

Maine State Library
Testimony – Lori Fisher, State Librarian

131st Maine Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

LD 258 – “An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024, and June 30 2025.”

February 13, 2023

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs; Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Lori Fisher, and I am the Maine State Librarian. I am speaking in support of the Maine State Library’s items in the Biennial Budget, which appears on pages 514 to 519 of Part A of the budget proposal.

Introduction

Established in 1837, the Maine State Library (MSL) is one of the first cultural agencies created by state government, and throughout our long history, we have had the privilege and honor of “Helping People; Making Maine Libraries Stronger; and Transforming Information into Knowledge” (our mission). In 2022 the library experienced a significant change in leadership with the departure of James Ritter (former State Librarian) and Janet McKenney (former Director of Library Development). These roles have recently been filled – most recently I became your State Librarian on December 27, 2022. The MSL staff and I look forward to continuing to serve the people of Maine, and the allocations represented in the proposed FY24-25 budget will allow us to do so.

MSL is made up of three departments: Collection Development and Digital Initiatives; Public and Outreach Services – Research and Innovation; and Library Development.

The budget submitted will enable these core departments to carry out their essential work. The testimony that follows underscores the importance of our work and highlights challenges that are before us.

Administration: Page A-514 (Original Part A Budget Submission)

This fund (General Fund) is created to support the role of the Maine State Librarian and associated administrative costs such as technology, central service center, and other administrative responsibilities. The State Librarian is statutorily responsible for overseeing the operation of the Maine State Library, which includes the three departments previously referenced. Additionally, the Maine State Library is one of four key agencies that partner to support the Maine School and Library Network (MSLN), which delivers high-speed fiber broadband to nearly 900 libraries and schools across Maine. Over 90% of Maine's public libraries receive services through MSLN. All of these libraries have a 1 gigabit fiber connection except for 4 island libraries or libraries in very remote areas.

Blind and Visually Impaired News Access Fund: Page A-515 (Original Part A Budget Submission)

This fund (Special Revenue Fund) receives its revenue from the Maine Public Utilities Commission's portion of the Universal Service Fund. The Maine State Library then administers content subscriptions, most notably Newsline provided by the National Federation for the Blind, to ensure that those Maine citizens who are blind or have visual impairments, can access news services 24/7.

Imagination Library of Maine Program: Page A-515 (Original Part A Budget Submission)

This fund (Special Revenue Fund), established in 2021 through legislation related to Title 27, Libraries, History, Culture and Art, Chapter 1: State Librarian, has the specific purpose of "...promoting and encouraging reading by children of this State and to develop a statewide initiative to provide age-appropriate books to children from birth to 5 years of age at their homes on a monthly basis." We have received \$200,000 for FY22/23 and anticipate adding private funds to this revenue account to exceed a match of those funds over the course of FY23/24 and FY24/25, as outlined in the legislation.

Maine Public Library Fund: Page A-516 (Original Part A Budget Submission)

This fund (Special Revenue Fund), established in 2014, allows Maine state tax filers to voluntarily contribute to the Maine Public Library Fund when they file their annual state taxes. In 2022 over \$50,000 was collected through these incredible voluntary contributions. The funds are used to directly support Maine's public libraries through grants that allow libraries to develop impactful community programs, build collections, pilot innovative initiatives, support professional development for librarians, and much more. Since 2014, approximately \$300,000 has been granted to Maine's public libraries.

Maine Public Library Fund (MPLF) in action:



“One of the BHPs (behavioral health professional) who brings the young man she works with into the library for the Robotics Club, said that he has matured so much in just the few months of coming to the group. She said that he is enjoying the club so much that he is working very hard at concentrating and completing the task at hand and has become so much more social with the other children in the group. She can see (in fact we all do) this positive change and credits the work he is doing with building the robots and the concentration needed to get the job done. His behavior and social skills have improved for the positive and he is thoroughly enjoying the club!” (As reported by the Berwick Public Library Director in their required final grant report.)

Maine State Library Fund: Page A-517 (Original Part A Budget Submission)

This is the Maine State Library's primary operating fund (General Fund and Federal Fund) account that supports the bulk of services delivered by MSL.

The State Library's three core departments are represented through this program.

Collections and Digital Initiatives is responsible for the acquisition, cataloging and care of the library's holdings. This includes over seven linear miles of shelved books, government documents

and periodicals. The vast majority of our permanent collection pertains to Maine – books on Maine people, places, and public policy, books by Maine authors, and a local history and genealogy collection that is the largest of its kind north of Boston. The library also holds a significant collection of historical maps and unique special collections pertaining to the history of our state.

Newspapers are also an important part of our collection. We maintain subscriptions to every current daily and local newspaper published in the state (currently 78 titles) and maintain an archive of millions of pages of historical newspapers in bound volumes and over a thousand reels of microfilmed papers – many of which may not exist anywhere else in any other format.

This department is also primarily responsible for building digital collections and helping to maintain access to the state library's digital platforms. I'll talk more about those services in a moment.

The State Library's Public and Outreach Services department serves Maine citizens through a public/circulating library. The primary purpose of our public operation is to provide services to Maine citizens seeking access to our collections, research and reference services and public computing support. The public also attends special programs hosted by MSL.

When we resided in the Cultural Building, we were typically open 50 hours per week, and in a traditional year served approximately 75,000 visitors. We remained open to the public throughout the pandemic (aside from the time needed to move), providing virtual, curbside, and eventually onsite services and direct lending. At this time we are open 40 hours per week and staff two facilities: one for public services at 242 State Street, and one for collections storage, van delivery, and inter-library loan services in leased space in Winthrop. MSL continues to be a destination for people all over the state and the nation.

A very important component to our public services is under the auspice of "Outreach Services." This includes two very unique programs – Talking Books Plus and Books by Mail programs. The former (Talking Books), lends audio books provided by the National Library Service via the Library of Congress to thousands of eligible Maine Citizens. The Books by Mail program literally mails books to citizens that are homebound and/or in communities that are not served by a public library.

Our Library Development department receives its primary funding directly from the Institute of Museum and Library Services through the Library Services and Technology Act's *Grants to States* program, which is the only federal program exclusive to state library agencies across the nation (for Federal Fiscal Year 2023, MSL will receive \$1.5 million). The department is made up of a team of Specialists in key areas (e.g., Technology, STEM, Workforce Development, Small/Rural Libraries, etc.) who are responsible for working with Maine libraries to ensure they have the tools they need, as well as needed consultation to make them stronger organizations. Additionally, this department supports the growth of online professional development and learning resources through subscriptions available in the Digital Maine Library.

A cornerstone of the work Library Development Specialists do is to support the continuing education needs of Maine's library workforce - the majority of whom do not hold a degree in Library Science. This work is accomplished through a combination of in-person workshops, virtual and hybrid sessions, asynchronous online courses, site visits, and one-on-one consultations. Consultations average 216 per month (about 2,600 over the last two years). Virtual programming begun in response to the pandemic proved successful in connecting with Maine's more rural and remote libraries that had not often participated in in-person training programs (primarily because of travel time and costs). Library Development is broadening its virtual and hybrid offerings to continue to reach these libraries. For example, MSL offers a 3-tiered Voluntary Public Librarian Certification (VPLC) program which includes over 500 asynchronous courses. Through this and other self-directed learning, 169 librarians have completed 688 courses. A total of 23 VPLC certificates were issued in the last year.

Turnover among library directors has been over 50% in the last four years which impacts the services these libraries are able to offer their communities. To mitigate this trend and ensure a strong library workforce, Library Development instituted an intensive intervention approach for directors in the position 3 years or less. After a hiatus during the Pandemic, this past fall 47 new directors attended a by-invitation in-person orientation and 36 are currently participating in monthly peer learning circles. Library Development will continue this approach throughout FY24/25.

Suffice it to say, all three core departments of the Maine State Library have thrived over the past year, and we look forward to doing so in the years to come – this fund in the budget has and will continue to support all these important services.

Specific initiatives where we are asking for increased funding in this biennium budget:

- **Page A-517: \$250,000 each year for Bendable Maine & Digital Maine**

According to Title 27 § 39, MSL purchases digital learning content for use free of charge by all residents of the state. Resident access content virtually through Maine's 255 public libraries as well as all K-12 libraries and academic libraries including University of Maine System, and Bates, Bowdoin, and Colby Colleges. Demand for digital materials increased in response to the pandemic and anticipated to continue to grow. In particular, the launch of Bendable Maine in August 2022 has highlighted two main areas of need: workforce development and community engagement. MSL partnered with the Maine Department of Labor to acquire and provide content in Career Centers across the state, some of which are now in libraries. For more statistics on Bendable (August 2022 – January 2023) please see the last page of this testimony.

- **Page A-517: \$45,000 each year for increased rate charged for van delivery service across the state.** In accordance with Title 27 § 39, MSL manages a van delivery service so that residents of the State have access to over 1.5 million physical materials through the State's library network. The last biennium saw a significant rate increase for this service due to labor shortages, supply chain challenges, and increased diesel costs. In FY 22 MSL covered this \$44,000 in extra cost with existing funds from its operating budget. Since that approach is not sustainable, we are asking for the increase in cost to be covered by additional funds. MSL will explore what other options are available to provide this type of statewide service, and anticipates going out for another RFP before the next biennium.

- **Page A-517: \$50,000 in FY23/24 and \$15,000 in FY24/25 to adjust for increased costs of collections purchases.** MSL is required to submit a five-year plan to the Institute of Museum and Library Services to receive annual federal funding. The 2023-2027 plan focuses on increasing access to materials for Maine residents who are visually impaired, have a disability, and/or reside in an underserved community. These materials are provided both digitally and through mail delivery services to address challenges for residents living in remote areas of the state. The collections impacted by this include the library's Large Print program and Talking Books Plus program, which

are both available statewide. This funding will specifically target our Large Print collection, bringing it up to date with increased titles/genres available to Maine residents who depend on library services for reading and informational materials.

- **Page A-518: \$3,587 in each year for statewide insurance coverage.** This increase was provided to us by the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Division of Risk Management.
- **Page A-518: \$26,009 in FY23/24 and \$29,058 in FY 24/25 for the department's share of the Financial and Human Resources Service Center.** These figure were provided to us by the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, and are due to negotiated and benefit changes to Personal Services, as well as increases in operational costs.
- **Page A-518: \$55,000 in FY23/24 to replace 6 obsolete microfilm machines (one time funding).** The Office of Information Technology determined in 2022 that they can no longer support the library's existing equipment due to compatibility issues with Windows 10. The six machines to be replaced are 10 years old and are used by the public to access newspapers and government documents.
- **Page A-518: \$300,000 in FY23/24 to replace the integrated library system for the URSUS libraries.** Title 27 § 39 requires the State Library to promote resource sharing among Maine's libraries. URSUS is an integrated library system (ILS) which brings together seven University of Maine System libraries and combines them with the collections of MSL, Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library, Bangor Public Library, and Portland Public Library. This provides Maine residents access to over 3 million unique titles. The current system software is 25 years old, and is critical to library infrastructure and resource sharing, supporting all collective library functions such as circulation, processing overdue materials, cataloging, serials management, acquisitions, and statistical reporting. The URSUS directors actively engaged in an RFP process over the past year to identify potential vendor replacement systems and respective costs. The request for \$300,000 in this initiative reflects a one-time cost for system implementation, migration from the current ILS, and training for staff. The cost can be roughly divided between the University of Maine Libraries (\$184,000) and Maine public libraries (\$116,000).

Statewide Library Information System Fund: Page A-519 (Original Part A Budget Submission)

This fund (General Fund) provides support to both the Maine State Library's Digital Repository and the Digital Maine Library. All three of the Maine State Library's departments have a role in managing the platforms and content that the funds in this program support. Examples include digital newspapers such as the Wall Street Journal; car repair information from Chiltons, genealogical information and documents from Ancestry, job-ready classes through Learning Express, and foreign language learning modules through Pronunciator.

We have brought all of these resources together through the DigitalMaine Library (www.digitalmaine.org) online portal where any Mainer can access this licensed content through geoauthentication (verifying by IP address that they are located in Maine) or by logging-in using their library card number.

Some of our most important and sought-after digital content pertains to the rich history of our state. Through our DigitalMaine Repository (www.digitalmaine.com), the Maine State Library has collaborated with the Maine State Archives and the Maine Law and Legislative Reference Library to build online collections that provide transparency in government and offer insight into how public policy has evolved over time.

We have also partnered with over 60 libraries, museums, and historical societies around Maine and over two-dozen other organizations ranging from churches, trade groups, fraternal organizations, municipal governments, public policy groups and arts organizations to provide access to community-specific collections ranging from local history books, town reports, historical newspapers, and a variety of other source materials for people with an interest in learning more about the past.

To facilitate this work, we've invested in scanning technology that we allow collecting institutions to use as no charge to facilitate digitization of their Maine-related holdings. During the renovation, our two large book scanning units were moved to a small scan lab we set-up on the first floor of the Cross Office Building in the space that was once occupied by OPEGA (Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability). We would welcome the opportunity to give you a tour if that would be of interest.

Last month, as we marked the 10-year anniversary of the launch of this service, the 230,000th digital item was added to the system and the content download count surpassed 4.25 million.

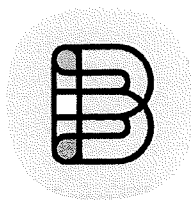
Challenges

While the Maine State Library recognizes the importance of fiscal prudence given the uncertainty of economic conditions ahead of us, the major challenge we face in the new biennium is completion of the Cultural Building renovation and moving all of our collections and staff back into that space in 2024/2025. We are very aware of how this project, which started with HVAC replacement and expanded to asbestos removal and an entire gutting of the facility, has grown into a major capital renovation that was not budgeted for. Completing the renovation, including ADA accessibility to the bathrooms throughout the building, is critical over the next 12 months. MSL staff appreciates the support of the Committees regarding our requests in the supplemental budget for high density shelving and space planning/furniture for the newly renovated building. We have over 20 years of assessments and studies on our space in the Cultural Building that highlight the space constraints we face given our mission and statutory mandates. Given the high cost of moving all of our collections and staff out of and back into the space for this unplanned renovation, now is the time to make efficient and effective adjustments to the MSL floorplan within the building while it is empty in order to maximize collections space and address the public's information needs for the 21st century. Moving back into the Cultural Building in 2024/2025 will be a top priority for us that will be balanced with all of the other statewide and collaborative services outlined previously in my testimony.

Thank you for your time today. I'd be happy to answer any questions the Committee members may have.

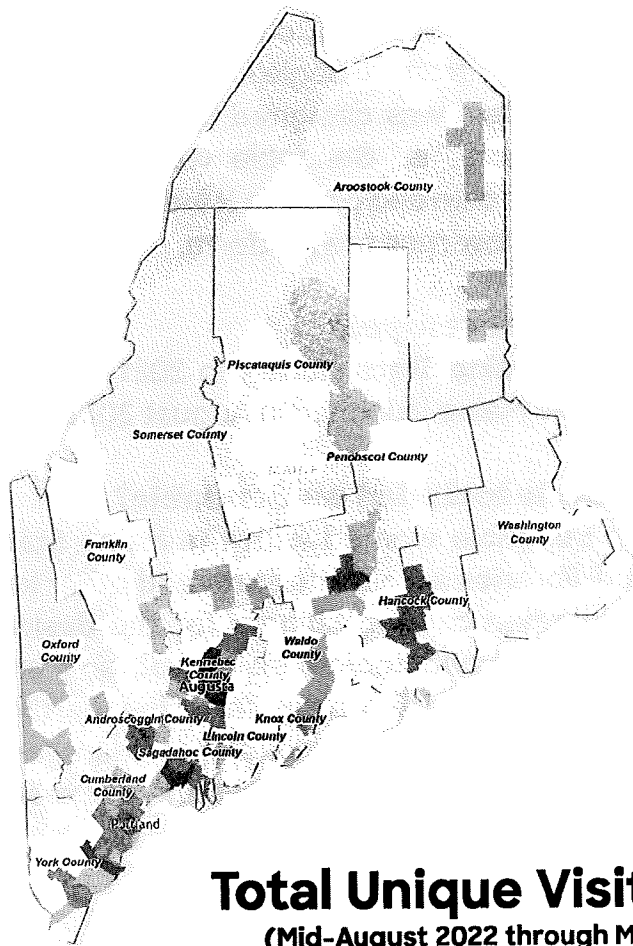
Respectfully,

Lori Fisher,



Bendable Maine

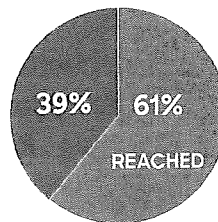
Stats & facts of maine.bendable.com



Number of Accounts by Zip Code:

- > 25-37
- > 14-25
- > 9-14
- > 4-9
- 1-4

Percent of zip codes reached to date:



Total Unique Visitors: 12,289
(Mid-August 2022 through Mid-January 2023)

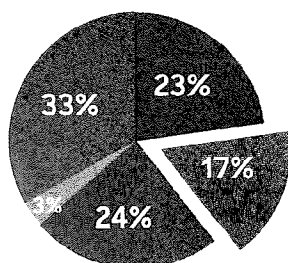
Top Five Community Collections

- Healthy life through farming
- Using picture books to be your child's first teacher
- Finding a career within your passion
- Learning, programming and creating together in makerspaces
- Exploring Baxter State Park

Top Five Career Collections

- Tech Support Specialist
- Medical Administration
- Aquaculture
- Production Technician
- Public Sector

Resources Engagement and Paths to Learning



- Board
- Explore
- Home
- My Stuff
- Untrackable

Bendable 1:01s: Instructional Video Series for Beginners



Local Interest
Bendable 101: Where Should You Begin?

Follow along with this one-minute video to see how to sign up for Bendable Maine, along with how to keep track of your favorite learning content and find new

More details
Video



Local Interest
Bendable 101: Discovering Content

In this one-minute video, see how to navigate Bendable Maine's 'Discover' page to find learning content that's just right for you.

More details
Video

Local Resource Providers

Statewide:

DOL Career Centers
MaineCat
National Digital Equity Center
6 Branches across 8 counties
Maine Adult Education
32 Branches across 12 counties

Androscoggin

The Root Cellar
Maine Adult Education (5 branches)

Aroostook

National Digital Equity Center (1 branch)
Maine Adult Education (2 branches)

Hancock

ArtWaves
Haystack Mountain School of Craft
National Digital Equity Center (5 branches)
Maine Adult Education (2 branches)
The Abbe Museum

Knox

The Farmer's Lyceum
Maine Adult Education (2 branches)

Penobscot

Ebenezer Farm Fitness
Bangor Makerspace
National Digital Equity Center (1 branch)
Maine Adult Education (1 branch)
University of Maine Cooperative Extension

Piscataquis

Community Fitness
Maine Adult Education (1 branch)

Sagadahoc

Healthy Living For ME
National Digital Equity Center (1 branch)
Now You're Cooking
Maine Adult Education (3 branches)
Healthy Living For ME
Maine Adult Education (1 branch)

Waldo

National Digital Equity Center (2 branches)
Maine Adult Education (1 branch)

Washington

Maine Outdoor School
National Digital Equity Center (1 branch)

York

National Digital Equity Center (3 branches)
Maine Adult Education (8 branches)

Cumberland

Common Threads
Factory 3 Makerspace
Healthy Living For ME
Maine Adult Education (2 branches)
Maine Audubon
Maine Humanities Council
National Digital Equity Center (2 branches)
Portland Conservatory of Music
Portland Museum of Art
University of Southern Maine

Kennebec

Healthy Living For ME
Learn with MOOSE!
Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife
Maine State Museum
MDF - Maine Downtown Center
Maine Adult Education (4 branches)

National Resource Providers



About Bendable Maine

Who is behind Bendable?

Bendable was developed by the Drucker Institute, a nonprofit social enterprise. Bendable first launched in June 2020 in South Bend, Indiana, in partnership with the St. Joseph County Public Library and with philanthropic funding from Google's and Walmart's corporate foundations. The system was designed by IDEO. In late 2022, the Institute team that created Bendable was given the opportunity to spin it out on their own and operate it independently. Their company, Bendable Labs, now runs the platform.

How was Bendable Maine developed?

Bendable partnered with the Maine State Library in 2021 to bring Bendable to Mainers. Bendable Maine launched in August 2022.

How do you choose what is included on Bendable?

The team that developed Bendable worked with the Maine State Library, its network of local libraries across the state and other key stakeholders to curate a learning catalog tailored for the desires and needs of Mainers. We balanced topics, skill level, age and modality so that you are always one click away from the learning you need. We've included high-quality national providers and trusted local providers so that community-based, in-person choices are highlighted alongside online offerings.

Who exactly is Bendable for?

Much of the content on Bendable is geared for working adults, but it is truly a "lifelong" learning system. Anyone from elementary school through retirement age should be able to find interesting things to learn.

Does Bendable cost money?

Because Bendable is being offered through the public library, the vast majority of learning resources featured on the system are free to local residents. When there is a cost, it's clearly indicated.

What is Bendable's Privacy Policy?

Bendable is compliant with the California Privacy Rights Act (CPRA) and the European Union's GDPR.

maine.bendable.com



Bendable 1:01s Video Series

