

NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY

Carl E. Heastie, Speaker
Carrie Woerner, Chair



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

COMMITTEE ON
Libraries and Education Technology



CARRIE WOERNER
Assemblywoman 113th District
Saratoga County
Warren County
Washington County

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

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Committee on
Libraries and Education Technology

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December 15, 2023

Honorable Carl E. Heastie
Speaker of the Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 932
Albany, New York 12248

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I am pleased to present to you the 2023 Annual Report for the Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries and Education Technology. The work accomplished during the 2023 legislative session reflects the commitment of the Committee to ensure libraries and library systems throughout the state can continue to be community hubs providing critical services, educational resources, and access to information for all New Yorkers.

The 2022-23 enacted state budget provided \$99.6 million in state aid for libraries and library systems and maintained capital funding for library projects at \$34 million.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee members for their continued contributions to this past year's achievements. Finally, Mr. Speaker, thank you for your leadership and support of our libraries.

Sincerely,

Carrie Woerner
Chair, Committee on Libraries and Education
Technology

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

**NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY
STANDING COMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES AND EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY**

Carrie Woerner, Chair

Committee Members

Majority

Michaelle C. Solages
Inez E. Dickens
Karen M. McMahon
Jennifer A. Lunsford
Juan Ardila
Dana Levenberg

Minority

Matthew Slater, *Ranker*
Josh Jensen

Majority Staff

Maria Volpe-McDermott, Assistant Secretary for Program and Policy
Benjamin Decker, Associate Counsel
Nicole Clarke, Committee Clerk
Joann Butler, Program and Counsel Executive Secretary

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I. COMMITTEE JURISDICTION

The Standing Committee on Libraries and Education Technology was created in 1997. It has jurisdiction over legislation affecting public, academic, school, and special libraries as well as the administration and funding of libraries and library systems across New York State. The Committee also oversees the funding of the New York State Library, New York State Museum, and New York State Archives. The Committee has endeavored to assist libraries in sustaining and upgrading their infrastructure, as well as meeting the challenges of the information age. Libraries have become modern community centers playing an integral part in the education, workforce, and cultural development of New Yorkers.

New York State is home to a total of 73 library systems: 23 public library systems, nine reference and research library systems, and 40 school library systems. There are 758 public libraries statewide. New York's largest library, the New York Public Library, contains over 15 million volumes and is among the top research institutions in the world. Statewide, over 19 million people use New York State's public library systems. From the largest library to the smallest community-based book exchange, all of New York's libraries play a vital role in our communities.

The New York State Museum, the New York State Library, and the New York State Archives are in Albany, New York and are part of the Office of Cultural Education within the State Education Department. Established in 1836, the New York State Museum is the oldest and largest state museum in the nation housing more than 16 million scientific specimens and one million cultural objects from the state. The New York State Library was established in 1818 and houses the Regent Joseph E. Bowman Jr. Research Library with a collection of over 20 million items and the Talking Book and Braille Library. Additionally, the New York State Archives holds over 250 million historical records dating from 1630 to the present to support the preservation of state and local government and non-government records.

During the 2023 legislative session, 12 bills were referred to the Libraries and Education Technology Committee. This report provides a detailed examination of the Committee's budgetary and legislative achievements in 2023.

II. STATE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

New York State libraries work hard to meet the diverse needs of our state. The Committee's efforts and commitment to providing libraries with sufficient funding reflects the Assembly's longstanding support for libraries and the educational, economic, and cultural roles they play in their communities.

State Aid

Chapter 917 of the Laws of 1990 established a formula to provide stable funding for libraries and library systems based on the most recent census data.

The Legislature provided \$99.6 million in state aid for libraries and library systems, an increase of \$3.5 million over the Executive's proposal.

The Talking Book and Braille Library (TBBL) is a free library service for eligible residents of upstate New York who are unable to use standard print materials due to a visual or physical disability. TBBL serves over 15,000 New Yorkers. The Legislature maintained funding for the Conservation and Preservation Program and the Talking Book and Braille Library at a combined \$713,000.

The Legislature also restored \$375,000 for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and \$112,500 for the Langston Hughes Community Library.

Capital

The Legislature restored \$20 million in funding for Library Construction Aid.

Other

The Legislature increased funding to \$176,000 for the Statewide Summer Reading Program to ensure that every library system receives a minimum of at least \$6,000 for summer reading programs. This funding comes from revenues collected from the sale of Love Your Library license plates.

The Legislature provided \$1 million in funding to revive the Summer School for the Arts program.

The Legislature extended the authorization for state aid up to 75% of project costs for library construction in economically disadvantaged communities for three years until March 31, 2026.

III. LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

The Committee acted on several important measures this session designed to assist libraries throughout New York State.

A.1313, McDonald; Chapter 209 of the Laws of 2023: This law allows the North Greenbush Public Library to be eligible for financing through the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY).

A.5035, JM Giglio, Chapter 220 of the Laws of 2023: This law allows the Olean Public Library to be eligible for financing through DASNY.

A.5266, Levenberg; Chapter 587 of the Laws of 2023: This law reduces the number of petition signatures a proposed increase to the annual tax levy for registered public or free association libraries would need to appear on the ballot.

A.6781-A, Tague; Chapter 229 of the Laws of 2023: This law allows The Community Library to be eligible for financing through DASNY.

A.7082, Walsh; Chapter 336 of the Laws of 2023: This law amends the charter for the Ballston Community Public Library to change it from a public village library to a special district public library. The law also allows the Ballston Community Public Library to be eligible for funding through DASNY.

A.7246, Woerner; Chapter 578 of the Laws of 2023: This law provides for the administration of grant awards for conservation and preservation of library research materials to be made during an academic year rather than a state fiscal year.

IV. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Library Construction Aid

October 25, 2023

10:00 A.M.

Albany, New York

The Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries and Education Technology held a hearing on Wednesday, October 25, 2023 on library construction aid and the long-term capital needs of libraries and library systems. In particular, the Committee was interested in hearing ways to update, improve, and streamline the process for the application for and allocation of library construction aid. Additionally, the Committee was interested in hearing updates on how state funding for construction of public library buildings in economically distressed communities has impacted those libraries and communities.

The Committee heard testimony from the State Education Department, New York Library Association, Ramapo Catskill Library System, The New York Public Library, and Suffolk Cooperative Library System.

Key takeaways from testimony presented at the hearing include the following:

- Library aid has stagnated since 2019, and remains below the statutory requirement;
- Make permanent the reduced match described in Education Law section 273-a;
- About 20% of the library systems could not use their full allocation because of the complexity embedded in the program rules. The distinction between “economically disadvantaged” and “economically distressed” communities is not serving to ensure that all allocated monies are efficiently and effectively awarded. The requirement that no more than 50% of funding for a library system go to libraries in economically distressed communities creates a challenge, when one project in an economically distressed community equals 50% of the funding, then no other projects in economically distressed communities in that library system can be funded. Removing the cap and allowing increased local control means that library systems can better ensure that monies go where they are most needed. Many libraries are architecturally and historically significant buildings and under current funding rules Library Construction Aid cannot be used to restore any historically or architecturally significant fixtures in these buildings. As an example, a brick building will need to be re-pointed to ensure the building envelope remains intact; under current rules this rehabilitation/restoration/repair is not fundable despite the fact that repointing is frequently less expensive than taking down the wall and putting up a new one;
- Explore the possibility of an expedited process for emergency projects where a library must close its physical structure while awaiting funding;
- Funding shortfalls in the cultural education fund has resulted in the elimination of the

funding for the NOVELNY database access to which local libraries depend and this needs to be restored;

- The State Library has seen a significant reduction in reference librarian staff and library materials acquisition because of funding shortfalls in the Cultural Education and Local Government Records Management Funds. This has impacted the ability of the State Library and State Archives to meet the needs of the public and institutions that access historical resources;
- New York's requirement that Libraries register for the Federal SAM program, even when the library does not use federal funds, creates an administrative burden for libraries with no offsetting benefit; and
- The requirement for school district libraries to seek a permit from the State Education Department's school facilities department prior to applying for Library Construction Aid creates, sometimes significant, process delays.

V. OUTLOOK FOR 2024

For the upcoming legislative session, the Committee will continue to advocate for an increase in Aid to Public Libraries, cultural education, summer school for the arts and capital funding to ensure our libraries and cultural resource institutions are adequately funded.

The Committee will also continue to advance local legislation important to libraries. With an increasingly diverse New York State population, we must provide each library with the flexibility it needs to properly serve the needs of its community. The Committee welcomes legislation that addresses the key findings from this year's hearing on how the Library Construction Aid program can be improved.

APPENDIX A

**SUMMARY OF ACTION ON ALL BILLS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON
LIBRARIES AND EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY**

TOTAL NUMBER OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD: 1

	<u>ASSEMBLY BILLS</u>	<u>SENATE BILLS</u>	<u>TOTAL BILLS</u>
BILLS REPORTED FAVORABLE TO			
TO CODES	0	0	0
TO JUDICIARY	0	0	0
TO WAYS AND MEANS	4	0	4
TO RULES	1	0	1
TO FLOOR	0	0	0
TOTAL	5	0	5
COMMITTEE ACTION			
HELD FOR CONSIDERATION	0	0	0
DEFEATED	0	0	0
ENACTING CLAUSE STRICKEN	0	0	0
REMAINING IN COMMITTEE	6	2	8
BILLS REFERENCE CHANGED TO:			
WAYS AND MEANS	1	0	1
TOTAL	1	0	1