

Reforms to Protect Regional Library Services

Governor Patrick has tremendous respect for libraries, as they are essential to educating our children and offering resources to everyone in the Commonwealth. Facing unprecedented budget challenges brought on by an unprecedented global economic downturn, no state agency has been untouched by cuts. Governor Patrick asked each state agency to develop creative ideas to meet our budget challenges while continuing to provide important services to Massachusetts residents. The Board of Library Commissioners, in consultation with the statewide library community, developed a plan to consolidate regional library systems. Governor Patrick included the Board of Library Commissioners plan in his Fiscal 2011 budget recommendations to the House and Senate.

How Libraries Receive Funding

Public libraries receive funding from their local communities, and therefore rely on state local aid funding. Governor Patrick's proposed budget would not cut local aid. Libraries also rely on \$21 M in state funding for regional services, state aid to public libraries, services for the blind and support of automated library networks through the Board of Library Commissioners. They also benefit from a \$100 M bond bill Governor Patrick signed to invest in renewed and expanded public library facilities.

Regional Consolidation Plan

Regional library systems have been in place since the early 1960s. In 1998 they expanded to serve 1,750 libraries statewide through six regional systems. Under the new plan, the six regional systems will be consolidated into one system with offices located in Whately and Waltham. The plan preserves core programs and helps streamline operations so that residents can continue to access library services, such as:

- Delivery (13.5 million items moved between libraries annually)
- Interlibrary Loan (more than 6 million requests filled annually)
- Electronic reference sources access for libraries and residents statewide
- Cooperative Purchasing to receive discounts and avoid costs
- Summer Reading Program (100,000 kids served last summer)

What to Expect from Regional Consolidation

Your local library will continue to receive the same level of statewide services for summer reading, interlibrary loans, delivery, electronic resources and cooperative purchasing. Some services such as training and technical assistance for staff will continue, but at a reduced level.

These changes will not cause libraries to close, and services can be sustained only under a single consolidated region. Western Massachusetts will continue to be served through the Whately facility under the new plan, including continuing education and technical assistance services.

We all have a stake in this together to provide the best library services to the residents of the Commonwealth.