

**For the MFOL Annual Meeting. Falmouth. October 17, 2015**

By Mary Ann Cluggish, MBLC.

Read by Katherine Dibble, former MBLC Commissioner.

**Because you're here, I know you love libraries as much as I do. For the next 5 minutes, I'd like to talk about another way you can raise thousands of dollars for your library.**

I'm going to talk about Advocacy. When a lot of Friends members hear that, they turn off, their ears go deaf, they just tune out. NOT interested. Not what I signed up for. But think about it. Libraries need money and all kinds of support.

There are towns where the Selectmen or Finance committee are saying we can't afford to spend so much on the library...let's cut the budget, let's close the branch, OR we don't need to expand the library (despite the fact that its the busiest place in town). At the State level there are also a thousand competing demands, many of them quite dire that must be funded.

At the state level, **Library funding has been decimated over the last 10-15 years, cut as much as 50%, ironically, while library usage has increased by 50%.**

Funding for State Aid to Public Libraries, money that goes **directly to your local library**, is down 11% below where it was six years ago. Your library can use those funds for any legitimate purpose, furniture, computers, DVD's, whatever. It was cut again for this fiscal year, so your library will be getting even less in State Aid this year than last year.

The legislature cut **funding for the networks, like Minuteman, Sails or Clams, by 24% this year**, and now with accumulated cuts, **network funding is down 52%** from where it was in 2001. For technology! In 2015! Each of your libraries pays a membership fee from your local library budget to belong to those networks. When state funding decreases to those networks, the technology costs have to be **passed on to the local libraries** and your library's budget takes a direct hit. The money has to come from some place.

Not investing in technology results in a decaying network infrastructure creating slowdowns and system instability. What happens in library operations? Instead of fast response **speeding** up work, systems can go down for hours, there's a reversion to manual processes, work backs up, it takes hours to reboot and days to catch up. Library efficiency plummets.

**Everyone loves library reciprocity**; if you order a book or DVD or CD your library doesn't have, it will get delivered from another library. That's covered by the MLS budget, the Massachusetts Library System. Over the years, the legislature has cut their budget to the point where it is **down 42%** below the high in 2009.

We cannot allow this **statewide library resource sharing system** -- to be chipped away and degraded through a lack of funding. The total state library budget funding all of this Resource Sharing, State Aid, the networks, delivery, summer reading and more is **less than .007** of the state budget, that's seven one thousandths.

**Libraries do not require big money to make a big difference, but they do require enough money.**

Politics and getting the money your library needs is **a numbers game**, or to put it another way: **the squeaky wheel gets the oil.**

If our State Reps and Senators heard from hundreds and hundreds and maybe thousands of library supporters....it would be close to impossible for them to ignore it. **But they don't hear from hundreds of library supporters. We have to change that.**

I know that in **some towns**, the Trustees and Friends organizations do support the Library budget and do send emails to their State reps. But not many.

**Talking to your legislators is critical and we desperately need the numbers that the Trustees and Friends represent!** Also, I've heard that there are 60,000 **members of Friends in Massachusetts**. If even 1/3 of those actually emailed or called their state reps and senators, it would be a **tsunami** of support. It would probably make the national news. If the legislators got hundreds of emails and phone calls, I would bet that we would see absolutely no problem in getting full funding on the State Level for libraries.

**Recently a couple of us from the MBLC met with a State Rep who said, "If I don't hear from you, I have to figure that everything is OK."**

**Well, things are not OK.** They have got to hear from us.

Another State Rep said, emails are good, but actually getting phone calls from constituents means much more. She said the first thing she always asks her staff when she comes in to the office, is **"How many phone calls did we get today and what were they about?"**

**Every political office tallies up how many emails and how many phone calls they get on each issue. We have to make the numbers for library funding add up, one phone call at a time, one email at a time.**

Many people say that they wouldn't know what to say. So how hard would it be to make a phone call or email your State rep....that is...if you knew what to say?

If you make a phone call, the chances are 99.9% that you will talk to a Legislative Aide, or even an 18 year old intern. The Legislative Aide is going to take a few notes on what you said and pass it on to the Legislator.

Here's a simple script that you could use as the basis for a phone call or for an email. Later this fall and winter, when you receive an email asking you to contact your legislators about supporting the library budget, you could use these words.

**Please, just do it!**

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**Email or phone call script to State Rep to use in 2015 and early 2016:**

This is \_(your name)\_\_\_\_\_.

I live in Rep. \_\_\_\_\_'s district and I'm calling to ask him/her to support funding library services, specifically increases to State Aid to Public Libraries and to Automated Networks and Technology. These are line items 9501 and 9506. State Aid to Public Libraries is down 11% from its high in 2009. Our local library very much needs State Aid to get back at least to its previous levels...and significantly more to meet what our library actually needs. It's very important that this item gets increased.

The Automated Networks and Technology line item goes to the library networks. Each local library pays a membership fee. That line item is down 52% below where it was in 2001! When that money is cut it impacts our local library budget because then the local libraries have to pay more in fees to keep the networks running.

I'd appreciate it very much if Representative \_\_\_\_\_ would actively support these items.

Your name and address

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