

Upper Hudson Library System

Testimony for NYS Assembly Public Hearing on Library Funding

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Public Libraries and Public Library Systems - a Smart Investment for New York State

Funding overview of NYS library aid

Library aid in the NY State budget (which represents less than 1/10 of 1% of the total budget) has been reduced 6 times in the last 4 years and the current funding level is equivalent to 2004 levels. The NY State Legislature needs to reverse that trend and change their mindset about supporting libraries and library systems. You have to think of this as your opportunity to make an investment in the future of New York State through your support of libraries. Funding libraries and library systems is an investment in New York's economic recovery, an investment in New York's educational and cultural infrastructure, an investment in New York's citizens, and an investment that will produce a substantial return and make a lasting positive difference for New York State.

Public Libraries are Essential

- 1) Public Libraries are essential to the State's economic recovery. Every day, the nearly 400 public computers in Upper Hudson's libraries are in use from opening to closing. Much of that use is from people searching for employment, changing jobs, and starting and managing small businesses. Every day in our public libraries staff provide training and support to job seekers, GED students working to improve their marketability and their job skills, and people looking to public libraries to improve their technology skills. Public Libraries are making a significant contribution to getting New Yorker's back to work.
- 2) Public Libraries are essential to the State's educational infrastructure. Public Libraries support the process of becoming an effective learner, which is a dynamic and complex process that begins at birth and continues into adulthood. Public Libraries serve children for years before they begin school, and provide vital early literacy and learning experiences that help prepare children for a successful k-12 experience. Research

overwhelmingly supports the correlation between early childhood exposure to reading and learning and success in school. And for many parents the public library is the place not only get books to read to their children, but also to get information for themselves on how to be a better parent and how to improve their life and the lives of their children.

- 3) Public Libraries are essential in connecting New Yorkers to the digital world. There is a myth out there that “everyone” has a computer at home and it’s easy for many of us to take for granted ubiquitous access to the internet. The woman who came to the Troy Public Library last week to apply for an entry level job at Price Chopper, an application that can only be submitted online – knows that it’s simply not true that everyone owns a computer. So does the 81-year-old man considering a move to a faraway assisted living facility that came to the East Greenbush Community Library last month to use a public computer to view the facility’s photo tour. For many New Yorkers, public libraries are the only place they can use a tool that is becoming more and more necessary to be fully engaged in the world we live in.
- 4) Public Libraries are essential ingredients of a democratic society. Effective democracy requires full citizen participation in government at the local, county, and state level by all citizens. Public libraries serve as polling places, venues for candidate forums, and the place where citizens have free and full access to information on all viewpoints. The public library serves as a gathering place for all kinds of civic, cultural and social groups and it is these groups that make up the social fabric of New York. The public library helps communities engage in shaping their future.

Try to imagine what your hometown would be like without its public library....imagine what New York State would be like without any of its public libraries.

Public Library Systems Connect New York’s Libraries

- 1) There has been a lot of talk lately about the need for local governments to cooperate, collaborate, and share resources to achieve greater efficiency and economies of scale. Library Systems in New York State have been the models for cooperation, collaboration and resource sharing since they were established 50 years ago.

All users of the Upper Hudson Library System have 24/7 online access to the combined collections of all 29 public libraries in Albany and Rensselaer Counties, which includes over 1.8 million items.

And the System provides member libraries and their users with an efficient resource sharing system that picks up and delivers user requested library material to every library, every weekday. Last year 3.2 million library items were shared between and among the 29 UHLS member libraries.

To put that in perspective ...If each library had to purchase all of the library material shared last year for their own shelves, the total annual cost to the 29 Upper Hudson libraries would be over \$27 million in taxpayer dollars (based on a conservative estimate of \$20/item).

Multiply that single year savings by the 23 public library systems statewide and it is clear that public library systems are a truly exceptional investment of tax dollars.

- 2) As we continue to move forward in a time of fiscal uncertainty, public library systems are uniquely positioned to be the “change agent” to help public libraries explore new organizational models that can ensure sustainable support for the essential services they provide to communities across the state.

Again please try to imagine what your community or New York State would be like without its library systems. Public libraries could only offer the material and information contained within that building’s four walls. Library systems provide the essential connections that link all library users to the universe of information and make all of New York’s resources available to all of its citizens.

Funding New York’s Public Libraries and Public Library Systems is a smart investment of NYS taxpayer \$ for several reasons:

- 1) **In today’s new economy, information is the single most important commodity that we trade in and public libraries are the community’s entry portals into that new world.**
- 2) **Public Library Systems are the role models for all local government units seeking to cooperate, collaborate, and share resources for the benefit of all New Yorkers.**
- 3) **Numerous studies have demonstrated that for every \$1 invested in public libraries, a \$5 - \$6 return on investment comes back to the community.**

I am only asking that you look at library funding through the eyes of an investor trying to make his money go as far as possible.

If you do that I'm sure you will do the right thing and provide libraries and library systems with the support they need to continue to make New York a better place to live, work, and raise a family.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to you.

Supporting statistical information from UHLS MVLS and SALS (separate sheet attached)

Links to Public Library return on Investment studies

<http://www.ala.org/ala/research/librarystats/roi/index.cfm>

<http://www.irs.org/public/roi/>

<http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/econimpact.html>

2010 Public Use Statistics for the Capital Region Public Library Systems (UHLS, MVLS, SALS)

	MVLS	UHLS	SALS	Totals
Circulation	1,775,209	4,887,158	3,272,906	9,935,273
Holdings	884,599	1,814,320	1,015,401	3,714,320
Public Internet Computers	182	389	327	898
Computer Use	364,843	533,759	394,370	1,292,972
Program Attendance	70,718	178,265	140,698	389,681
Library Visits	1,678,030	2,983,660	2,380,848	7,042,538
Reference Questions	171,159	445,655	459,040	1,075,854
<i>Population Served (2010 census)</i>	293,226	424,813	330,359	1,048,398
Delivery stops	5,460	10,608	7,592	23,660
Delivery volume	1.8 million items	3.2 million items	787,848 items	5.8 million items
ILL borrowed	96,612	600,480	203,194	900,286
ILL loaned	110,605	568,803	189,480	868,888
Hours Open	940.5	1,545	1,263	3,749
Borrowers	134,313	295,137	203,954	633,404
Employed (FTE)	118.68	379	232.3	730