



SEMLS

Southeastern Massachusetts Library System

Vision & Service

October 4, 2007

Robert Maier, Director
Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners
98 No. Washington Street
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Rob,

"Libraries build Communities" captures what is happening in our libraries today. During the past five years, residents in southeastern MA have told their stories of the library's impact on their lives at our legislative breakfast. Each of these stories reminds us of the community each library is building by the services they offer. Whether is the student at Eastern Nazarene College, who uses the reference databases supplied by the state and region; the Brockton and Stoughton residents who use the literacy program at Stoughton Public Library to learn to read and better their lives; or the Mashpee author who uses regional ILL to support his writings on World War II; the children from Rockland who use the library and databases for homework; the Teens from Weymouth who have used My Own Cafe to connect with other teens in the area; or the Falmouth resident who use of the library gave him the strength and will to fight the obstacles he had facing him. Our libraries, public, school, academic and special, are facing greater demands each day and we, the MA Board of Library Commissioners and Regional Library Systems, need to provide them with the resources that they need to succeed.

Individual Libraries can provide many stories to tell you about use of their services; how library usage continues to increase even as the Internet becomes more common in our households and why increased state aid to public libraries is so important to their overall strength. The state aid line has not kept up with inflation and the added demands placed on library services.

My stories will be a little different as many of the regional services are to build strong library staff so that they can continue to build community. State Aid to Regional Public Libraries (line 7000-9401) has limited the service that we can provide to libraries across the state that will make them stronger and better able to serve their communities.

Each year, the Regions and the State team up together to offer a Summer Reading Program to children, teens and adults through their public library. Study after study shows that children who read during the summer months retain much of the learning that took place in the previous academic year in greater numbers than children who do not have that opportunity. The Summer Reading program invites participants to read for enjoyment and pleasure and encourages of love reading. Libraries sponsor programs and introduce children to music, storytelling, science and nature. Most libraries report standing room only at their programs. This past summer, one library noted that a child who often comes

to the library and creates havoc was taken with the electronic version of the Program and participated for the first time.

In the Southeastern Region, we received a federal grant from the MBLC to develop a teen web site for teens ages 13-18. This is a website maintained by the region, but moderated by teens. Teens have the ability to post their poetry, artwork, writings, and to chat with other teens in our area. It's an alternative to My Space and can provide a safer Internet environment for teens to connect with other teens. Our dream is to make this a statewide venture to have other teens across the state join the 300 plus teens on the site today. One of our Schools, Silver Lake Regional High School, loves the site and has received funding from MassCue to have students produce a public service ad to promote it. One of our teen administrators started on the site a little over a year ago. She was extremely shy and was uncomfortable connecting with other teens. Today, she is one of the leaders on My Own Care and a leader in her school as well. We want to give other teens this possibility.

The regions fund an Interlibrary Loan Program, which provides Massachusetts residents with the ability to borrow materials from around the world, The development and support of our automated Networks through line 7000-9506 Library Technology and Resource Sharing has given residents knowledge of the fantastic resources held in libraries across the state, but there are times when a resident needs something held further afar. In the southeastern region, 9000 requests were made on behalf of residents last year. Authors, researchers, readers and students used this program to obtain materials that they needed. One of our biggest users of this service is the public library in West Tisbury. Through the region program, we are able to bring material to the residents of West Tisbury through their libraries. The connection to library community can help offset the sense of isolation that island living can cause.

Last year, the Southeastern Regional office provided workshops and trainings to over 1500 employees of our libraries. These workshops trained staff on the latest in technology. One of our participants wrote that she finds the workshops informative, stimulating and even fun, but moreover, she walks away inspired, encouraged and armed with new and different ideas to bring back to the library. Through our workshops, she has developed the library's website, added enhancements to it and trained other staff members.

As our society moves more toward an online environment, libraries often are asked by their residents to teach them how to use a computer, email, how to search the internet, etc. Regional staff teach our library employees how to present workshops and trainings for residents; we train the trainers.

Customer service, Reader's advisory, building layout and design are some of the other workshop areas that we provide that help our libraries better serve their communities.

During the past few years, all of us have experienced the dramatic increase in fuel costs. The regional library systems provide delivery services to our members, so that residents can pick up resources at their local library, academic, public, special and school. This saves our residents valuable time in getting the materials they need delivered to them instead of driving to a location that has what they are looking for. Last year, the Southeastern Region delivered over 3 1/2 million items to residents through their libraries.

In this fast-paced and harried world, it's important for us as residents to have a place that we can count on to help us find the resources and materials that we need to create a better life for our families. We also need a place that is a center in all our communities. Our libraries do and can continue to fill this greatly needed role. The regional library systems funded through line 7000-9401 provide additional support to libraries through out the state. Since 2002, the regional budgets have struggled with budget cuts that have ranged from a high of 24% to today of 17%. We can assist our libraries with the education, resources and assistance that will help them stay strong as community centers. For every dollar that region receives in state funding, it provides \$7.50 worth of services to its member. The State's investment in the regions has been cost effective and of great importance to our members. We ask for your continued financial support of the services that we provide to libraries across the Commonwealth.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cynthia Roach". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cynthia Roach
Regional Administrator