

# NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2020



COMMITTEE ON  
LIBRARIES AND EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY

CARL E. HEASTIE  
SPEAKER

SEAN M. RYAN  
CHAIR



SEAN M. RYAN  
Assembly District 149

65 Grant Street  
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THE ASSEMBLY  
STATE OF NEW YORK  
ALBANY

CHAIR  
Committee on Libraries and Education  
Technology

COMMITTEES  
Education  
Governmental Employees  
Transportation  
Environmental Conservation  
Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force

December 15, 2020

Honorable Carl E. Heastie  
Speaker of the Assembly  
Legislative Office Building, Room 932  
Albany, New York 12248

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I am pleased to present to you the 2020 Annual Report for the Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries and Education Technology. The work accomplished during the unprecedented 2020 legislative session reflects the commitment of the Committee and myself to ensure libraries and library systems throughout the state can continue to be community hubs providing critical services, educational resources, and access to information for all New Yorkers.

This year, the Assembly Majority and the Committee remained dedicated to increasing resources for libraries throughout New York State. The 2020-21 enacted budget provided \$91.6 million in state aid for libraries and library systems and \$14 million in funding to continue statewide library capital projects. In addition, the Legislature passed crucial legislation to assist our libraries during the COVID-19 pandemic. Chapter 120 of the Laws of 2020 (A.10465 Ryan) extended the statutory project deadline by 12 months for libraries that received library construction grant funding in the 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2019-20 fiscal years and were unable to complete such projects due to the state disaster emergency declared due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee members for their continued contributions to this past year's achievements. Finally, Mr. Speaker, thank you for your leadership and support of our libraries.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean M Ryan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sean Ryan  
Chair, Committee on Libraries and Education  
Technology

**2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

**NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES AND EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY**

**Sean Ryan, Chair**

**Committee Members**

**Majority**

Steven Otis  
Michaëlle C. Solages  
Brian Barnwell  
Inez E. Dickens  
Yuh-Line Niou  
Karen M. McMahon

**Minority**

Robert Smullen, *Ranker*  
Mary Beth Walsh

**Majority Staff**

Maria Volpe-McDermott, Assistant Secretary for Program and Policy  
Benjamin Decker, Associate Counsel  
Kayli McTague, Committee Assistant  
Abigail Mellon, Program and Counsel Executive Secretary

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## I. COMMITTEE JURISDICTION

The Standing Committee on Libraries and Education Technology was created in 1997. It has jurisdiction over legislation affecting public, academic, school and special libraries as well as the administration and funding of libraries and library systems across New York State. The Committee has endeavored to assist libraries in sustaining and upgrading their infrastructure, as well as meeting the challenges of the information age. Libraries have become modern community centers playing an integral part in the education and cultural development of New Yorkers.

New York State is home to a total of 73 library systems: 23 public library systems, nine reference and research library systems, and 40 school library systems. There are 755 public libraries statewide. Six of the 40 largest libraries in the United States are in New York, more than any other state. New York's largest library, the New York Public Library, contains over 10 million volumes and is among the top research institutions in the world. Statewide, over 19 million people utilize New York State's public library systems. From the largest library to the smallest community-based book exchange, all of New York's libraries play a vital role in our communities.

During the 2020 Session, 18 bills were referred to the Libraries and Education Technology Committee. This report provides a detailed examination of the Committee's budgetary and legislative achievements in 2020.

## **II. STATE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS**

New York State libraries work hard to meet the diverse needs of our state. However, public, academic and school libraries need adequate resources and reliable funding sources. The Committee's efforts and commitment to providing libraries with sufficient resources reflects the Assembly's longstanding support for libraries and the educational, economic and cultural roles they play in their communities.

Funding for New York's libraries has been and continues to be a priority for the Assembly Majority. Chapter 917 of the Laws of 1990 established a formula to provide stable funding for libraries and library systems based on the most recent census data.

### **State Aid**

The Legislature provided \$91.6 million in state aid for libraries and library systems.

The Talking Book and Braille Library (TBBL) is a free library service for eligible residents of upstate New York who are unable to use standard print materials due to a visual or physical disability. TBBL serves over 15,000 New Yorkers. The Legislature maintained funding for the Conservation and Preservation Program and the Talking Book and Braille Library at a combined \$693,000.

The Legislature also maintained \$250,000 for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and \$75,000 for the Langston Hughes Community Library.

### **Capital**

The Legislature provided \$14 million in funding to continue statewide library capital projects.

### **III. IMPROVING AND EXPANDING NEW YORK STATE LIBRARIES**

The Committee acted on several important measures this session designed to expand and improve libraries throughout New York State.

**A.10209-A, Kolb; Chapter 156 of the Laws of 2020:** This law allows the Victor Farmington Library to be eligible for financing through the Dormitory Authority (DASNY).

**A.10465, Rules (Ryan); Chapter 120 of the Laws of 2020:** This law extends the statutory project deadline by 12 months for libraries that received library construction grant funds in the 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2019-20 fiscal years and were unable to complete such projects due to the state disaster emergency declared due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **IV. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

### **A. COVID-19 and New York State's Libraries**

The Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries and Educational Technology held a virtual hearing on Thursday, November 19, 2020 on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on New York State's libraries and library systems. Specifically, the Committee sought testimony on the reopening of libraries and the challenges libraries and library systems have faced due to COVID-19, as well as the critical role libraries have played in ensuring digital equity and access to information for all New Yorkers during this unprecedented time.

The Committee heard testimony from the State Education Department, New York Library Association, New York Public Library, Queens Public Library, Brooklyn Public Library, Mid-Hudson Library System, Monroe County Library System, Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, Southern Tier Library System, Ramapo Catskill Library System, Quester III BOCES School Library System, Rochester City School District, Madison-Oneida BOCES School Library System, and Western New York Library Resources Council.

The Committee heard about the enhanced protocols libraries have established to ensure the health and safety of library staff and patrons and the unique ways libraries have transitioned to providing virtual services. The Committee also heard about the future funding needs of our public libraries, the necessity of libraries as digital disparities continue to grow, and the vital support libraries and library systems provide to students, individuals, and communities across New York State.



## **V. OUTLOOK FOR 2021**

For the upcoming legislative session, the Committee will further its efforts to lessen the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on libraries and library systems as they continue to meet the diverse and changing needs of their communities. Now more than ever, the Committee must ensure digital equity and bolster access to technology to enable individuals and families around the state to attend school, go to work, and connect with their communities virtually during these unprecedented times.

In addition, the Committee will continue to advocate for an increase in Aid to Public Libraries and capital funding to ensure our libraries are adequately funded. Since approximately half of New York's public library buildings are 60 or more years old, it is essential to provide libraries with adequate resources.

Finally, the Committee will continue to advance local legislation important to the library community. With an increasingly diverse New York State population, we must provide each library with the flexibility it needs to properly serve the needs of its community.

**APPENDIX A**

**SUMMARY OF ACTION ON ALL BILLS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON  
LIBRARIES AND EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY**

**TOTAL NUMBER OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD: 1**

	<u>ASSEMBLY BILLS</u>	<u>SENATE BILLS</u>	<u>TOTAL BILLS</u>
<b>BILLS REPORTED FAVORABLE TO</b>			
TO CODES	0	0	0
TO JUDICIARY	0	0	0
TO WAYS AND MEANS	1	0	1
TO RULES	0	0	0
TO FLOOR	0	0	0
TOTAL	1	0	1
<b>COMMITTEE ACTION</b>			
HELD FOR CONSIDERATION	0	0	0
DEFEATED	0	0	0
ENACTING CLAUSE STRICKEN	0	0	0
<b>REMAINING IN COMMITTEE</b>	17	1	18
<b>BILLS REFERENCE CHANGED TO:</b>			
<b>Ways and Means 1</b>			
<b>TOTAL</b>	1	0	1