



## Shout it out for libraries

As the recession bites ever deeper into state and municipal budgets, many libraries are being forced to reduce hours, cut staff, or close. In late summer, Seattle Public Library shut all of its locations, including its website, for seven days to save money. Libraries have closed in Indiana, New York, and Ohio. Giant library systems in Denver, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., are under siege.

However, there are glimmers of hope on the darkened landscape! The New York Public Library successfully used an online fundraising and advocacy [campaign](#) to fight the city's plan to slash its municipal support by \$28 million. Their efforts won back \$23 million in library funding.

In response to the looming budget crisis in Illinois, the General Assembly passed a budget that reduced state support to libraries by 50% (\$5 million). Secretary of State Jesse White (my new hero!) reallocated federal money from the Library Services and Technology Act grants to restore some of the funds. The reallocation reduced the cuts to 16.5% for regional library systems, 16% for public libraries, and 3% for school libraries. For Alliance, it meant a \$325,000 drop in funding. However, the good news is the library community came together using [www.saveillinoislibraries.com](http://www.saveillinoislibraries.com) to inundate Illinois legislators with our story. We are still waiting to see the result of our labor, but I am sure that it will be good!

Key to these efforts were:

- A clear and simple message. In New York, the message was “Keep your library open;” in Illinois, the message is “Restore library funding.” In both cases, we are saying “We need **your** help!”
- Many voices to send the message. In New York, it was a celebrity-studded YouTube [video](#). In Illinois, the community asked legislators to pledge their support. There is power in a crowd of like-minded folks!
- A wide variety of communication tools. From the face-to-face meetings to emails, from Facebook to Twitter, we used every communication network available! Everyone chose their own channel.
- Campaigns galvanizing support for all types of libraries. More than 30,000 New York residents contacted their representatives, and in Illinois, more than 3,500 messages were sent to legislators.

In Libraryland, we need to have the courage of our convictions. It may not be our “comfort zone,” but across the nation, our very survival depends upon public and political support. We know the public loves us; we just need to convey our support to the decision makers! We need to shout it out for libraries!

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