\$ 2,409,473**

## RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

Value of services	\$10,663,310
Total revenue	\$ 2,409,473

Return in value to member libraries for every dollar of revenue **\$4.43**

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## Value of Automated Network Services (ANSER):

Average annual cost of ILS maintenance costs amortized over five (5) years (based on SirsiDynix quotations)	\$1,779,316
Wages & Benefits for staff to configure and maintain ILS @ \$20.86/hr for 35 hour work-week for 46 libraries	\$1,746,190

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Grand total value of ANSER **\$3,525,506**

Member library ANSER Fees: **\$1,138,908**

## RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

Value of services	\$ 3,525,506
ANSER fees	\$ 1,169,630

Return in value to member libraries for every dollar of revenue **\$3.01**

A detailed breakdown of how the value of RCLS services was calculated is available upon request.