



Testimony for Library Procurement Hearing
July 28, 2009

Good morning and thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today about library procurement issues.

We are pleased the Assembly is interested in this issue and hope this hearing and the testimony provided today will spur the Legislature into taking action on three key initiatives proposed by the New York Library Association that will improve the ability of libraries to reduce their costs --through cooperative bidding, sharing internet connections with BOCES and enabling the State Library to negotiate statewide pricing for databases accessible to all libraries.

First, regarding the current state of library procurement, libraries are already at the forefront of collaborative cost-sharing efforts through New York's network of library systems. Library systems were created by the Legislature to provide a mechanism by which shared services and cooperative arrangements could be maximized for their member libraries, such as inter-library loan, delivery service, centralized automation and cataloging, and web hosting, where such services are specified in law or permitted due to sole sourcing.

Libraries also utilize the discounts and pricing available through OGS state contract for items like computers, printers and other office equipment and supplies. Libraries either order directly off state contract or use the OGS pricing to negotiate deals directly with the supplier. The OGS state contract website could be made to be more user friendly and modeled more after commercial sites like Amazon.com or Ebay. Library purchases through state contracts varies greatly among libraries, depending on the size of the library and familiarity of library staff with OGS.

There are services and products that are either not available through OGS state contract or not provided by library systems where libraries could benefit from cooperative bidding. Under current municipal law, cities, towns, village, school districts and boards of cooperative educational services are allowed to cooperatively bid for services and products. Unfortunately, libraries and library systems were not included in this cost saving measure, although we were included in the local government consolidation bill recently signed into law. So for purposes of consolidation we are treated like other governmental entities, but for purposes of cooperative bidding to save money we are not.

However, we have proposed to remedy this inequity and Assemblywoman Amy Paulin has introduced legislation A.6154 which would allow libraries and library systems to join together to go out to bid for a variety of services and products, like auditing, landscaping, payroll processing, etc. This bill was not passed by the Assembly by the end of the regular Legislative Session, but its passage would greatly enhance cost-sharing/savings among libraries.

Another legislative initiative, sponsored by Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther, would allow BOCES to contract with libraries and library systems to provide internet service. In many areas of the state, especially in upstate rural areas, BOCES, because they are better funded than libraries and library systems, have more robust high-speed internet capacity which literally runs right by the local library. Unfortunately, state law does not permit BOCES to serve or contract with non-LEA's. This legislation would allow BOCES to contract with libraries and library systems specifically and only for telecommunication services. Again, this bill made little headway in the Assembly. But it makes sense from a shared services point of view.

Lastly, the New York State Library should be empowered either through regulation or law to expand its ability to negotiate or purchase statewide licensing for online databases beyond the core databases available through NOVEL. Currently, NOVEL databases, which are funded by approximately \$2.5 million in federal LSTA funds, are purchased by the New York State Library and available for use by all libraries and their patrons in the state.

In the absence of any additional state or federal funding to expand the number of free databases available to libraries through NOVEL, we would prefer that the NYS Library be explicitly authorized to negotiate statewide pricing for databases beyond NOVEL., Libraries would have to purchase on these additional databases on their own, but at a reduced price. The NYS Library would use the negotiating clout of the State of New York to obtain the best pricing for all types of databases available to all types of libraries, providing equity of access and affordability for all. Other state libraries offer this service, like New Jersey, and its about time that New York State followed suit.

So if the Assembly is serious about helping libraries and improving the procurement process, I have identified three simple ways by which that can be accomplished: cooperative bidding, sharing internet connections with BOCES and enabling the State Library to negotiate statewide pricing for databases accessible to all libraries.

Thanks again for letting me speak to you today.

