



**TESTIMONY ON SB 2013  
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023  
By: Mary J. Soucie, State Librarian  
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Chairman Vigesaa and Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

For the record I am Mary Soucie, and I am the State Librarian of North Dakota. I am here today to provide information on our agency's operation and budget request which is included in the Department of Public Instruction's budget in SB2013.

The State Library was established as the Public Library Commission in 1907 and occupied a single room in the State Capitol. In 1909, the library's name was changed to the State Library Commission. The State Library Commission occupied the Liberty Memorial Building on the Capitol Grounds from 1936-1970 and later moved to the Randal Building north of Bismarck. The agency's name was changed to the North Dakota State Library in 1979. In 1982 the State Library returned to the Liberty Memorial Building, its present location.

The first two pages in our binder materials is a brief overview of the State Library. The mission of the North Dakota State Library is creating pathways to information and innovation for North Dakota libraries, state government and residents. Our three constituency groups are the North

Dakota library community, state agencies and North Dakota citizens, especially those that are not served by a local public library. Any North Dakotan can apply for a state library card to access our materials and online resources. The third page of our binder materials includes our mission and our agency goals.

The State Library has 26.75 FTE and has four divisions:

Administrative and Fiscal Services, Library Services, Patron Services and Technology Services as shown in our organization chart on page four of the binder materials. The Administrative and Fiscal Services division includes fiscal, human resources, marketing, and outreach for the agency. The Library Services Division provides direct support to the library community through the Library Development and Cataloging departments. The Patron Services Division provides direct service to library patrons. The Technology Services Division includes IT and Digital Initiatives.

The State Library collection includes over 308,000 physical items. Our state documents collection has any item that has been produced by a state agency for the public and we have items that go back to territory days. Our Talking Books program provides materials to patrons that are unable to read traditional physical books due to a visual or physical disability. In 2020, the State Library joined the Library2Go e-book

consortium which includes over 60 public libraries. In 2022, NDSL owned e-materials in the consortium circulated 298,543 times. In addition to e-books and e-audiobooks, the collection includes over 3,000 magazines in multiple languages. Our collection also includes over 65 STEM kits that circulate to libraries and organizations.

The State Library purchases some of our online library resources through a collaborative process with Minnesota and South Dakota to realize economies of scale. Libraries that participate in this collaborative program pay a very small amount compared to what they would pay if they purchased them on their own.

The online library resources that the State Library purchases individually are provided to any citizen with a North Dakota State Library card or a local public library card. Many of our libraries would not be able to provide access to these quality resources without the support of the State Library. By purchasing these, the State Library helps libraries of all sizes meet the needs of their patrons. Our medium and larger libraries are able to purchase additional online library resources because the State Library provides the ones that we do.

We provide support to the library community that includes continuing education for staff and public library trustees, cataloging services,

reference support consulting services, grant assistance, and technology support. We have specialists dedicated to public, school, and academic/special/tribal libraries. We have a literacy specialist who helps libraries of all types in the different areas of literacy.

In addition to cataloging materials for over twenty-five school and public libraries, our cataloging department also catalogs the physical items in the State Library's collection as well as seven state agencies.

NDSL coordinates the statewide InterLibrary Loan (ILL) program. Patrons and libraries place holds on our materials which we then send through the mail to the requestor. For items that cannot be found in-state, we request the materials from libraries across the country. While some of the local libraries may charge a patron a nominal fee for an ILL request, the State Library does not charge any fees unless one is required by the lending library. The patron must okay the fee prior to the item being requested. We mail items directly to individual's homes and they are responsible for any costs associated with the return of the item. We also provide reference and reader's advisory to patrons to assist them with their informational and personal reading needs.

NDSL received \$2.1M in American Rescue Plan Act dollars from the Institute for Museum and Library Services. The funds were to be used to

respond to COVID, eliminate the digital divide and to provide technical support for libraries. We used the funds to automate three libraries and add their materials to the statewide consortium, Online Dakota Information Network (ODIN). The libraries patrons will now be able to access the collection and request materials even when the library itself is not physically opened. This project provided technical support to libraries as well as helping to eliminate the digital divide by providing access to library materials 24/7.

ARPA dollars were utilized to purchase 10 book vending machines that will be placed throughout North Dakota to serve patrons that do not have local public library service. We have placed seven of the machines in a permanent location with one machine temporarily placed in the Capitol. We are discussing a partnership with North Dakota Parks and Rec to place the remaining two machines in state parks thereby expanding access to more citizens. Items in the machines can be checked out with an NDSL library card. We are excited to be the first state to deploy the book vending machines on a statewide level.

The third project that was funded by ARPA dollars was the creation of a statewide e-book consortium for academic libraries. Twelve academic



libraries joined the consortium. NDSL paid for their licensing fees for the first two years as well as provided funding for the startup of the collection.

Our budget request is outlined on pages 5-6 of the binder materials. Our base budget for the 2021-23 biennium was \$10,362,864 and includes salaries and wages, grants to libraries, our operating expenses and ARPA funding. Operating funds are used for online library resources, continuing education and technical support to libraries, library materials, equipment, and office supplies.

Our requested budget for the 2023-25 biennium to the Senate was \$9,542,074, which includes cost to continue of \$971,234 and one-time funding of \$611,635. We have since received updated information from our Federal Partner, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and are requesting an increase in federal authority of \$69,028 from the base level budget for a total agency request of \$9,878,899 of which \$2,433,445 is federal and other funds as shown in the top chart on page 6 of the binder materials.

During the current biennium, the State Library has been analyzing our wages and we have learned that we are lowest paying state agency, and this has impacted our ability to retain staff and fill vacant positions. NDSL has experienced a 46% turnover this last year; many of our positions had to

be listed multiple times before we were able to fill them. Several candidates that declined extended offers or withdrew from the application process cited our pay rate as the factor. NDSL is requesting an increase to fund a salary and wage compensation package of \$591,040 general funds. This amount is inclusive of \$180,000 general funds for equity.

NDSL is requesting an increase in operating expenses total of \$330,194 in general fund, of which \$264,635 is to support the new Capitol space rent model. The remaining \$65,559 is attributed to travel for statewide support to public libraries and tribal libraries, inflation of online resources and subscription services that directly support libraries, state agencies and patrons.

Our State Aid to Public Libraries and the Library Vision funds are pass-through grants that go directly to support library service and programs in the state. The State Aid for Public Libraries is \$1,737,582 in general fund for the biennium and the Library Vision grants are \$237,500 in general fund for the biennium.

The libraries use the funds to purchase materials, increase the type and number of programs and to add or improve technology including equipment, software, and programs. The formula for State Aid to Public Libraries is in §54-24.2 Laws Pertaining to State Aid for Public Libraries.

The North Dakota Library Coordinating Council and the State Library create the Library Vision grant opportunities two to three times per year. We are requesting an additional \$50,000 in general fund for the Library Vision grants to be used specifically for tribal libraries.

The five tribal libraries are all located in community colleges. Four of them have been designated as the public library by the tribal nation. They are not eligible for State Aid since they do not meet the definition of a legally established library as outlined in §40-38. NDSL wants to support the tribal libraries in meeting the needs of their communities since they would classify as unserved. Serving the unserved is one of our agency priorities. We would include the tribal libraries in grant opportunities that are open to all publicly funded libraries as well as create grant opportunities that are unique to the tribal libraries. Legislative Management and the Attorney General's office are working on language for Century Code to allow us to include the Tribal Libraries in the grant program.

The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States program from IMLS is our federal grant program. During federal fiscal year 2021, we did not meet our Maintenance of Effort requirements, primarily due to staff turnover resulting in longstanding vacancies. We submitted a waiver appeal which was denied. Our next LSTA distribution will be



lowered by \$237,964. We have requested \$228,635 as one-time funding in our 2023-25 request to replace the dollars we will lose from LSTA funding.

NDSL has long-term serving staff who are eligible for retirement in the 23-25 biennium. NDSL is requesting one-time funding of \$40,000 in general fund for retirement payouts.

In response to the pandemic and consistent turnover, NDSL implemented a hybrid and fully telecommuting option for eligible staff. Prior to 2020, no NDSL employees telecommuted and very few employees had laptops. NDSL needs to transition 38% of our staff from desktops to laptops to allow for telecommuting and to increase the efficient use of technology by allowing employees to utilize their equipment beyond their desk. In addition, we plan to implement an electronic filing system (FileNet) for the administrative office to ensure that staff can access files when they are in the building and working remotely and to eliminate the need to retain paper files. NDSL is requesting one-time funding of \$43,000 in general funds.

We are requesting one-time funding of \$300,000 in general funds for a renovation of the space we occupy in the Liberty Memorial Building. The State Library has been in the Liberty Memorial Building since it was first occupied in 1924, except for a period of twelve years between 1968-1982. The building underwent a renovation in 1981 and no changes have been

made since that project. The State Library will update our circulation desk and staff space on the ground floor to provide for flexibility, ergonomics and more efficient use of the space. We will update the carpeting and blinds throughout the portion of the building that we utilize. We will also create an Emerging Technologies Lab for use by libraries across the state and state agencies.

The general fund request in total increased by \$1,613,733. Federal and other funds increased by \$69,028.

Thank you for your time today. I am happy to answer any questions the committee has.