

Written Testimony for Municipal Efficiencies Sub-Committee
Lisa Karim – April 7, 2015

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to bring to light the often overlooked history of regionalized savings and cooperative efficiencies created by and available to libraries throughout the state of Connecticut, two of which are in jeopardy of elimination in the proposed state budget.

First, many libraries throughout the state have joined together to form 3 cooperatives, Library Connection (LCI), Bibliomation and Libraries Online (LION), all of which were established between 1979 and 1981. The goal of each cooperative being to leverage technology to share, expand, and promote quality, cost-effective information resources and services.

Simsbury Public Library is one of the 30 member libraries of Library Connection. Our annual member assessment provides

- A shared integrated library system (ILS) for circulation, cataloging, reserves
- Automated statistical reports of community borrowing and library use
- Email notifications for library users
- A shared collection of downloadable ebooks, audiobooks, magazines and streaming video
- An automated cataloging process
- Staff expertise, training, consultation, troubleshooting and customization

Some of the benefits of LCI membership include

- Centralized ILS maintenance and support means local library staff do not need high levels of specialized technological proficiencies which prove costly
- Local library cataloging of materials is streamlined through automation, saving time and resources and allowing materials to be available for borrowing faster
- Library users have a large pool of digital resources in the shared collection from which to borrow, rather than only those purchased by the local library

A second example of library efficiency through cooperation is reflected in Connecticard. Connecticard is a state mandated program that allows any resident to use their hometown library card at any of the 192 public libraries in Connecticut, providing equity of access to library materials statewide. Local libraries are reimbursed by the state proportionally for their lending of materials to non-residents. Simsbury Public Library receives approximately \$16,000 annually through the Connecticard program.

Both the funding and the legislative mandate for Connecticard are proposed for elimination in the state budget. Elimination of this program and its funding will mean users will only be able to borrow material directly from their library of residence.

State funding to Connecticard is approximately \$950,000 annually. However, Connecticut libraries saved taxpayers \$68M in FY 13-14 by borrowing 4.5M items through Connecticard rather than having each library purchase them, an incredible return on the less than \$1M investment.

A third example of library efficiency through cooperation is exemplified through Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC). CLC is a statewide 501(c)(3) membership cooperative comprised of all types of libraries: public, school, academic & special. CLC is mandated by Connecticut General Statute Section 11-9e which defines its purpose as *“to improve library service through coordinated planning, resource sharing, and the development of programs too costly or impractical for a single library to maintain.”*

CLC was established in 2003 when the Boards of the 4 Connecticut Cooperative Library Service Units, established in 1975, decided to merge, enabling service to libraries to be provided more cost effectively. There are currently 800 CLC member libraries, including 94% of all public libraries, 92% of academic/college libraries, 44% of all K-12 school libraries and 20% of all special libraries.

Both the funding and the legislative mandate for Connecticut Library Consortium are proposed for elimination in the state budget

What does CLC do exactly?

- Leverages collective negotiating and buying power through statewide contracts saving member libraries 80% on mission-critical library materials
- Provides training and professional development opportunities at greatly reduced costs to member library staff

What's the cost benefit of CLC?

- CLC's FY 13-14 state funds of \$332,500 translated to savings of over \$7.1M for its member libraries
- Simsbury Public Library's \$660 annual membership resulted in a savings of over \$75,000 on books, media, supplies, early literacy and job skills resources

Without CLC Simsbury Public Library will be forced to drastically reduce the purchasing of materials and resources providing fewer opportunities for learning to our users.

Libraries of all types have a greatly overlooked history and longstanding foundation in creative collaboration to provide cost efficiencies. These are just a few which are formal and open to all libraries. There are many other relationships established between libraries themselves and between libraries and other community organizations which help each leverage resources and funding. I hope this has helped bring to light the vital role libraries play in keeping costs down through cooperation. I encourage you to talk with your local library and learn more.

I also urge you to support funding for libraries in the state budget process. Elimination of the Connecticard program and Connecticut Library Consortium will have dire consequences for libraries and residents throughout the state.

Sincerely,

Lisa Karim
Library Director

Karim- Simsbury Public Library
Page 2