



TESTIMONY ON SB 2013
SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
January 12th 2023
By: Mary J. Soucie, State Librarian
701-328-4654

Chairman Bekkedahl and Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee:

For the record, I am State Librarian Mary Soucie, and I am testifying on SB2013. 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. Any North Dakotan can obtain a library card to access our materials and online resources.

Our guiding principles are to provide leadership to the library community; enhance the value of libraries; deliver access to and assistance with credible information sources; enrich the lives of the people we serve and foster a welcoming and inclusive environment for all.

Our agency goals are to expand statewide outreach opportunities ; promote the value of North Dakota's libraries; maintain and promote awareness of technologies for libraries and patrons; advocate for and administer grant opportunities for libraries; curate a well-developed collection that advances the State Library's mission and is consistent with our guiding principles and legislative

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 is able to help 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 technical support to the library community. 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. We provide assistance to libraries applying for grants. We also provide continuing education to the library community, including public library trustees.

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.

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.

The next project that was funded with ARPA dollars was to purchase 10 book vending machines that will be placed in counties throughout North Dakota that do not have countywide library service. North Dakota has five counties that have no public libraries within their border and an additional 23 counties that don't have countywide public library service. One of the machines has been temporarily placed in the Capitol, across from the Brynhild Haugland room. All you need to check out an item is an NDSL library card. Machines have been installed in Oliver, Sheridan and Sioux counties. The remaining machines will be installed over the next two weeks in Benson, Burke, McHenry, Sargent, Sheridan, Slope and Traill counties. We will be meeting our goal of serving the unserved with the machines. This project meets the IMLS goal of responding to the pandemic by providing greater access to materials for patrons who did not have library service during and beyond the pandemic. The project also helps to eliminate the digital divide because patrons will not need access to the Internet to request materials from our main

Our requested budget for the 2023-25 biennium is \$9,542,074, which includes cost to continue of \$971,234 and one-time funding of \$611,635.

The State Library has 26.75 FTE positions. Our organizational chart is attached and is page 9 of my testimony. 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 Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States program from IMLS is our federal grant program. During the Federal FY19, we did not meet our Maintenance of Effort requirements, primarily due to staff vacancies. We submitted a waiver appeal which was denied. Our next LSTA distribution will be lowered by 20%, the amount of the MOE that we did not meet. 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 fund.

