

## **Michigan Library Community Suffers "a Perfect Storm of Funding Cuts"**

By Lynn Blumenstein Feb 25, 2011

The State of Michigan is the latest to propose significant cuts to library services as a way to deal with a major budget deficit. At the same time, the state's largest public library system, [Detroit Public Library](#) (DPL), announced substantial staff reductions in anticipation of a growing budget shortfall, and the Troy Public Library may have finally lost its battle to survive.

### **Michigan cuts aid to local libraries**

Michigan governor Rick Snyder's proposed FY11/12 [budget](#), which still must pass through the state legislature, proposes \$13.7 million for all library services, including state aid to regional and local libraries and the Library of Michigan. This amounts to a \$2.3 million decrease, or 9.4 percent, but incorporates an additional \$950,000 for the Michigan eLibrary.

Last year state aid to local and regional libraries totaled \$5.75 million, but Snyder has proposed reducing that to \$3.44 million, a 40 percent cut.

"The library community is hemorrhaging money from every angle. Every library in every community will feel the impact of these cuts," Christine Berro, the Michigan Library Association board president, said in a [statement](#).

"This is coupled with the fact that we are facing a perfect storm of funding cuts-every source of funding available to libraries-state aid, [renaissance zone reimbursements](#), tax capture of dedicated library millages, elimination of personal property taxes and federal funds-is being chopped-off at the knees," Berro said. "There isn't much more we can take and be expected to survive."

Michigan Library Association (MLA) executive director Gretchen Couraud told *LJ* that state aid to local libraries (two-thirds going to regional co-ops and one-third to public libraries) has been savaged 76 percent since 2000, and the latest proposal could destroy regional and statewide services "in one fell swoop."

Michigan's 11 regional cooperative [libraries](#) offer staff training, distance learning, and support in the form of group discounts, cataloging, processing, and consultation services.

Berro said that regional library services, interlibrary loan via the MeLCat Michigan eLibrary [catalog](#), and GED test preparation services (MeL Tests and Tutorials), as well as some individual libraries, could be eliminated.

The reduction in local aid could also threaten maintenance of effort qualification for federal funding, Couraud said.

The state budget most likely will be finalized by May 31, said Couraud. Library supporters will begin testifying before the state legislature as early as next week.

### **Detroit PL to implement 20 percent staff reduction**

In related news, as *LJ* earlier [reported](#) as a possibility, DPL has indeed decided to lay off 20 percent of its workforce, or 83 staffers, by March 31. Details are being worked out with union officials, but seniority rules most likely will be applied, as per contract stipulations, DPL spokesperson Atiim Funchess told *LJ*.

A ten percent salary cut had been considered. Instead, however, a furlough schedule is being worked out, Funchess said.

DPL currently faces a \$7.49 million deficit, according to auditors, as of June 30, 2010, said Funchess. The \$14 million figure cited in news reports refers to future projections that DPL is working to avoid.

Funchess also confirmed to *LJ* that DPL is seeking to recover money from a fundraising company that only raised \$100 for the main library renovation project, according to the [Detroit News](#). DPL transferred \$200,000 to the Detroit Library Foundation, a nonprofit it set up in 2008 to raise \$20 million, and hired a prominent fundraiser. The foundation is not active at this time, said Funchess.

### **Troy councilors refuse to consider library funding**

Supporters of Michigan's Troy Public Library had held out some hope that a way would be found to save the library from closing, despite the loss of a critical millage [vote](#) in November. But the library this week [posted](#) on its website that its final day of service would be May 1.

The announcement came as the result of the city council's failure on February 21 to take up a resolution proposed by Councilman Martin Howrylak that would have put the library back on the city's three-year rolling budget, the *Daily Tribune* [reported](#).