



**Pioneer  
Library  
System**

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*leading libraries forward*

My name is Lauren Moore. I am the Executive Director of the Pioneer Library System, a cooperative library system providing shared services to the 42 small and rural public libraries in Ontario, Wayne, Wyoming, and Livingston counties. We manage an online library catalog that provides every resident in our four counties with access to over 1M library items; our delivery vans travel more than 2,000 miles a week to deliver library materials to all 42 libraries; we provide continuing education to member library staff and trustees; and we provide onsite technology support for libraries' computers and networking systems. Our libraries are an important part of the region's educational network, providing lifelong learning opportunities to community members of all ages.

Last year, I was unable to attend the Committee's Hearing on Public Library Funding, but I submitted written testimony in which I described the Pioneer Library System's investment in our member libraries' technology infrastructure, thanks to increases in state. I shared a story about how the System replaced our member libraries' wireless access points with the enterprise-quality access points necessary for busy public organizations like our libraries. We supplemented the equipment upgrade with increased technology support from Pioneer System staff, and the result was a faster, more efficient, streamlined, twenty-first century wireless access experience for libraries and the patrons they serve.

It was a success story, but I closed on the same sad lines that seemed to conclude every conversation about library technology in rural communities. In 2015 I wrote, "[this] success story illustrates the effectiveness of the Pioneer Library System in helping libraries to save money and increase services to the public. However, it also makes glaringly obvious the inadequacy of current library funding to meet the ongoing infrastructure needs of public libraries... specifically the need for increased bandwidth for small and rural libraries. Almost all of our member libraries have inadequate bandwidth levels, but because of the rural nature of the communities, there are limited options for bandwidth increases without huge investments in broadband infrastructure and high monthly bills to internet service providers that would exceed libraries' current budgets."

Well, I am very pleased to be here in-person today to report that there is now a happy ending to the story. This July, our 42 small and rural libraries quadrupled their available bandwidth, without huge investments in broadband infrastructure and without any cost increases to local libraries. Instead, we leveraged system resources, including

purchasing power, technology expertise, and state aid to achieve what last year seemed impossible.

Once again, it all came together thanks to the legislature and its investment in library aid and library systems. First, the Pioneer Library System used its collective purchasing power to renegotiate a favorable contract with Time Warner, which resulted in higher bandwidth availability at more competitive pricing levels. The prices were made even more favorable because of a strategic effort on behalf of the System to move many of the Time-Warner supported services in-house, and instead rely on System staff expertise and System-purchased equipment, specifically System-managed Firewalls. Most importantly, last year's increase in state aid finally restored Pioneer Library System's funding to a level that allowed the Pioneer Board of Trustees to commit to subsidizing about 80% of member libraries' bandwidth costs.

The impact of these changes is staggering. Not only has every member library in the System at least quadrupled its bandwidth, seven of our libraries upgraded to 100x100 mbps fiber connections. Now, every resident of our four counties, even those living in the region's most rural communities, will have access to the technology they need to find employment, learn new skills, succeed in school, and become fully engaged digital citizens.

At the Pioneer Library System, we are very proud of what we have been able to accomplish with our state aid. Finding a way for our rural member libraries to achieve adequate bandwidth levels was our number one priority, and we made a series of bold changes at the System that helped us achieve this goal. And just as we are grateful for the increases in state aid that allowed us to make those bold changes, we are acutely aware that a future decrease in state aid could significantly cripple our operations.

As you know, despite recent increases, current state library aid is roughly equivalent to the library funding level of 2002. (To put that date in context, remember that YouTube, which requires at least 2-6 megabytes/second to view its videos, wasn't launched until 2006.) We are operating in a completely different technology landscape than in 2002, one that requires high levels of expertise, new investment in evolving technologies, and ever-increasing bandwidth levels. My goal is that every library in the Pioneer Library System has 100 x 100 mbps connections by 2019. We will continue to leverage all of the System resources we can to reach that goal, but it certainly can't happen with 2002-level funding.

Library systems in New York are the models of shared services, but the increased costs of delivering the twenty-first century services our communities deserve are outstripping found efficiencies. Investing in library systems ensures that every resident, even if living in a rural community, has access to lifelong learning opportunities through his or her local

public library. But in order for systems to continue to lead libraries forward into a strong and enduring future, we need adequate funding.

Thank you for convening this important discussion about public library funding. I hope that I can join you again in 2019 with another happy coda to my story: 100 x 100 mbps connections at all 42 libraries in the Pioneer Library System.