



Impact of LSTA Funding in Virginia

The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), administered by the Institute for Museum and Library Services, provides critically important federal funding in support of our nation's libraries. The LSTA budget currently directs \$155 million to libraries through the Grants to States program and \$27 million to competitive discretionary grants to advance research, innovation, professional development, and continuing education in the library field.

Through the Grants to States program, the state library agency in each U.S. state and territory receives funding allocated under a population-based formula. State libraries use this funding for statewide library services and activities that each state identifies as the most important to address their state's educational, economic, civic, and demographic needs. Government agencies, not-for-profit organizations, colleges and universities, library consortia, and library associations in every state are also able to apply for LSTA's discretionary grants through the National Leadership and the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Programs.

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Virginia receives \$3.7 million annually in LSTA funding, which is used to support the Commonwealth's public libraries, statewide library services, and a wide array of information resources that benefit all Virginians. Reduction or loss of this funding would have a devastating impact on programs and services that Virginians rely on. If LSTA funds were to be eliminated:

- **Find It Virginia:** Virginians would lose access to *Find It Virginia*, a heavily used web portal that offers 24/7 access to reliable information to the public at home, work, school, and in their local library. LSTA covers the cost of *Find It Virginia's* licensed content (newspapers; magazines; encyclopedias; e-books; business, health, and wellness information; employment resources; homework help, and more), which is available to all free of charge. While Virginians of all ages use *Find It Virginia*, it is an indispensable resource for teachers and students from elementary through high school.
- **Early Learning, Summer Reading, and STEM:** Most early literacy activities, children's summer and winter reading programs, and educational support for STEM learning that Virginia public libraries currently offer would come to an end. In 2016, 131,448 children, 19,436 teens and 23,232 adults participated in summer reading programs and 16,693 pre-school children participated in the winter reading program. An outside study of the summer reading program has shown that young Virginians who participated in this program in their local library performed better academically than their nonparticipating peers, outperforming them on tests across all measures and grades.

- **Library Websites and Discovery Systems:** Technology support that enables small to medium-sized public libraries to offer online access to their library resources would end. Smaller libraries, especially in rural or financially challenged areas of Virginia, do not have the technical expertise or the funding to maintain a basic website or to offer their users access to their holdings through an online catalog. Without the support that LSTA provides, these libraries will have diminished capacity to meet their community's information needs. Communities cannot thrive without strong, technologically connected libraries.
- **Training:** Public library staff would no longer have the opportunity to participate in online and in-person training that is essential for them to develop and maintain 21st century work skills and develop new services, especially in areas such as technology and workforce assistance. Training for library trustees and directors, so critical to ensure that library leaders stay abreast of new trends in libraries and have the knowledge they need to align their services to community needs, would also be severely curtailed.
- **Access to Virginia's Documentary History:** Public access to millions of unique historical documents and images that contain the stories and experiences of Virginians of all walks of life across more than 400 years of history would be in jeopardy. LSTA funding supports most of the technological infrastructure and staff work that allows 4.5 million users each year to access these unique collections through the main Library of Virginia website and its companion digital collections site, Virginia Memory. Access to 100 digital collections and nearly 12 million images would be at risk. Very few, if any, new collections would be added to these sites in future if this essential infrastructure were lost, preventing the public from benefitting from these unique historical resources. The Library of Virginia's social media initiatives and public programming that encourages Virginians to engage with the past and make it relevant to our collective future would no longer be supported.
- **Access to government information:** Online public access to state government information in electronic format would be seriously hampered. The technology infrastructure that supports the transfer, management, processing, and access to the electronic records of Virginia government would be at grave risk should LSTA funding disappear. Online access to the electronic records of Governor Tim Kaine's administration and similar collections that make government transparent to citizens would be impossible to maintain without this necessary infrastructure. LSTA funds also support Virginia's partnership with the Internet Archive, whose web-archiving tool Archive-It captures and saves a myriad of Virginia government websites and enables the state archives to preserve that information as part of the permanent historical record.

- **Document Bank:** Document Bank of Virginia (DBVa), the Library of Virginia's initiative to get original documents into classrooms, would be discontinued. Using primary sources, DBVa Bank assists teachers in making history relevant to students while helping them learn and understand state standards. DBVa will teach students to be critical thinkers as they analyze the original documents and draw their own conclusions about Virginia's past.
- **E-Rate Discounts:** Funding that enables libraries to obtain the support they need to participate in the federal E-Rate Program would disappear. Without this assistance, most libraries would have difficulty with the complex application process and would lose E-Rate's educational discounts on telecommunications and internet costs. The loss of affordable internet and telecommunications services would hamper library users who rely on public libraries for their internet access to apply for jobs, take courses, and improve their lives.
- **National Leadership Grants:** Without the National Leadership Grants for Libraries (NLG) funded through LSTA, Virginia libraries, colleges, universities, and consortial organizations would lose a critical and unique source of funding for projects that address significant challenges and opportunities facing the library and archival fields. The development of new tools, research findings, models, services, practices, or alliances that could be replicated and thereby strengthen libraries across the country would be significantly hampered.
- **Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Grants:** The Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program (LB21) supports professional development, graduate education, and continuing education to help libraries and archives develop a diverse workforce of librarians to better meet the changing learning and information needs of the American public. There is no other funding source for these transformational grants, made possible through the vision and leadership of former First Lady Laura Bush.

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The LSTA appropriation represents a minute fraction of the federal budget, yet the return on investment is substantial. While there is not an ROI study for funds spent on libraries in Virginia, studies from Wisconsin and Minnesota clearly show that investing in public libraries provides a substantial return on investment. The economic return to taxpayers in Wisconsin is \$4.06 per dollar of taxpayer support. The ROI is calculated by dividing the economic contribution of public libraries per capita (\$134.16) by the public tax support per capita (\$33.07). This return per dollar of taxpayer funds comes back to taxpayers in the form of the value of public library services and the direct economic contribution of public libraries to the state economy. Minnesota estimates a Return on Investment at \$4.62 for every taxpayer \$1 generated in support of Minnesota's public libraries.

Reference: [The Economic Contribution of Wisconsin Public Libraries to the Economy of Wisconsin; Minnesota Public Libraries' Return on Investment](http://melsa.org/melsa/assets/File/Library_final.pdf) (http://melsa.org/melsa/assets/File/Library_final.pdf)