



House Appropriations Education Subcommittee

Testimony by Lance Werner, Director
Kent District Public Library and
Mary Rzepczynski, Director,
Delta Township District Library
Michigan Library Association
February 24, 2016

Thank you Chairman Potvin and thank you to the committee for your leadership and support of the Library community. For many years library funding remained constant. However, the increase in funding that libraries experienced in FY2016 and recommendation for maintenance of that funding next year is a recognition by the Governor and legislature of the vital role that libraries continue to play in communities around this state. We appreciate our continued partnership and the ability to provide this testimony to you today.

State Aid to Public Libraries has been slowly and steadily increasing and libraries are appreciative. However, in the recent past, cuts have been deep. The legislature recognized the value of libraries when Renaissance Zone reimbursements, eliminated in 2010, were restored. Penal fines, which have been constitutionally dedicated to go to libraries since the founding of our state, have been converted to civil fines and are being diverted through parallel ordinances to other governmental services. Local library millages are being diverted through an increasing variety of tax capture mechanisms that do not respect the intent of the voter and are far less accountable to taxpayers.

We would like to thank Governor Snyder for his support in funding to public libraries. The library community respectfully requests the committee's support of the Governor's recommendations which include maintaining last year's increase of \$1 million in state aid to libraries and additional renaissance zone reimbursements.

We look forward to working with you and the Governor to move Michigan forward and expand essential e-services through libraries. We believe libraries should be a part of the call to encourage technology and innovation to help drive Michigan's success in the global economy.

Libraries Serve Our Communities:

As federal, state and local government move more information and services online, agencies depend upon the availability of public libraries and their public Internet access in urban as well as in remote and rural areas. For example:

- Secretary of State,
- Social Security ,
- Unemployment Insurance and Michigan Works access,
- Affordable Care Act,
- Tax Filing and Tax forms
- Foreclosure prevention

Libraries are well known for their reading and early childhood learning programs

Virtually every public library in the state of Michigan provides some type of education for babies, toddlers or preschoolers.

With last year's additional funding, libraries were able to increase the number of early learners age 0 to 6 who received education at their local library. We eliminated wait lists and incorporated more robust education and information literacy for preschoolers.

Examples:

- Kent District Library's Early Childhood Essentials and 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten.
- Kent District Library is partnering with Grand Rapids Public Library, WMU and the Early Childhood Investment Corporation to measure early literacy skill improvement as a result of participation in public library story times. Results of that work will be available soon.

Libraries provide free tutoring, after school programs and adult literacy classes.

Local schools strapped for resources are closing down school libraries. 50% of school libraries in Michigan no longer have a librarian on staff. Public libraries are stepping up to serve students.

Half a million children and teens participate in summer reading programs.

- KDL Lab Experience programs for school-age children feature STEM educational principals.
- Kent District Library provides partners with the Kent ISD on the Successlink Program

In addition, the Marshall library is investing heavily in an after school program for middle school kids waiting for parent pickup.

Libraries Help Develop a Skilled Technology Workforce

We cannot emphasize enough the role libraries play in developing a technology savvy workforce in Michigan, equipping Michigan's residents with literacy and technology skills.

Libraries are an essential link to the resources, technology and digital skills our residents need to thrive in this information age economy, and library funding is an investment in the global information infrastructure.

Every Michigan resident needs convenient and timely access to the world of information — print, digital and electronic. An educated society deserves access to unbiased, accurate information not always available on the open Internet or through Google. The statewide network of libraries provides these services to Michigan's residents.

Michigan Libraries Ensure Internet and Computer Access

- A full 66% of Michigan libraries report they are the only point of free internet access in their communities.
- In Kalkaska County barely 25% of residences have internet at home.
- Free internet access is often available inside and around library buildings.
- In rural northern Michigan it is not uncommon to see cars or even snowmobiles in the library parking lot after hours with their laptop plugged into an outside outlet accessing the internet. Often, this is their only available access.
- Michigan public libraries provide more than 10,000 internet accessible computers with more than 11 million internet user sessions logged in annually.

Michigan eLibrary

Nearly every library in the state – public, university, community college and special - is connected to the Michigan eLibrary (MeL). MeL is a 24-hour virtual library with material for all ages and includes access to over 35 databases. Last year, more than 1.2 million Michigan eLibrary users conducted 35 million searches in the MeL databases. Access to these resources saves Michigan colleges and universities millions of dollars each year.

MeLCat is a voluntary, statewide collaborative interlibrary loan system connecting 430 libraries with more than a million library loans annually. This is a huge value to small and rural libraries giving them access to major library systems across the state including the University of Michigan and Michigan State University.

Employment Services:

The Michigan Library Association reports that 96% of libraries provide career and job search materials including computer classes; resume writing and interviewing workshops; career and job testing, and resume preparation services. Michigan Works Agencies regularly refer clients to their local libraries for career development services. 78% of public libraries partner in some capacity with Michigan Works and 14 public libraries serve as access points and Service Centers and there is no dedicated funding for public libraries to provide these services.

Business Development

The economic development issues confronting Michigan's decision makers are being addressed by libraries' small business development centers. These centers are often staffed by business librarians who assist small businesses with online market research and more. In smaller communities, libraries are a principal source of information to area micro-, small, and mid-sized businesses. While major corporations will frequently have ready access to online resources, small business operators are learning to turn to the library. Michigan eLibrary (MeL) recently added five databases specifically equipped to assist entrepreneurs and small businesses improve the economy and create jobs in their communities.

Pressure on Public Libraries

In addition to these essential services, programs and classes available at public libraries are increasing.

- There were 53 million visits to Michigan libraries last year.
- More than 67,000 children's programs were offered (up 26% from last year) and
- Nearly three million Michigan residents attended a program at their local library.

As the state continues to move services online, they are directing residents to local libraries whose revenue streams continue to decline. To remain competitive in a global market, Michigan residents need access to information and digital literacy, and libraries remain a crucial link to that access.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony to the committee. The Michigan Library Association appreciates your time and support of Michigan libraries.