



VERMONT
LIBRARY
ASSOCIATION

January 21, 2007

Dear Librarians, Trustees and Friends:

Library Legislative Day in Montpelier was a huge success! Librarians, trustees and friends gathered at the State House in Montpelier on Friday, January 11th for the first Vermont State Library legislative Day. In the morning they met with their legislators over coffee and discussed the State Funding for Public Libraries Initiative. They asked for support and asked them to wear a red sticker that said, *I support state \$\$ money for public libraries*. In the card room supporters all morning spoke with legislators. Everyone enjoyed the power point presentation which showcased libraries around the state and gave powerful information about why we need state funding. At 10:30 children and parents gathered for a story hour presentation by Megan Alison of Kellogg Hubbard Library. As legislators passed by the card room the stories and songs brought smiles to their faces Governor Douglas stopped by the card room to visit with library supporters and hear their stories.

The overall response to the state funding initiative from our legislators was excellent. Most of the legislators we spoke to said that they supported state funding and the only reservations we heard seemed to be the timing since this is a tight budget year. The conversation has changed from *if* we should receive state funding to *when*.

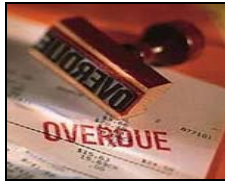
In the afternoon over 150 people met in room 11 for a presentation on the issue of state funding. Speakers, Representative Harry Chen, Poet David Budbill and Authors Howard Coffin and Chris Bohjalian spoke eloquently about the importance of our public libraries and why we must support them with funding.

Thank you all for doing your part in making the day successful.

Our next step is to hold legislative gathering in our counties and continue to remind our legislators that we need state funding now. We can also start to let our communities know about this initiative by having material available at our libraries. We will have a new brochure available on the VLA website soon. In the meantime, if you do not have a copy of the brochure I will be glad to send you some. Just call me at 586-9683.

Sincerely,

Linda Wells, Government Relations Committee



Long Overdue ...

State Funding for Our Public Libraries

Legislative Breakfasts or Gatherings February 5th 2007

It's time to plan your legislative breakfasts. We hope you all will be able to host a breakfast or gathering on February 5th or sometime during the first week of February. It's important that we keep up the momentum we started on State Library Day. We need to tell our legislators why they should support the state funding for public libraries.

The Government Relations Committee developed a new brochure which we gave out on State Library Day and many librarians went away with brochures for their libraries. If you do not have some, please call or e-mail me and I will send them to you -call Linda Wells at 586-9683 craftsbury@hotmail.com.

Be sure to highlight all the great work you are doing in your libraries. Make displays, tell your stories, and have lots of handouts. Also, specifically ask your legislators to support the State Funding for Public Libraries Initiative.

Please let me know when your area will be hosting a gathering and how it went. Send your report to craftsbury@hotmail.com.

We can continue to use the following Talking Points and Questions & Answers.

Vermont Public Library State Funding Initiative Questions and Answers

Q: Why do public libraries need financial support?

A: It's a prudent investment by the state to insure quality public library services for Vermonters.

Q: Do other states fund public libraries?

A: Yes, 44 states support their public libraries with direct funding.

Q: Why should the state of Vermont supplement local tax support for libraries?

A: Local public libraries form a state-wide network of services through resource sharing, electronic resources, business services, tourism, etc.

Public library services are for all Vermont citizens from birth to golden years. The diversity of Vermont towns and the varied ability to pay for local library services affects equal access. Public library services are important and vital to a healthy democracy. They are essential community links to literacy and life long learning.

Q: Other states provide county wide support from taxes collected at the county level; does Vermont?

A: No, in Vermont public libraries do not have financial support at the county level.

Q: What are the high demands and requests in Vermont public libraries?

A: Our citizens want more hours, meeting space, programs, literacy support, materials in a wide variety of (and ever-changing) formats, librarians as information navigators, convenient and speedy delivery of service, and current and up-to-date reading material. Every year, our libraries receive more requests for immediate answers delivered in a variety of ways - in person, by email, by phone, via our websites. We hear more demands for varied technology, such as plug-ins for lap tops and wireless access.)

Public libraries are seeing a significant upswing in remote electronic use of resources and also increased use of our facilities by children and teens seeking an after-school safe haven.

Q. Won't public libraries be obsolete in the next few years? Everyone is finding what they need on the internet?

A. While the internet is a valuable research tool with many unique resources, public library use is up – circulation in 2004-05 was up 5% over the previous year, 13% more Vermonters visited their public libraries in 2004-05, and 8% more adults, young adults, and children attended library programs. Public libraries still experience heavy use from internet users and offer a growing number of community members access to electronic databases from the library, home, or school.

Q. Have you explored formulas other states use and what will be the rules for receiving state funding?

A. While we reviewed the formulas and regulations used by all 50 states, the committee has decided to focus first on making a case for direct state funding and how it will improve the lives of Vermonters. The Vermont State Administrative Bulletin 5.5 outlines requirements for those receiving state funds. We expect that procedures and parameters for disbursement of funds will be developed through the state Administrative Rules process so that they may be reviewed and revised as needed.

Q. Instead of small grants to each library, have you considered one major initiative that all libraries could benefit from?

A. Not all public libraries would benefit in the same way from one major initiative, and we are aiming for a program that will give each library funds to use in ways that would best serve its community.

Q. What will prevent communities from reducing their support to local libraries if they receive state funding?

A. The state Administrative Rules process will address this issue.

Vermont Public Library State Funding Initiative

Talking Points

The cost of owning books, periodicals, or a functioning computer are beyond the means of many Vermonters.

BUT... many public libraries, the only local institutions that can level the playing field, are finding that the cost of meeting demand has outstripped income from local tax support.

Vermont ranks 19th in the country for the number of library visits per capita*

But... ranks 32nd in total per capita library operating income.

Vermont ranks 2nd in the country for public use of Internet terminals in libraries*

But... ranks last in the availability of Internet terminals per 5,000 population.

Public libraries in Vermont reflect a civic commitment to provide citizens with materials that allow them to be informed members of a democratic nation, regardless of age, race or economic status.

But... Vermont is one of only a few states in the country which does not provide either state funding to public libraries or a county-wide library system to complement local tax support.

* National Center for Education Statistics 2003

Sample Questions:

Do you think that funding public libraries is more important than providing food, heat, and medical care to the poor?

Not more important, but AS important. Without access to free public library service, adults in poverty have no free access to the resources that will allow them to better their lives.

We have too many public libraries in Vermont. Why can't you consolidate?

Many libraries serve multiple communities. Public libraries fill an important community-building role in towns throughout Vermont and are highly valued. Hence, there is currently little incentive for local governments to close local libraries. With state funding, there could be incentives to encourage more collaboration and consolidation.