

**State Support of Public Libraries:  
Current Proposal and Invitation to Comment  
December 2007  
Executive Summary**

- The model for State Aid to public libraries that was created with the legislation of 1977 has not worked effectively for years, has not been funded as intended, and has not utilized the funding available to the maximum efficiency.
- Concerns have been raised over the past several years about the equity of services provided by library cooperatives via State Aid support. No mechanism has been in place to assure a statewide benchmark of service to the public as a result of State Aid to Public Libraries.
- The State Librarian, Nancy Robertson, began to discuss these issues on her blog postings. She continued to discuss them when she went to thirteen locations around the state in the spring of 2007 for the State Librarian Town Meetings.
- During this same time frame, the State budget has been in decline. The State Aid line item has been significantly reduced, and staff retirements and/or resignations have caused several library cooperatives to reconsider their existence.
- The State Librarian formed an advisory committee, representing various sizes and locations of public libraries and cooperatives in the state. This committee's charge was to take a close look at state support of public library services and recommend a new model for consideration by the State Librarian to put forth for comment and follow through via the legislation.
- The advisory committee met twice with an outside facilitator and was able to take a close look at what State Aid is currently providing and whether or not it is working, define a guiding principle for envisioning a new model for State Aid funding, list out core services that State Aid should be funding for all libraries, and begin to create benchmarks for the measurement of the success of State Aid funding.
- Discussions over the span of the two advisory committee meetings led to a majority consensus on a model representing changes discussed by the group. That model was taken as the base for further refinement by a subgroup of the committee, who took into consideration all comments and feedback and reported their work to the State Librarian who made a few further refinements and finalized the resulting model. The model and associated descriptive narrative were then distributed back to the committee for comment prior to the posting of all documents on the web for broad comment by all libraries across the state.
- After the comment period is complete, the State Librarian will gather and analyze all input and ultimately the resulting finalized model will be taken forward for action by the legislature.