



CLINTON-ESSEX-FRANKLIN LIBRARY

A three county Library System serving 24 member libraries

NEWSLETTER

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STATE AND FEDERAL CUTS IN LIBRARY APPROPRIATIONS THREATEN PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE

The following article by Murray Bob, Director of the Chautauqua-Cattaraugus Library System and temporary Chairman of the Public Library Systems' Directors of New York State outlines the situation so well that it is being printed in its entirety:

"The public libraries in New York State are facing a major financial crisis.

Scores of public libraries across the state will have to curtail hours of opening, services to readers, and to introduce or raise user charges. Library staff will be dropped, positions vacated will go unfilled, bookmobile service to rural and inner-city pockets of poverty will be sacrificed. Traditional library services which reach the entire community and newer programs for the rural and urban poor, the elderly, the disabled, will be sacrificed. The just announced closing of 11 branch libraries in New York City and 13 branch libraries in Queens County are only the first, withal the most tragic effects of the financial squeeze facing public libraries throughout the state.

Public libraries, which serve millions of people in New York, and whose largest clientele by far is composed of students, usually cost tax-appropriating bodies less than 1% of their total budget. Imminent cuts in federal, state, and local funds (though the actual sums involved are trivial) threaten the entire established pattern of library service.

Of immediate importance is the New York State budget which, as passed, incorporates a 5% cut in state aid to public library systems. Neither the Assembly Ways and Means Committee or the Senate Finance Committee has made any moves to restore the 5%, as much else may be quietly restored in the Supplemental budget now in preparation.

The general public and even many legislators have widely misunderstood the meaning of the 5% cut in the state budget. For example, school districts, despite or perhaps because of public furor, were protected by a "save harmless" provision from any cutback until July 1. Even as far as the next fiscal year is concerned, some school districts will receive as much as or almost as much as this year.

Not so with public library systems. They must suffer a 5% net reduction in state aid effective April 1, 1969. Considering that public library systems have not received more money from New York State since 1966-67, the effect of the cutback can only be disastrous.

Unlike state aid to other political subdivisions, state aid to public library

systems is given on a fixed formula basis (a closed-end formula fixed, until amendment, in Education Law); unlike other jurisdictions, public library systems have no taxing authority themselves.

The cost of books, periodicals, newspapers, stationery, postage, library furniture and equipment, not to mention personnel, are escalating at a continuously intensified rate. What possible sense can it make to cut library funds back from an amount fixed for almost three years?

It is still not too late for the state legislature to restore the 5% cut from the Education Department request. The amount of money involved, \$770,000, is small but its restoration would do immense good. For library systems provide vital services such as acquisitions, cataloging, delivery, interlibrary loan, and book-mobiles to virtually all 750 public libraries in this state.

It has been noted previously that imminent federal and local fund cutbacks also threaten library service and make the state cut more than usually ominous. The Presidential budget for fiscal '70 incorporated absolutely no money whatever for public library building construction. It would also cut the appropriations for the Services Title of the Library Services and Construction Act by 50%. Thus, meaningful public library building activity underway for the first time in sixty years (since the time of Andrew Carnegie) is to come to an abrupt end. This, despite a burning need for new buildings for new communities, and a need to replace, rehabilitate or add on to wretchedly inadequate and outmoded existing library buildings.

Finally, the cutback of about 3 million dollars in local aid to New York City, Brooklyn, and Queensborough libraries sets a pattern which, on a less dramatic scale, is being repeated in communities across the state.

These developments are deeply ironic. For there was never a time when the free, unstructured, informal educational resources offered by public libraries was more needed and more used than they are today. The free, tax-supported library is a distinctively American invention, widely admired and copied throughout the world. What a shame that it is being permitted to wither on the vine! Serving scores of millions in this nation quietly and without question or reservation, the library deserves more from the political leadership in this country."

Since this article was written, the New York State Legislature has adjourned without restoring the 5% cut.

The implications of all this should be clear.

Every effort should be made by everyone interested in the future of public library service to see that what has happened represents a temporary set-back, and not only should cuts be restored but that needed increases should be made. All elected representatives at all levels of government - local, state and federal - should be informed and urged to bring this about.

COMMISSIONER'S COMMITTEE ON LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT CONDUCTS HEARINGS

In lieu of the usual program at the systems' annual conference, the Library Development Division transformed the meeting into "Library Hearings of the Commissioner's Committee on Library Development". This was held March 27-29, 1969 at the Thruway Motel in Albany. This two day meeting was attended by librarians from all types of libraries, library school faculty, trustees, officers of reference and research resources councils. The Commissioner's Committee was appointed by former Commissioner of Education, James E. Allen, to make recommendations to the department for next steps for the library program in New York State.

The issues presented for consideration to those attending the hearings were grouped around three main topics: Financing library operations, manpower and education, and principles relating to library development. The following persons attended from the Clinton-Essex-Franklin Library: Mrs. Everest, who represented the Library Trustees Foundation, Mr. Dumont, Mr. Vecchio and Miss Pungitore, director of Plattsburgh Public Library, the system's central library.

Some of the ideas and recommendations discussed were:

1. "For public libraries, increases in the State-aid formula be tied to a block-grant concept based on the State's share of a per-capita base. This aid would be apportioned to systems which, in accordance with a plan of service periodically reviewed and approved by the Education Department, would allocate funds on the basis of greatest regional needs. These needs would be determined in conjunction with member libraries and system board and staff. In consolidated systems, such allocations would be determined by the library board and staff.
2. "That through better organization of the work in libraries, many positions now filled by graduate librarians could be handled effectively by persons with a general educational background. (All positions in which the incumbent is in charge of the library would be expected from this generalization.)"
3. Access: "All persons in New York State should have reasonably convenient access to a quality and depth of library service, which will meet his library needs, and he should not be deprived of such service because of economic weakness of the political subdivision in which he lives."
4. Networks: "Every person in New York State should have access, through whatever libraries or library he rightfully may use, to the full chain of library resources in New York State, and beyond."
5. Audio-Visuals: "All libraries should provide access to, or should make available when they cannot provide them directly, the full range of media resources and services."
6. Library Service to Children: "The school library should have the responsibility and the capacity to meet all of the library needs of all children."

7. Electronic and Photographic Technologies: "Planning for library development of all kinds in New York State, but especially in designing of structures and relationships intended to meet more advanced reference and research library needs, must take into account both the great potential of electronic and photographic technologies and their equally real limitations."
8. Role of the State Library: "One device for serving the information needs of the State, at the same time protecting the highly specialized research libraries against a volume and level of requests they are not prepared to handle, will be to develop a carefully defined back-stopping collection in the State Library. Such a collection should not be expected to fill requests which are within the scope and depth of the central libraries in public library systems, nor those which are more appropriately handled by designated research libraries assigned a Statewide responsibility; but should, rather, range between these limits."
9. Institutions: "The State should take responsibility for the provision of library services to the populations of health and other institutions through a cooperative institutional library system."

There were general sessions when members of the committee spoke on the statements on financing library operations, manpower and education, and principles relating to library development. There were question and answer periods for clarification of anything in the statements. The whole group was broken down into small groups in an effort to give as much opportunity as possible for as many people as possible to give their views.

Probably the most controversial issue presented which engendered the most heat was the recommendation to take children's work from the public library and concentrate it in the school library. This would leave the public library essentially as an adult-serving institution.

Participation was lively and the report of the committee can not help but be influenced thereby.

SYSTEM DIRECTORS ORGANIZE INTO FORMAL GROUP

New York State's Library system directors have been meeting informally at library gatherings such as New York Library Association Conferences and Inter-System conferences to discuss matters of mutual concern. After some discussion at the Division of Library Development's annual meeting in Albany, it was decided to organize into a formal group. Murray Bob, Director of the Chautauqua-Cattaraugus Library System, was chosen as temporary chairman. He appointed an executive committee of five to work on the group's organization. The first resolution passed by the Public Library System Directors of New York State was to change the state aid formula in accordance with the recommendations of the Chautauqua-Cattaraugus Library System's petition which had been endorsed by fourteen of the twenty-two systems in the State, including the Clinton-Essex-Franklin Library. The temporary chairman was authorized to send a letter to the Commissioner's Committee on Library Development urging them

to recommend regulations on legislation, in accordance with the resolution, which may become effective no later than April 1, 1970.

REFERENCE AND RESEARCH CONFERENCE IS PLANNED

The North Country Reference and Research Resources Council will sponsor its first summer conference for business, professional and industrial leaders of the North Country, June 12-13 at Clarkson College of Technology. The Council provides reference and research materials for persons living in Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Oswego, Lewis, Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties. The purpose of this summer's conference at Clarkson is to provide information on the function of the council as part of the statewide information network and to ascertain from those in attendance how their needs can be filled, according to Mrs. Otilie Rollins, librarian at Clarkson, and Mrs. Mary Parker, librarian at Canton Agricultural and Technical College.

Conference plans call for two short general presentations to be made on economic, cultural and demographic projections for the northern area. They will be followed by a description of the New York State information network designed to meet spiralling needs for rapid transmission of information and materials to the researcher and professional user regardless of the location. There are 11 colleges in Northern New York with total book collections of 1,011,129 volumes. Through a program of cooperation and inter-library loan, these are accessible to meet research needs of North Country residents. The two-day session is the first of its type to be sponsored by one of the nine New York State Research and Resources Councils, according to Andrew K. Peters, president of the North Country Council and director of the library at St. Lawrence University, Canton.

MICROFILM READERS PLACED IN MEMBER LIBRARIES

With the purchase of two high-priced and two low-priced microfilm readers on an LSCA grant, the Clinton-Essex-Franklin Library is now able to place readers in a wide-spread area throughout the three counties. Four readers are now located in the system's central library in Plattsburgh. Three other readers are located in the following libraries: Wead Library in Malone, Dodge Memorial Library in Rouses Point, and the Black Watch Library in Ticonderoga. The libraries in Tupper Lake and Saranac Lake also have microfilm readers of their own. Thus, it is now possible to send microfilm upon request, and make it available to those not able to travel to the central library.

CONSULTANT VISITS

March 17:

Barbara Doh and Normand Dumont visited the Rouses Point and Champlain Libraries* to discuss Adult and Children's services in these areas.

March 26

Richard Ward went to the Black Watch Library in Ticonderoga and gave a talk to three Junior High School classes at the local public school on the services of the Clinton-Essex-Franklin Library System.

March 27

Chazy Library and West Chazy Library were visited by Barbara Doh for consulting on Children's work.

April 24

Barbara Doh and John Crager went to Keeseville, Lake Placid and Ausable Forks libraries for consultation in Children's and Young Adult Services.

May 8

John Crager assisted Lake Placid's new Librarian Sharon Steltzer, in weeding and reorganizing her Young Adult collection.

NEWS OF MEMBER LIBRARIES

Lake Placid

Lake Placid has a new librarian, Miss Sharon Steltzer, former Senior Clerk with the Clinton-Essex-Franklin Library system. We wish her success in her new position. Miss Steltzer began her new duties April 1, 1969.

Plattsburgh

Plattsburgh Public Library is preparing for its very popular children's Summer Reading Program which will begin on June 16 with registration. The theme this year will be Bookingham Castle.

Saranac Lake

Mrs. Ralph Meagher, Saranac Lake Free Library's librarian, has announced that a 20 volume set of the 1969 World Book Encyclopedia, the World Book Dictionary and Atlas have been added to the shelves of the library as a memorial to Col. John R. Bedell. These valuable books were given by Mrs. John R. Bedell and several friends.

Tupper Lake

The Grace Simmons Memorial Room in the Tupper Lake Library was dedicated April 25, 1969, as part of that Library's observance of National Library Week. Mrs. Simmons, who died June 21, 1968, served the library as a director and as librarian for 22 years. The room, given by friends and

relatives in Tupper Lake, and others who sent memorial contributions from throughout a wide area, is identified by a bronze tablet, appropriately inscribed, and mounted just outside the door. The memorial room features a stereo record player with two sets of headphones, available to adult music lovers who would like to listen to records from the library collection. The microfilm reader is also installed there for viewing Tupper Lake's community newspaper files back to 1911, and other microfilm material.

Tupper lake Library Board of Trustees has announced that it has received a bequest from the Charity Goff Nelson estate for \$75,000 to use together with any other funds that might be available to erect within the Village of Tupper Lake a new public library building. The bequest specifically states that funds cannot be used in connection with the expansion or remodeling of the existing library, but must be used for the construction of a new fireproof building.

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