

East Lansing Public Library

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Library Funding Crisis

Submitted by [Kristin](#) on Wed, 03/09/2011 - 6:28pm

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How does a newbie get to know the Greater Lansing area? You attend [Ignite Lansing](#), a [Lansing Derby Vixens roller derby bout](#), an [MSU men's hockey](#) game and the fun and enriching programs at the East Lansing Public Library, including a concert by Josh White, Jr., are just a few of the things I have done to get to know the Greater Lansing area. Since I am a Big Ten basketball fan, (men's and women's) I wanted to make it to a basketball game, however, that will have to wait until next season. I have so enjoyed meeting many community members and library patrons. Thank you to everyone who invited me to lunch, dinner and into their homes. Thank you for welcoming to the community!

It was my hope, as the new director of the East Lansing Public Library, that I would not have to do my first blog post on the funding crisis facing Michigan libraries. However, the budget proposed by Governor Snyder, currently sitting in front of our legislators, is bleak for libraries and our patrons. The Governor's budget proposes cutting 40 percent of state aid to libraries. The [Michigan Library Association](#) said, "the perfect storm of budget cuts take libraries back 50 years." The cuts will affect the services that the East Lansing Public Library provides to the community, specifically interlibrary loan and research databases.

Just to give you a little background, the statutorily-required funding to libraries is \$15 million. The Governor's proposal is to cut state aid to libraries to \$3 million. Currently the funding level of \$5 million qualifies the state to receive matching federal grant of \$5 million. This pays for [MeLCat](#), statewide interlibrary loan, and the [Michigan eLibrary \(MeL\), statewide research databases](#) such as [Chilton's Library](#) (car repair), [HeritageQuest Online](#) (genealogy research) and [Learning Express Library](#) (SAT, ACT prep, etc.). Cutting state aid means a cut to, and possibly a loss of, the matching grant, which puts MeLCat and MeL in jeopardy.

The [Michigan Library Association released a response](#) to the proposed 40% cut to state aid to public libraries, and the impact of these cuts to interlibrary loan services and research databases. MLA President Christine Berro, Portage District Library, states, Libraries are the only community that has successfully achieved statewide group purchasing which the Governor has called for — saving the state \$72 million — and that is now at risk. The MeLibrary, MeLCat interlibrary loan and MeL Tests and Tutorials — all resources used for research, education, job seeking and preparation — are in jeopardy. These services are invaluable to students at all levels and across the education spectrum.

Libraries have survived economic tsunamis through the years. Libraries endured through the Great Depression, two World Wars and the technological upheavals of the 1990's and early 2000's. However, these times are different and libraries are not surviving. These magnificent, educational, recreational and equalizing institutions are reducing hours, laying off staff and some are closing their doors ([Troy, MI](#)—closing, [Detroit Public Library](#)—laying off staff and reducing hours, [Flint Public Library](#)—reducing hours, instituting furloughs, East Lansing Public Library—instituted furloughs and reduced staff through attrition), just to name a few. We acknowledge that cuts have to be made and budgets need to be reduced to meet Michigan's current fiscal obligations and to ensure that the Great Lakes state is fiscally healthy for our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. However, because of those future generations we have to make sure that the cuts we make are smart cuts, the right cuts, and that those cuts don't rob our children of the 21st century education that they need to compete in the global marketplace.

I am reminded of the [TV ad](#) that premiered during this year's Super Bowl about Detroit, and I implore you all to stand-up for the East Lansing Public Library and to stand-up for Michigan libraries. [Reach out to your state legislator\(s\)](#) and tell them how much you value the East Lansing Public Library.