

# Assembly Committee on Libraries and Education Technology Public Hearing

**SUBJECT:** The role of New York State libraries in their communities

**PURPOSE:** To examine the essential programs and services that libraries provide to their communities and the challenges facing libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

December 7, 2018

Robert Hubsher  
Executive Director  
Ramapo Catskill Library System



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

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

Albert Einstein


In the twenty-first century the ability of people to achieve their full potential depends on access to high quality education and a superior information infrastructure. Success for individuals and the State as whole is also dependent on racial equity and social justice. **Libraries are an integral part of the State's education and information infrastructure and centers for engagement and inclusion. Libraries are a key component of a successful New York State (NYS).**

We must assure that our children are provided an exceptional education, adults have access to continuing education and everyone is able to access the information they need to achieve their educational goals, improve their quality of life, succeed in their jobs, start or expand their businesses, create new art, services, or goods and support their innovation in science and technology.

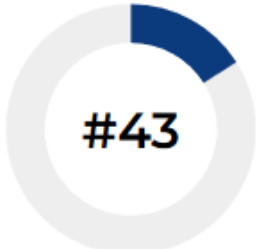
According to U.S. News & World Report based on NYS' rankings it appears we are failing New Yorkers.




## Education


RANKING	ATTRIBUTES	RANK
 <p>#23</p> <p>Rank</p>	Higher Education	#14
	Pre-K - 12	#31

## Opportunity

RANKING	ATTRIBUTES	RANK
 <p>#43</p>	Economic Opportunity	#35
	Equality	#5
	Affordability	#48



Infrastructure		
RANKING	ATTRIBUTES	RANK
 <p>#19</p> <p>Rank</p>	Energy	#30
	Internet Access	#12
	Transportation	#28

Quality of Life		
RANKING	ATTRIBUTES	RANK
 <p>#37</p> <p>Rank</p>	Natural Environment	#10
	Social Environment	#48

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.

As you know, just over 90% of all State Aid for Library Services goes to Library Systems. Those funds are used to leverage consolidated and cooperative purchasing of goods and services to reduce the cost of local operations.

Over the last 59 years RCLS has been offering consolidated and cooperative services to our member libraries that help them meet local needs, while keeping local expenditures down.

The services and programs we offer are based on our five year Plan of Service, developed in consultation with the staff and Trustees of our member libraries.

In order to deal with capped and reduced funding from the State, over the last 18 years RCLS has been required to reduce staffing by 20%, eliminate programs and services and introduce a member library service fee. The service fee is used to offset State Aid revenue shortfalls and was implemented in 2012.

We work very hard to keep expenditures down, but the costs of goods and services continues to increase. Although consortium purchasing reduces the cost for the individual member library, those costs also continue to increase. Without additional State Aid for Library Services we will be required to shift the cost to the local library or we will be required to reduce staff and eliminate services and programs.

Each year we prepare a return on investment (ROI) report that shows the value of the services we provide to our members for every dollar spent. This ROI is based on a very conservative calculation and shows that we provide **\$4.71** in value for every dollar spent on all of our services, except automation, where the value is **\$3.37** for every dollar spent.

One example of the kind of savings we offer our member libraries is our delivery service. In 2017 (the last full year of statistics) we delivered just under 3.3 million items (not counting inter-office mail) at a cost of \$0.166, about a third of the cost of a stamp.

# STATE AID FOR LIBRARY SERVICES

## Historical Context

### 1990/1991

State Budget	\$49.64 billion
State Aid for Library Services	\$70.50 million
State Budget allocated to Library Services	0.142%

### 2018/2019

State Budget	\$168.30 billion
State Aid for Library Services	\$96.98 million
State Budget allocated to Library Services	0.058%

Inflation 1990 to 2018	93.49%
Population increase 1990 to 2018	10.41%

State Budget increase 1990/91 to 2018/19	339.01%
Reduced by the impact of inflation	245.52%

State Aid for Library Services 1990/1991 to 2018/2019	137.56%
Reduced by the impact of inflation	44.07%

# RATE OF INFLATION - IN CONTEXT

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics consumer price index, prices in 2018 are 93.49% higher than prices in 1990. The dollar experienced an average inflation rate of 2.39% per year during this period.

In other words, \$100 in 1990 is equivalent in purchasing power to \$193.49 in 2018, a difference of \$93.49 over 28 years.

The 1990 inflation rate was 5.40%. The current inflation rate (2017 to 2018) is now 2.52%<sup>1</sup>. If this number holds, \$100 today will be equivalent to \$102.52 next year. The [current inflation rate](#) page gives more detail on the latest official inflation rates.

Goods or Services	1990	2018	Percent Change
Loaf of Bread	\$1.29	\$1.98	53.49%
Gallon of Milk	\$2.15	\$3.22	49.98%
Postage Stamp	\$0.25	\$0.50*	100.00%
KWH of Electricity	\$0.081	\$0.1928	138.80%
Gallon of Gas	\$1.08	\$2.59	139.81%

\*Going to \$0.55 January 1

**Additionally more than \$176.62 million in contemplated State Aid for Library Services has been withheld since FY 1990-1991.**



Libraries and library systems need your continuing support!

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. Another initiative of the Governor is to encourage cooperation, collaboration and shared services, which are integral for the economic well-being of the State and will help to lower the taxes of residents. Public library systems have been cooperating, collaborating and offering shared services for nearly 60 years. Although we have yet to be recognized for our on-going efforts to reduce local costs, while promoting service excellence at libraries state-wide. Libraries empower people through programs and services that enable people to meet the fullest of their potential.

Please work with us so that together we can continue to make a difference!

## A FEW LINKS TO ARTICLES ABOUT THE VALUE OF LIBRARIES

Why Public Libraries Are Amazing (July 23, 2018)

<https://www.currentaffairs.org/2018/07/why-libraries-are-amazing>

Does the digital world need libraries? (September 4, 2017)

<https://blog.mozilla.org/internetcitizen/2017/09/04/libraries/>

Most Americans – especially Millennials – say libraries can help them find reliable, trustworthy information (August 30, 2017)

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/08/30/most-americans-especially-millennials-say-libraries-can-help-them-find-reliable-trustworthy-information/>

Creators Discuss the Importance of Libraries in Promoting Literacy (July 20, 2017)

<https://www.bleedingcool.com/2017/07/20/creators-talk-libraries-literacy-sdcc/>

Millennials are the most likely generation of Americans to use public libraries (June 21, 2017)

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/21/millennials-are-the-most-likely-generation-of-americans-to-use-public-libraries/>

The State of America's Libraries 2017: A Report from the American Library Association (April 5, 2017)

<http://www.ala.org/news/sites/ala.org.news/files/content/State-of-Americas-Libraries-Report-2017.pdf>

School Libraries: Leading the Way into the Future (April 4, 2017)

<https://blog.schoollibraryconnection.com/2017/04/04/school-libraries-leading-the-way-into-the-future/>

How public libraries help build healthy communities (March 20, 2017)  
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2017/03/30/how-public-libraries-help-build-healthy-communities/>

7 Reasons Libraries Are Essential, Now More Than Ever (March 20, 2017)  
<https://www.bustle.com/p/7-reasons-libraries-are-essential-now-more-than-ever-43901>

The Importance of Libraries in Communities (February 3, 2017)  
<http://www.altmuslimah.com/2017/02/importance-libraries-communities/>

The Library's Role in a "Post-truth," "Fake News" Era (January, 5, 2017)  
<http://www.proquest.com/blog/pqblog/2017/The-librarys-role-in-a-post-truth-fake-news-era.html>

Libraries serve wide range of purposes and people, some homeless (December 1, 2016)  
<http://www.startribune.com/libraries-serve-wide-range-of-purposes-and-people-some-homeless/404135976/>

Smartphones Can't Replace Libraries (November 11, 2016)  
<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2016/11/10/why-academic-libraries-arent-just-expensive-vanity-projects-essay>

Will Librarians Be The Overseers Of The Information Age? (October 3, 2016)  
<http://www.edcircuit.com/will-librarians-be-the-overseers-of-the-information-age/>

# RCLS MEMBER LIBRARIES

## **Albert Wisner Public Library**

1 McFarland Drive • Warwick 10990 • 986-1047

## **Blauvelt Free Library**

541 Western Highway • 10913 • 359-2811

## **Chester Public Library**

1784 Kings Highway • 10918 • 469-4252

## **Cornwall Public Library**

395 Hudson Street • 12518 • 534-8282

## **Cragsmoor Free Library**

355 Cragsmoor Road • 12420 • 647-4611

## **Daniel Pierce Library**

328 Main Street • Grahamsville 12740 •  
985-7233

## **Ellenville Public Library & Museum**

40 Center Street • 12428 • 647-5530

## **Ethelbert B. Crawford Public Library**

479 Broadway • Monticello 12701 • 794-4660

## **Fallsburg Library**

12 Railroad Plaza • South Fallsburg 12779 •  
436-6067

## **Finkelstein Memorial Library**

24 Chestnut Street • Spring Valley 10977 •  
352-5700

## **Florida Public Library**

4 Cohen Circle • 10921 • 651-7659

## **Gardiner Library**

133 Farmers Turnpike • 12525 • 255-1255

## **Goshen Public Library and Historical Society**

203 Main Street • 10924 • 294-6606

## **Greenwood Lake Public Library**

79 Waterstone Road • 10925 • 477-8377

## **Haverstraw King's Daughters Public Library**

10 West Ramapo Road • Garnerville 10923 •  
786-3800

## **Highland Falls Library**

298 Main Street • 10928 • 446-3113

## **Josephine-Louise Public Library**

5 Scofield Street • Walden 12586 • 778-7621

## **Liberty Public Library**

111 Sullivan Avenue, Suite 1-3 • 12734 • 292-6070

## **Livingston Manor Free Library**

92 Main Street • 12758 • 439-5440

## **Mamakating Library**

128 Sullivan Street • Wurtsboro 12790 •  
888-8004

## **Moffat Library of Washingtonville**

6 West Main Street • 10992 • 496-5483

## **Monroe Free Library**

44 Millpond Parkway • 10950 • 783-4411

## **Montgomery Free Library**

133 Clinton Street • 12549 • 457-5616

## **Nanuet Public Library**

149 Church Street • 10954 • 623-4281

## **New City Free Library**

220 North Main Street • 10956 • 634-4997

## **Newburgh Free Library**

124 Grand Street • 12550 • 563-3600

## **Nyack Library**

59 South Broadway • 10960 • 358-3370

## **Orangeburg Library**

20 South Greenbush Road • 10962 • 359-2244

## **Palisades Free Library**

19 Closter Road • 10964 • 359-0136

## **Pearl River Public Library**

80 Franklin Avenue • 10965 • 735-4084

## **Piermont Library District**

25 Flywheel Park West • 10968 • 359-4595

## **Pine Bush Area Public Library District**

223-227 Maple Avenue • Pine Bush 12566 •  
744-3375

## **Port Jervis Free Library**

138 Pike Street • 12771 • 856-7313

## **Roscoe Free Library**

85 Highland Avenue • 12776 • 607-498-5574

## **Rose Memorial Library Association**

79 East Main Street • Stony Point 10980 •  
786-2100

## **Sloatsburg Public Library**

1 Liberty Rock Road • 10974 • 753-2001

## **Suffern Free Library**

210 Lafayette Avenue • 10901 • 357-1237

## **Sunshine Hall Free Library**

14 Proctor Road • Eldred 12732 • 557-6258

## **Tappan Library**

93 Main Street • 10983 • 359-3877

## **Thrall Public Library District of Middletown and Walkkill**

11-19 Depot Street • 10940 • 341-5454

## **Tomkins Cove Public Library**

419 Liberty Drive North • 10986 • 786-3060

## **Tuxedo Park Library**

227 Route 17 • 10987 • 351-2207

## **Valley Cottage Free Library**

110 Route 303 • 10989 • 268-7700

## **Walkkill Public Library**

7 Bona Ventura Avenue • 12589 • 895-3707

## **West Nyack Free Library**

65 Strawtown Road • 10994 • 358-6081

## **Western Sullivan Public Library**

19 Center Street • Jeffersonville 12748 •  
482-4350

## **Woodbury Public Library**

16 County Route 105 • Highland Mills 10930 •  
928-6162