



**serves more
than 1600**

public, academic,
school, and
special libraries

The Massachusetts Library System

Fund: 7000-9401

The Massachusetts Library System (MLS) was founded in 2010 when a budget crisis forced the consolidation of six regional library service providers into a single entity. It serves more than 1,600 public, academic, school, and special libraries statewide and provides a \$7.23 return on investment for every \$1 spent through programs that help libraries to share knowledge, pool resources, and leverage buying power. In addition, MLS provides statewide delivery of interlibrary loan items patrons request through library networks.

Why MLS is Important

MLS provides critical, cost-effective services to libraries statewide. No library has the space or money to meet the needs of all of their residents. Through the interlibrary loan system and other digital resources provided in part by MLS, libraries are able to share resources which gives Massachusetts library patrons access to the over 53.5 million items available in libraries statewide. This in turn saves libraries a total of \$55 million statewide each year.

MLS also provides training, consulting, temporary staffing and more to help libraries and librarians meet the challenges they face today and prepare for the future.

How a Lack of Funding has Affected MLS

State funding to MLS has historically risen an average of 1% annually and not kept pace with rising costs. In FY 2017, due to the previous increase in minimum wage and rising healthcare costs, MLS faced a \$1 million shortfall that forced major reductions:

- School children and adult researchers no longer have access to important digital resources to support digital literacy.
- Residents now see delays for items requested from other libraries. Some libraries no longer receive delivery at all.
- Due to hiring freezes, MLS is unable to provide the hands-on advice and training especially important in small and rural communities.

The new increases to minimum wage will double that shortfall through dramatic growth in our costs for the delivery service, putting this service at risk.

What MLS Would Do with Increased Funding

This year, MLS is focused on funding to restore critical services to libraries and residents and to absorb the costs associated with implementing the new minimum wage that will cause significant increases to costs for the MLS delivery service. In addition, increased funding will allow:

- Strong support to statewide resource sharing that ensures all Massachusetts residents have access to the full range of resources available in Massachusetts and beyond.
- Increased access to digital resources that are critical for school children, college students and other library visitors.
- Increased training and support to libraries on basic library skills and cutting edge topics including improved outreach to libraries in small and rural communities.