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Testimony of the Empire State Library Network to the Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries and Educational Technology

I'm Nate Hill, Executive Director of the Metropolitan New York Library Council, based in New York City.

I'm Kathleen Gundrum, Executive Director of the Capital District Library Council, based in Albany.

METRO and CDLC are two of the state's nine Reference and Research Resources Councils that comprise the Empire State Library Network. We have been supporting and providing services to New York's libraries and archives for more than fifty years to ensure equal access to information for all New Yorkers.

Empire State Library Network members include all types of libraries: college and university, hospital, museum, historical society, government agency and corporate. All public and school library systems in New York are also members. We work with these organizations regionally and statewide to achieve measurable economies of scale and increased quality of services.

At the regional level we provide our members with programs and services that reduce their costs and that enable them to perform their jobs efficiently. Some examples of how we support members at the local level include:

- By distributing grants to members which allows them to expand their physical and digital library collections.
- By negotiating for and offering discounts to electronic resources and other services on behalf of our members, which reduces costs and saves staff resources.
- By providing expert cataloging and resource sharing services for libraries that don't have the infrastructure or the capacity.
- By administering programs that allow libraries to share their collections.
- By hosting catalogs for museum and hospital libraries.



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Libraries and library systems in New York also realize greater savings by engaging in collective purchasing actions. The Empire State Library Network has a tradition of providing such services is best-positioned at the statewide level to help libraries achieve cost-savings and to streamline resources.

Examples of our collaborative efforts include:

- Through the Empire Library Delivery, a statewide courier system that transports thousands of items between libraries. Libraries are able to share books, reducing duplication, and they realize cost-savings with predictable shipping costs which reduces postage costs and saves staff time.
- By offering high-quality, low cost professional development to a statewide audience so that librarians are well-trained and up-to-date on needed skills. By collaborating on programming among the ESLN Councils and other library organizations, it avoids unnecessary duplication and extends our professional development offerings.
- By enabling our members to provide real-time research services around the clock via Ask Us 24/7, a virtual reference service that is administered by the Empire State Library Network and that includes participants from around the world.
- By working with librarians through the Hospital Library Services Program to get physicians and clinicians the information resources they need in a timely, sometimes urgent, manner.
- By supporting shared digitization platforms that provide free access to photographs, letters, diaries, directories, maps, newspapers and books about New York to anyone who is interested. Library councils and the Empire State Library Network offer shared digital hosting services like New York Heritage, so that member organizations have a place where their digital collections can be accessed. In addition, via the Empire State Digital Network, we will offer an aggregation service that harvests these hosted collections and will make them all accessible via a single portal. Finally, Empire State Library Network further provides and maintains NYS Historic Newspapers, a platform which gives free access to a wide range of newspapers chosen to reflect New York's unique history.

By providing and supporting these digital platforms, our work is far-reaching. These services:

- Help K-12 schools by providing access to primary resource materials.
- Build communities by pulling the history of communities out of the storage room and onto the internet.
- Help us all connect to our roots.



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- Provide quality content to transfer across all those broadband connections we hope to build across the state.
- Save money because rather than every community and school and library having to do it themselves, ESLN can provide the one place to bring it all together.

Sharing resources and providing the infrastructure means New York's libraries have access to resources for providing essential services. To ensure that this model is maintained, the Empire State Library Network asks the Committee on Libraries and Education Technology to continue its investment in libraries and the continued restoration of state aid to library systems. As demonstrated above, libraries and library systems are models of shared services and collaborative planning. By collaborating deeply and sharing some programs and services, we are able to stretch our dollars as far as possible.

Total state funding in the FY2016-17 enacted budget was \$95.6M, placing library aid at 2006 funding levels. New York State Education Law requires Library Aid for FY 2017-2018 to be \$102.6M. We encourage you to increase library aid in proportion to an increase in education funding. Libraries are education, and with your support our library systems can provide educational and research services to all citizens of New Yorkers.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today and thank you for your interest in and support of New York's libraries and library systems.

Kathleen Gundrum
Executive Director, Capital District Library Council

Nate Hill
Executive Director, Metropolitan New York Library Council