

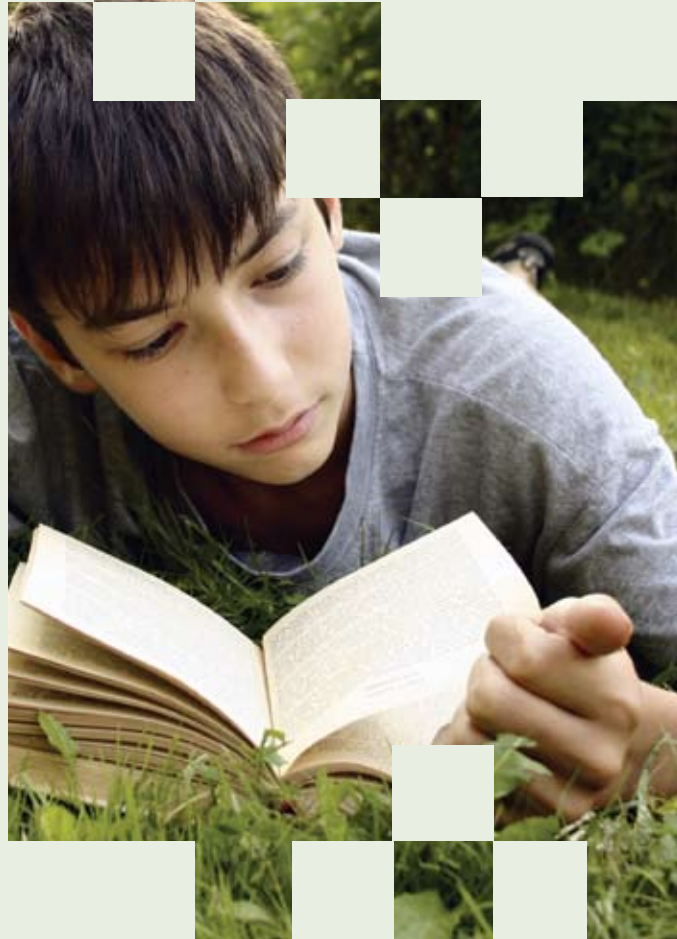
Long Overdue: State Funding for Vermont Public Libraries



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Whether it is the small, cozy Peacham Library or the bustling, high-tech Fletcher Free Library, Vermont's libraries are vital to the health and well-being of our communities. Our public libraries serve all Vermonters – regardless of age, race, or economic status – in many different ways. Today, however, these community-based institutions face severe cutbacks and possible closings. So that our public libraries may continue to serve Vermonters, the Vermont Library Association is requesting state funding from the General Assembly.



*A library is not a luxury
but one of the necessities of life.*

– Henry Ward Beecher

What Is the Value of the Local Public Library?

- ▶ Young children develop language skills through library programs such as story hour and activities for preschoolers.
- ▶ Schoolchildren use the library after school to read, study, or complete homework assignments.
- ▶ Free access to libraries provides a critical resource for people who often cannot afford to buy books or subscriptions to newspapers and magazines.
- ▶ More than 3 million items (books, audiobooks, and DVDs) are accessible to all Vermonters via the statewide Interlibrary Loan network.
- ▶ Libraries are helping close the digital divide by making computers and the Internet available. Patrons use this access to, for example, search for jobs, prepare resumes, or look for educational opportunities.
- ▶ Small businesses rely on libraries for print and electronic resources, wireless access, meeting space, and research services.

- ▶ Libraries provide places where people can meet to discuss ideas and civic issues.
- ▶ Libraries offer a variety of literacy programs such as GED tutoring and testing and computer skills workshops.
- ▶ Bookmobiles serve our rural communities and often deliver books to people who are homebound.

Public Libraries – A Good Investment

The Vermont Department of Libraries estimates that for every \$1 spent by state and local governments on Vermont public libraries, the return to the communities on that investment is \$7.41.



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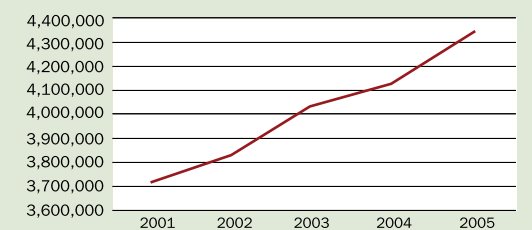
Why Our Public Libraries Need State Funding

LONG OVERDUE

- ▶ In many communities, libraries struggle to keep up with the growing demand for services. Every Vermont public library faces the likelihood that it will not be able to meet future needs with current funding.
- ▶ Vermont lags behind in statewide support for libraries. In 2003, Vermont ranked 19th in the country for the number of library visits per capita, but it ranked 32nd in total per capita library operating income. The national average operating income was \$31.18 per capita as opposed to \$18.23 in Vermont in 2003.
- ▶ The local property tax burden is already too high. Vermont is one of only six states in the country that does not provide either state or county funding to complement local tax support. Almost 73% of the operating funds of Vermont public libraries come from local property taxes. Less than 0.1% come from state or federal sources.
- ▶ Demands for library services are increasing rapidly. In 2005, over 3 million people used Vermont libraries with a total circulation of over 4 million books, magazines, and audiovisual materials. Public library circulation increased 14% between 1998 and 2005, while the number of public library visitors increased 53%.

The Vermont Library Association requests support for an appropriation of \$1.6 million to be administered by the Department of Libraries. This investment will support all 139 libraries that meet Public Library Minimum Standards in an amount equal to 10% of a library's operating budget with a \$1,500 minimum award. This support will allow Vermont's diverse network of libraries to meet strong community demand for their services: to purchase books and media for circulation, to be open to the public on a regular basis, and to keep pace with changes in technology.

Vermont Public Libraries – Total Items Borrowed



Year:	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total items borrowed:	3,715,313	3,739,925	4,019,492	4,133,638	4,345,403
Total program attendance:	192,056	208,783	258,927	273,993	294,380