

# WASHTENAW COUNTY: Local libraries to lose aid under Snyder's budget cuts proposal

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By David Veselenak, Heritage Media

Schools and local governments aren't the only places where residents may see budget cuts from Gov. Rick Snyder's proposal. Libraries would lose \$2.3 million in state aid if the Republican governor from Ann Arbor's proposal is approved.

Library services would lose 9.4 percent of their budget, bringing it down to \$13.7 million.

"Certainly, I'm disappointed," said Paul McCann, director of the Dexter District Library. "I think we're looking at being funded at 20 percent of state statute (down from 37 percent).

"When you're cutting that down to 20 percent of full funding ... essentially it's gone."

With cuts already happening to libraries, it has left some trying to figure out a way to increase revenue, a difficult task for libraries that don't charge for use.

Susan Wess, director of the Milan Public Library, said Milan began a program last summer where patrons could "adopt" a magazine subscription to continue its delivery. But with more cuts looming, coupled with decreased property tax revenues, Wess is unsure how the library will keep some services.

"We will probably get 11 cents for each individual in our area. What can you get for 11 cents?" she said. "We're not getting a lot."

One of the biggest effects several libraries say the cuts will have on services revolves around sharing of materials. MELCat, the system used to share media between Michigan libraries such as books, DVDs and other materials, will be one of the first items hit if the budget calls for a decrease in funding

Snyder's plan calls for \$950,000 to be set aside for the Michigan eLibrary, but library officials still worry other cuts could effect its services, mean an increase in waiting time for materials or possibly an elimination of the system altogether.

"We greatly appreciate Governor Snyder including funding for the Michigan eLibrary as its own line item in the budget," said Michigan Library Association President Christine Berro, "but, unfortunately, it's just not enough to maintain the service at its current level and the entire system is at risk of collapsing."

McCann said the system is a valuable tool that, if cut or eliminated, would hurt lower-income families and students that rely on library services that may not be able to afford services at home.

"That's a service that is valuable to us, full. It helps students with their homework, it provided business entrepreneurs to help start and maintain business trends," he said. "These are all things that the average citizen may or may not have high-speed Internet in their home. The loss of those will be a great loss."

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