



# NORTH COUNTRY LIBRARY SYSTEM

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Director: Stephen B. Bolton

To: Trustees and Directors

From: Steve Bolton

Date: January 21, 2010

Talk about taking a one-two punch! This past Tuesday, budget figures for 2009 were released and the Governor's budget proposed an additional four percent cut. Tuesday morning the Division of Library Development in Albany released the figures showing how last year's budget cuts would be spread among programs. We had been waiting since November for this information, but now we know how much money is in our budget for 2009. State funding for libraries was slashed by 14% last year. Overall, this means a drop of \$270,671 in State funds for libraries in the North Country. This includes grant programs like Outreach, cut from \$91,489 to \$78,869, and the funds sent to your library, Local Library Services Aid, cut from \$128,314 to \$110,615. An additional 4% cut would bring the total loss of funds to over \$338,000.

So much for the numbers, what does this mean? Many little things that will add up to a big loss of service for your patrons. Over the past few years, NCLS has honed services down to the key elements, while at the same time making improvements. State budget cuts will result in:

- Continuing Education classes:
  - No more outside speakers
  - Fewer Classes
  - Dropping our popular "Certification" classes
- Delivery:
  - Over the past six years, the borrowing between libraries has increased by **150%**. We expanded our delivery services three years ago to keep pace with this. Our delivery service is now again straining to keep up with demand. We should be expanding this service, but the latest cuts will make it difficult, if not impossible, to meet this need.
- Consulting:
  - Consulting is now a well-defined service, helping libraries with grants, funding campaigns, policies and procedures. Stepping away from our preferred hands-on method of helping will inevitably be the result of restricted travel. We may have to regress to a time when Consultants had many other duties, and this will result in library Directors having less access to this resource.
- Technology
  - The Information Technology Department has ordered, configured and installed hundreds of PCs in the past few years, and there are now 50 libraries with wireless services. A smaller, increasingly strained staff will mean less help with technology-related grants and slower response times to calls for assistance.

- Technical Services
  - “Tech” Services keeps the catalog up-to-date and oversees the operation of the circulation system. Six years ago there were 14 libraries using the SIRSI circulation system. There are now 41 using the circulation system. The 150% jump in borrowing is a direct result libraries becoming “automated”. A slower response time in keeping the catalog current or in helping libraries get on the circulation system is absolutely not acceptable. Hopefully it is not inevitable.
- The many other things:
  - Help with annual reports; submitting the many reports to get reimbursed for phone expenses through Erate; Outreach service; Printing service; databases such as Learning Express, and HeritageQuest. All are threatened.  
In 1998, NCLS employed 33 people. Today we have 21.

The cuts that have been received (FOUR in the past two years) are more devastating to libraries because we have experienced so many years of flat funding. The present reductions reduce the overall State funding for libraries back to the amount received in 1998. This “overall” figure includes some advances that have been made, such as construction grants. However, for the basic system aid – the money that pays for the services in the above list - the picture is even worse. We have to revert to 1994 to reach a funding level as low as 2009.

The cooperative structure of public libraries is being threatened. We need library supporters to make some noise! Tell State Legislators and the Governor that libraries have already been cut through actual reductions and flat budgets. Everyone acknowledges that the State is having budget trouble and that cuts must be made, but Legislators should build some equity into the process so libraries do not receive a disproportionate cut.

Thank you for your concern and support.

#### **SEND A FAX**

Go to [www.NYLA.ORG](http://www.nyla.org) and click the red, white and blue “Library Advocate” button in the upper left corner of the page, or follow this link:

[http://www.nyla.org/index.php?page\\_id=925](http://www.nyla.org/index.php?page_id=925)

#### **SEND LETTERS**

The contact information can be found here:

<http://ncls.northcountrylibraries.org/pub/legislators.pdf>

(If you have already sent a Fax or letter, please send another!)