Some Frequently Asked Questions

GOALS FOR 2009-10 STATE BUDGET

Q. What is the Pennsylvania Library Association's primary message for library advocates this year?

A. In order to maintain vitally needed library services for Pennsylvanians in FY 2009-2010, the Pennsylvania Library Association calls for state funding equal to the current year (FY 2008-2009).

Q. What is Governor Rendell's plan for library funding in the FY 2009-10 State Budget?

A. Demand for library services is up dramatically during this recession. Libraries all across Pennsylvania are busier than ever before, serving people looking for work, families on tight budgets, and retirees grappling with shrinking savings. Yet **the Governor's budget proposes to cut 5.1% from state support for library services, or $4,790,000**, even as the $14 billion Department of Education budget grows overall. Even worse, these cuts not only reduce library services, they will also trigger the loss of nearly one million dollars in federal funds.

Q. Why will Pennsylvania lose nearly one million dollars in Federal LSTA Funds?

A. The federal government requires states to maintain their financial support for libraries each year. This "maintenance of effort" requirement means that the Governor's proposed reduction of $3,040,000 in the first four of the five library appropriation lines in the table below, including the devastating cut to our State Library, will cause Pennsylvania to lose at least $906,000 more in federal funding.

Program (line item)	FY 2008-09 Total	Gov's Proposal for FY 2009-10	% Change	$ Reduction in State Funding as Proposed	Add'l Loss of Federal Funds That Will Result	$ Impact on Library Services
Office of Commonwealth Libraries (includes State Library operations)	$ 4,846,000	$ 2,396,000	**-50.6%**	- $ 2,450,000		
Library Services/Visually Impaired & Disabled	$ 2,976,000	$ 2,926,000	**-1.7%**	- $ 50,000		
Library Access (POWER Library, statewide card, interlibrary delivery)	$ 7,290,000	$ 7,000,000	**-4.0%**	- $ 290,000		
Electronic Library Catalog (Ask Here PA, Access PA database)	$ 3,792,000	$ 3,542,000	**-6.6%**	- $ 250,000		
Public Library Subsidy	$ 75,750,000	$ 74,000,000	**-2.3%**	-$ 1,750,000		
Total – All Library Programs	**$ 94,654,000**	**$ 89,864,000**	**-5.1%**	**- $ 4,790,000**	**-$ 906,000**	**-$ 5,696,000**

Q. How will a reduction in LSTA funds affect my library?

A. This loss of LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) funding will affect local residents who rely on their public libraries. Local libraries will see reduced services, fewer available databases, and decreased availability of grants for local library improvements. Ironically, this loss of LSTA dollars would come at the very same time that Pennsylvania is trying to secure every nickel possible from Washington.

Q. Does the Public Library Subsidy affect LSTA funds?

A. No. The Public Library Subsidy consists of dollars that go to support local library services and thus are not factored in to the determination of the state's maintenance of effort for purposes of federal funding.

Nevertheless, the proposed reduction in the Public Library Subsidy comes at the worst possible time—when people rely even more heavily on the books, DVDs, subscriptions, computers, and professional staff available at Pennsylvania's public libraries.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY SUBSIDY

Q. Does the Pennsylvania Library Association recommend that supporters advocate for a return to the Public Library Funding Formula in the FY 2009-10 budget?

A. No. Even with level funding, there would not be sufficient funds available to run the formula. (See related document on PaLA's website entitled, Funding Formula Background.)

Q. Isn't a 2.3% cut in the Public Library Subsidy quite modest, in light of the state's large budget deficit?

A. Funding for public libraries was slashed five years ago in the original 2003-04 state budget. Librarians had no choice but to cut back on hours, programs for kids, new technology, new books, and trained employees. Librarians, library users and library advocates made their voices heard, but it took five long years to return to pre-funding-cut levels.

Eight years ago (FY 2001-02), the Public Library Subsidy stood at $75.2 million. Seven years ago (2002-03), in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and the economic downturn that followed, the Public Library Subsidy was level funded at $75.2 million. But in the years that followed, services lost due to state budget cuts combined with the failure to keep pace with inflation put libraries in a position of barely making do.

Combine this history with the increased need for public library services by people affected by the recession, and you can see why even a modest decrease in funds will put added pressure on library services.

STATE LIBRARY OPERATIONS

Q. How will a 50.6% reduction in the line item for the State Library affect operations?

A.

- Decreased hours of operation. The Library is currently open to the public 48.5 hours a week, Monday through Saturday. Those hours are expected to face substantial reduction.
- Severe cuts in materials purchases. The inability to collect materials published for, by and about Pennsylvania will have an impact on the State Library's mission to provide information for State Government and to collect and preserve our written heritage.
- Cutbacks in Interlibrary Loan services. Pennsylvania's libraries (of all types) will need to adjust to a longer turn-around time for requested materials.
- Reductions or cessation of valuable digitization projects. The State Library has been a leader in transferring historic materials from original to digital formats in order to make the information more readily available for research.
- Withdrawal of librarians from Ask Here PA – the exceptional 24/7 statewide reference service.

Q. Who uses the State Library?

A.

- All parts of State Government including the General Assembly, departments and commissions, state hospitals and corrections facilities, the state police and other agencies. Several of these agencies rely upon the State Library's extensive databases for construction codes, legal information as well as federal and state documents.
- Academic libraries including the State System of Higher Education, the Pennsylvania Academic Library Consortium, Inc., and the Keystone Library Network (14 State Universities.)
- Public libraries including the 30 District Library Centers and their local public libraries. The other Statewide Resource Center Libraries; the Free Library of Philadelphia, Penn State University Libraries and the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.
- Special libraries including historical societies and genealogical research centers.
- The general public who borrow materials and use computers to assist in job searches and medical information. Those persons who are otherwise unable to afford access to the Internet use the workstations in the Main Reading Room.
- Genealogists and history researchers. The State Library has the most extensive collection of Pennsylvania newspapers in the commonwealth. A wide variety of indexes, genealogies and family histories, state and county histories, atlases, land warranty maps, ship lists, compilations of church and cemetery records as well as census records are available. Some genealogists plan their vacations with a stop in Harrisburg to use the collection to enhance information from Internet resources.

Q. What does the State Library do for people in *my* community?

A.

- The State Library works closely with local public libraries to provide materials that most small public libraries do not have the budget to purchase or the space to store. Access to the State Library's extensive collection of newspapers and accompanying microfilms is invaluable to researchers and genealogists.
- Many Pennsylvanians use the Pennsylvania Archives series, regimental histories (primarily from the Revolutionary and Civil Wars), research guides for ethnic and minority groups, and guides to genealogical research in foreign countries.
- The Rare Collections Library is a treasure for all Americans and a special source of pride to Pennsylvanians. In 1745, Benjamin Franklin ordered the first volumes of British Law for use by the Pennsylvania Assembly. The collection has grown and includes rare volumes, maps and newspapers. The cost-effective techniques developed in the Rare Book Project and now used to preserve these materials assist local libraries and community organizations to preserve books, maps, pamphlets and other materials that are important to their community pride and history.
- Duplication of materials and cost-effective measures in state government are manifested in the State Library operation. State agencies can access data bases and materials through the State Library, staff members receive training and learn how to efficiently use these materials. Taxpayers receive the benefit of effective use of those tax dollars.

LIBRARIES AND THE ECONOMY

Q. Is it true that public libraries get busier when the economy takes a downturn?

A. A 2002 American Library Association study confirms the increase in library use in the wake of a recession. This study found that circulation in March 2001, during the post 9/11 recession, was 8.3 percent higher than would be expected from the trend observed since January 1997. Every indication today is the library use in Pennsylvania has increased dramatically since last year.

Q. Why are Pennsylvanians using libraries more during this recession?

A.

- Libraries are part of the solution when a community is struggling economically. From free access to books and online resources for families to library business centers that help support entrepreneurship and retraining, libraries support lifelong learning.
- Libraries are America's great information equalizers – the only place people of all ages and backgrounds can find and freely use such a diversity of resources, along with the expert guidance of librarians.
- As more and more Americans look for employment, libraries are helping to level the playing field for job seekers. Based on a 2006 survey, only half of the top 100 U.S. retailers accepted in-store paper applications, and this trend surely has continued. Library staff report that many patrons are turning to library computers and Internet access to find work, apply for jobs online, type resumes and cover letters and open email accounts.

- Many libraries design and offer programs tailored to meet local community economic needs, providing residents with guidance, training and workshops in resume writing and interviewing, job-search resources, and connections with outside agencies that offer training and job placement.
- During times of economic downturn, libraries see more users because people cut back on entertainment. People are able to rent movies for free and check out CDs, use databases and download audio books.

Q. Do libraries have the resources to handle the increase in use?

A. It has been said that no one stretches the public's dollar further than the local librarian, and librarians certainly recognize the reality of added budget pressures during a recession.

Libraries depend on revenue from local governments and private donors, all of whom are adjusting their budgets downward. All of these factors mean that libraries must enact belt-tightening measures that may affect services, at a time when services are needed more than ever.

Pennsylvania's librarians are not asking for a funding increase from the state. Rather, they seek level funding in order to meet some part of the rising demand for hours and access to computers, training classes, current books, publications, and DVD's.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR LIBRARY ADVOCATES

Q. Wouldn't it save money and resources if Pennsylvania combined school and public libraries in one facility?

A. Schools and public libraries have very different missions. Public libraries were established to serve all residents of a community at hours that are most convenient to them. Schools, on the other hand, direct their resources to serving just their student populations, all of whom are minors. Schools must work to protect the children in their charge, which may mean restrictions on the kinds of materials available in the library, as well as security issues. Most schools are unwilling to allow members of the public in their buildings during the school day, unless they have legitimate business. School administrators would be hard pressed to monitor the kind of traffic that public libraries see on a daily basis.

Q. Are public libraries eligible to receive tutoring funds from the Pennsylvania Department of Education?

A. Unfortunately, tutoring funds are not available to libraries. The Pennsylvania Library Association has long advocated a statewide contract for a "live homework help" online product that would be available in all public libraries in the Commonwealth. In the handful of libraries where live homework help operates already, this service has proven to be invaluable to students and wildly popular with parents. But the service is too expensive to purchase on a library-by-library basis. PaLA supports a statewide contract similar to those that make up POWER Library, through the Office of Commonwealth Libraries, to provide live homework help in a cost-effective manner for all students in every corner of Pennsylvania. For this year, however, the need to preserve current funding levels and to reverse the

devastating cuts to the State Library are the most pressing priorities requiring our advocacy. Nonetheless, library advocates are encouraged to discuss live homework tutoring help with legislators who may want more information on the subject.

LIBRARIES SERVICES FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED AND DISABLED

Q. Do libraries provide any special services for people with visual and physical impairments?

A. Yes, the state supports special services at two libraries---the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and the Free Library of Philadelphia---to operate two regional centers that provide audio materials for visually impaired library and other special materials for disabled users—including many returning veterans—all across the state.

Q. Who pays for this service?

A. The Governor and General Assembly approve a separate appropriation for library services to the visually impaired and disabled. This program has been level-funded at $2.9 million since 2001. The federal government provides about $3.3 million and the U. S. Postal Service provides about $3.7 million-worth of free delivery services. Both of these funding streams have kept pace with inflation, but the state funding has not.

Q. Is this funding level sufficient for the constituents who use it?

A. No, it is not. For one thing, the need for services continues to increase. As we know, Pennsylvania's population of elderly citizens continues to grow, leading to ever higher numbers of citizens with vision problems. Services are also critical for students with visual or physical impairments. What's more, a growing number of Pennsylvania veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan need specialized materials or equipment in order to take advantage of library services and materials.

Second, the cost of providing the service -- staff, circulation, materials storage, utilities -- has gone up every year, while funding has not. And finally, the national talking books program is being converted to a digital format, meaning that outdated equipment and cassette tapes must be replaced at an additional cost of $250,000 per year over a five year period. A state appropriation of at least $3.165 million would be required in FY 2009-10 <u>just to stay current</u> with the growing demand for services to the visually impaired and disabled.