



Four County Library System

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Providing consolidated services to public libraries in Broome, Chenango, Delaware and Otsego Counties since 1960

November 5, 2015

Steven McCutcheon
Legislative Analyst
Assembly Committee on Libraries and Education Technology
Room 513M, The Capitol
Albany, New York 12247

Dear Mr. McCutcheon,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Assembly Committee on Libraries and Education Technology. I am writing on behalf of the Four County Library System (4CLS) and our forty-two member libraries. We work together to provide library services to communities in Broome, Delaware, Otsego, and Chenango County. Thank you also for your efforts to raise library funding.

Most of our libraries serve small towns with less than 5,000 people. In these small towns, libraries fill many roles, especially that of community center, and are often their community's only facility with free Internet access. Library Systems like 4CLS play an important role in helping libraries work together to achieve economies of scale. Beyond providing leadership and consulting, 4CLS hosts the online catalog and integrated library system that is critical for the provision of modern library services. 4CLS also provides delivery service, ferrying library materials between libraries that are scattered around a region of 4,000 square miles. By working together with our members, we have been able to deploy modern library technology such as e-books and downloadable audio to all corners of our region. All of these important services are supported by New York State library aid. In particular, 4CLS's delivery service utilizes a van system to transfer library materials (books, magazines, CD's, DVD's, and more) items between libraries. The service is highly valued by library staff and patrons. The van service is expensive to run, costing 4CLS around \$100,000 per year, but is a more cost-effective option than trying to ship books around an area of our size. A recent study estimates that we move almost 440,000 items a year.

We are very grateful for the recent increase in state funding for libraries and library systems. Cuts in State Library Operating Aid over many years have severely impacted our ability to provide these valued services. 4CLS has had to reduce staff and cut services. Without the recent reversal, we would be looking and further cuts in staff and services to our member libraries. We are always looking for more ways to work more efficiently and share costs. However, without stable funding from the state, we will be unable to maintain our current level of service and support. Our only alternative would be to cut more services or raise the fees charged to our member libraries, many of whom are already suffering as casualties of the tax cap.

State Library Construction Aid has been a very valuable asset to our libraries. Many are operating out of buildings that were never intended to be libraries. These facilities are often lacking in areas such as accessibility, energy efficiency, and technological infrastructure. These older buildings present another challenge to providing modern library services. They often have to be re-wired to allow for the placement of computers for the staff and the public. For these and more projects, our libraries have been able to make great use of State Library Construction Aid.

Projects awaiting final state approval in the 2015-2016 round of construction aid include:

- William B. Ogden Free Library (Walton) - Renovation of stone & mortar walls and electric upgrades – total cost \$109,705
- Oxford Memorial Library - Solar Panel Installation – total cost \$66,023
- Unadilla Public Library – Replacing inefficient windows and light fixtures & renovation of floors, shelves, & walls, total cost \$47,000
- Kinney Memorial Library (Hartwick) – Window replacement and additional insulation, total cost \$33,381
- Mary Wilcox Memorial Library (Whitney Point) - Foundation, railing, & electrical work to improve safety. Renovation of doors & windows to conserve energy, total cost \$31,995
- Worcester Free Library - Removing siding, install plywood sheathing & weather barrier, install spray foam insulation, total cost \$31,474
- George F. Johnson Memorial Library (Endicott) - Replacement of remaining 48-year-old interior fluorescent light fixtures with new energy-efficient LED fixtures, total cost \$26,320
- Four County Library System – Replacement of the building roof and installation of a solar energy system to reduce 4CLS's energy consumption, total cost \$184,425

Many of these projects have energy efficiency components that will save energy and reduce the libraries' operating costs at the same time. These may seem like small projects. Most of our libraries do not have capital funds. Their required local match for these projects come out of their operating funds. As a result, they often break larger projects down into smaller pieces and address their construction needs piecemeal over several years. For example, the Worcester Free Library operates out of space they share with a local theater. With help from Construction Aid, they have purchased a neighboring building and are slowly making it suitable for library operations. When completed, the project will increase the library's area from 600 square feet to 2,240 square feet, but the process will take years. The last survey of libraries in our region revealed estimated construction needs at over \$25 Million. With our current allotment of just over \$400,000 a year in State Library Construction Aid, our libraries will continue to limp towards addressing their construction & renovation needs. In the meantime, library staff and patrons will continue to contend with buildings fraught with accessibility issues, barriers to the implementation of modern technology, and inefficient energy systems.

An increase in State Library Construction Aid from \$14 Million to \$30 Million would see 4CLS's allotment jump to over \$850,000. Our libraries' ability to address their construction needs would greatly improve, resulting in more and larger construction projects, putting people to work in our upstate communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. Thank you again for the recent increase in funding for libraries and library systems. If you have any questions about our libraries or library service in our region, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Bachman', written in a cursive style.

Steven J. Bachman
Executive Director