

TO: New York State Division of Budget
FROM: Paula Smith, Director-Monroe County Library System/Rochester Public Library
SUBJECT: Support for Library Aid to Systems
DATE: November 16, 2007

Library systems are outstanding examples of intergovernmental collaboration and cooperation. They exemplify cost effectiveness and efficiency by providing basic library system operations that benefit all residents in their service areas. For the Monroe County Library System, the infrastructure and system services include maintaining the catalog, developing and maintaining the automation and telecommunications systems, inter-library loan, and the delivery system that enable resource sharing and other economy-of-scale services. Because of the library system, anyone in Monroe County may borrow books and other materials from any public library in Monroe County; indeed only one library card is issued by public libraries in the county – it says “Monroe County Library System” – it embodies our motto of “One County, One Card.”

For ten years (1996-2005), the State did not increase funding for systems and libraries. This caused system services to deteriorate – to the detriment of the New York residents, including those of Monroe County. The supplemental state funding received over the past two years has been used to shore up operations and services such as leasing new delivery trucks and upgrading the automation system, thus allowing us to better meet an ever increasing public demand for books, programming, information, and web-based services.

The highest priority of the statewide library community is that the \$8 million in 2007 supplemental aid to library systems be continued and made permanent.

The second priority of the library community is a continuation of the public library construction funding of \$14 million. The State Library has documented a need of over \$2 billion for public library facilities. In Monroe County, \$36,953,000 in facility upgrade needs have been identified.

While the total needs of library systems much exceed the \$8 million system aid and the \$14 million construction aid, we in the library community are keenly aware of the state’s fiscal situation this year and are only asking for these two items to be included in the Governor’s budget so that we can continue our legacy of services that are essential to so many New Yorkers.