

Assembly Committee on Libraries and Education Technology
Public Hearing to Examine the 2015-2016 State Budget's Impact
on Libraries in New York State

November 6, 2015

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Executive Director
Ramapo Catskill Library System



That the public library is a part of the educational system should never be lost sight of in the work of establishing it, or in its management. To the great mass of the people it comes as their first and only educational opportunity.

John Cotton Dana
American Library and Museum Director

The only thing you absolutely have to know is the location of the library.

Albert Einstein

In the increasingly competitive global marketplace, success is largely dependent on one's level of education and access to information. The future success of our State rests upon the extent to which we can assure that our children are provided an exceptional education, adults have access to continuing education and everyone is able to benefit from a superior information infrastructure. **Libraries are an integral part of the education and information infrastructure of New York State.**

Before I can answer the question posed by the Committee allow me to briefly address the library environment within our State. As you all know there are different types of libraries chartered – school district, special district, municipal and association libraries - all of which are independent entities with a Board of Trustees. In addition, our State is fortunate to have three types of library systems Public, School, and Reference and Research Library Resource Councils.

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/libs/libtypes.htm>

Just over 90% of all State Aid for libraries and Library Systems goes to Systems.

State Aid funding formulas are defined in Education Law, with the current formulas established 25 years ago in 1990.

In spite of the restoration of \$5 million in the 2015 -2016 State Budget for Library Aid, funding for libraries and library systems remains below the level it was fifteen years ago, in 2000.

In order to deal with capped and subsequently reduced funding from the State, over the last 15 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.

Increased State Aid this year allowed RCLS to maintain the service fee at the same level as last year, maintain our overall level of service and staffing, and in two areas provide increased service. We were able to increase the number of career counseling and citizenship information sessions offered. These programs are provided in partnership with local employment counselors and literacy organizations, and member libraries which are prepared to offer space, handle registrations for the sessions and undertake the public relations required to bring in the participants.

The fall sessions for these programs are currently underway so I cannot give statistics for attendance at this point. However, I can say that since we started these programs we have been able to offer 591 individuals one-on-one career counseling and help develop their online job search, resume writing and interview skills. The citizenship programs to date have helped a total of 140 people get their citizenship. Both programs are on target to exceed last year's participation numbers.

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

This year RCLS developed a "government efficiency plan" as required under the Tax Cap laws for our member libraries. Twenty-seven of our libraries opted to participate under the Plan, which was approved by the State Comptroller's Office.

Nine years ago RCLS negotiated and coordinated a public-private partnership to establish a fiber network connecting all member libraries at a cost that was equal to our antiquated frame-relay system. After 5 years we were able to double the bandwidth to all of our locations with a 20% reduction in cost. And this year we were able to increase bandwidth by 50% without any increase in cost. In addition, RCLS files the E-rate applications on behalf of all of our member libraries to further reduce cost by 62%.

In 2014 our delivery service transported over 3.3 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.

As public spending comes increasingly under scrutiny, it is institutions, like the NY Library Systems, that embrace cooperation, provide consolidated services, exhibit clear responses to regional needs and demonstrate the highest return for every dollar spent, that will emerge as the most worthy of public funding. It is worth repeating that library systems have been doing this since their inception.

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 is a conservative calculation and shows that we provide \$4.54 in value for every dollar spent on all of our services except automation, where the value is \$3.03 for every dollar spent.

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 to make sure that New York State returns to its leadership position within the Nation and the world. 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!

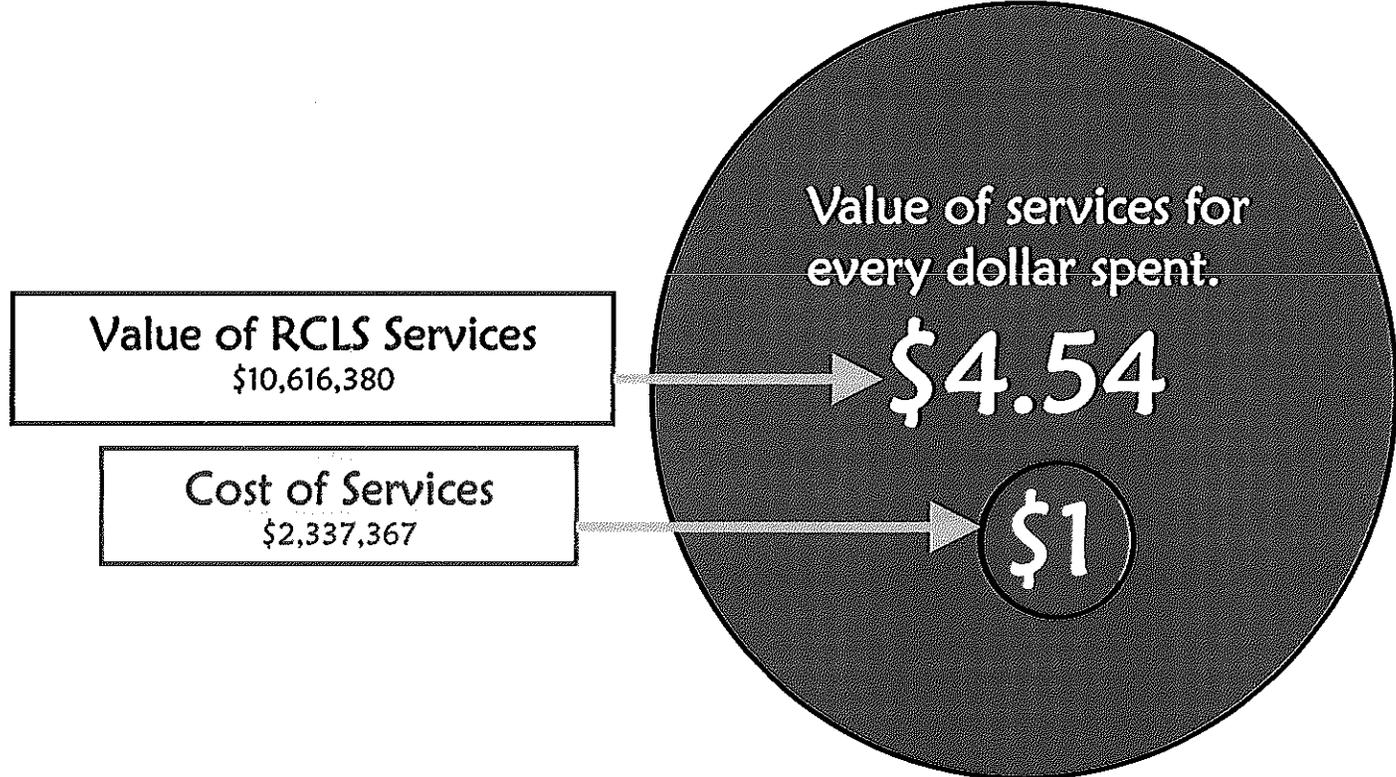


2015 RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI) FOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY RAMAPO CATSKILL LIBRARY SYSTEM

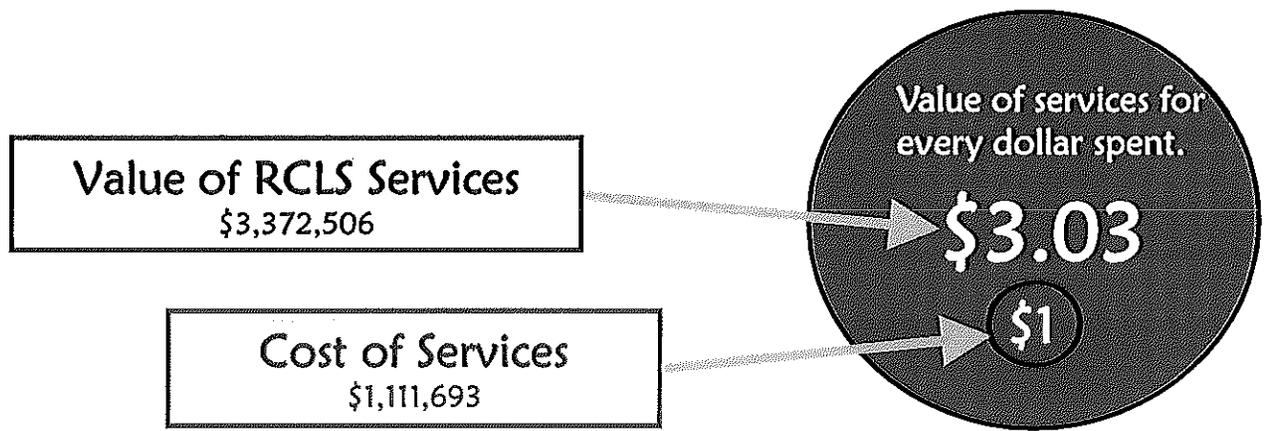
MONETARY VALUE OF SERVICES FOR EVERY DOLLAR SPENT

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

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



Automated Network Services (ANSER)



Value of RCLS Services:

Continuing Education	\$ 88,200
Consulting Contacts (excluding automation)	\$ 247,410
Cataloging	\$ 389,976
Delivery Services	\$ 8,525,866
Digital Content	\$ 1,364,928

Grand total value of services	\$10,616,380
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RCLS Revenue:

Basic State Aid	\$ 1,945,552
Central Library Aid	\$ 294,722
Revenue from member library service fees	\$ 97,093

Total revenue	\$ 2,337,367
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RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

Value of services	\$10,616,380
Total revenue	\$ 2,337,367

Return in value to member libraries for every dollar of revenue **\$4.54**

Value of Automated Network Services (ANSER):

Average annual cost of ILS maintenance costs amortized over five (5) years (based on SirsiDynix quotations)	\$1,677,176
Wages & Benefits for staff to configure and maintain ILS @ \$20.25/hr for 35 hour work-week for 46 libraries	\$1,695,330

Grand total value of ANSER	\$3,372,506
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Member library ANSER Fees:	\$1,111,693
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RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

Value of services	\$ 3,372,506
ANSER fees	\$ 1,111,693

Return in value to member libraries for every dollar of revenue **\$3.03**

QUOTATIONS ABOUT LIBRARIES FOR ANY OCCASION

Access to knowledge is the superb, the supreme act of truly great civilizations. Of all the institutions that purport to do this, free libraries stand virtually alone in accomplishing this mission.

Toni Morrison

An original idea. That can't be too hard. The library must be full of them.

Stephen Fry

A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people. It is a never failing spring in the desert.

Andrew Carnegie

To ask why we need libraries at all, when there is so much information available elsewhere, is about as sensible as asking if roadmaps are necessary now that there are so very many roads.

Jon Bing (author and professor of law)

I have an unshakeable conviction that democracy can never be undermined if we maintain our library resources and a national intelligence capable of utilizing them.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Library-denigrators, pay heed: suggesting that the Internet is a viable substitute for libraries is like saying porn could replace your wife.

Joanne Harris (author)

A library is a place where you learn what teachers were afraid to teach you.

Alan M. Dershowitz (lawyer, author)

Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation.

Walter Cronkite

The very existence of libraries affords the best evidence that we may yet have hope for the future of man.

T. S. Eliot

Civilized nations build libraries; lands that have lost their soul close them down.

Toby Forward (author)

Libraries will get you through times of no money better than money will get you through times of no libraries.

Anne Herbert (author)

The library is the temple of learning, and learning has liberated more people than all the wars in history.

Carl T. Rowan (journalist and author)