

Ensuring your right to read



Freedom from censorship

Librarians find themselves on the front line of book challenges and disruptions centered mainly around LGBTQ+ and race themed books and programs. Since 2021 book challenges and disruptions have more than quadrupled in the Commonwealth. While we recognize the right to challenge, we're also working to build understanding and ensuring that everyone can see themselves reflected in our collections and services.

Digital equity through Networks

Access to reliable internet is an issue of economic, educational, and social equity. The MBLC provides grants to library Networks to make internet and community Wi-Fi access affordable. This is an essential service for the estimated four-in-ten adults with lower incomes who do not have home broadband. (2) With libraries hosting 7,200 internet sessions on library computers daily and lending out laptops, tablets and hotspots, we're working together to make sure reliable internet is available for all.

Budget line 7000-9506 is a priority.

Accessibility for all

With more than 780,000 people** with disabilities living in Massachusetts, expanding access to library services is a priority. Whether it's a newspaper, a website, the new best seller in large print, or simply a text or email, the talking book libraries at Perkins and Worcester are working to ensure that everyone can read what they want, when they want.

Librarians across the state have been trained to increase accessibility for residents who are visually impaired and for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Perkins (budget line 7000-9406) and Worcester (budget line 7000-9402) are priorities.



Cybersecurity

Networks are very aware of and are preparing against cyberattacks, especially since patron privacy (protected by Mass General Law) is integral to public library service. The online technical support Networks provide to libraries makes daily library transactions, like checking out a book, possible. A cyberattack on one of the Networks could shut down library services for an entire region of the state.

Budget line 7000-9506 is a priority.

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Massachusetts Libraries
BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS

Unfair eBook pricing and practices

Exorbitant eBook pricing and restrictive publisher licensing rules make it difficult to keep up with demand. (1) *Residents wait on average more than a month for an eBook.

Here's an example:

Lessons in Chemistry: A Novel (9780385547376) by Bonnie Garmus	
LIBRARY PRICING for the eBook \$55.00	CONSUMER PRICING for eBook \$14.99
RESTRICTIONS on library eBook: License expires after 24 months.	RESTRICTIONS on consumer eBook: Ownership does not expire.
LIBRARY PRICING for eAudio \$95.00	CONSUMER PRICING for eAudio \$24.99
RESTRICTIONS on library eAudio: License expires after 12 months.	RESTRICTIONS on eAudio: License does not expire.

Budget line 7000-9506 is a priority.



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1. <https://www.readersfirst.org/publisher-price-watch>
2. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/06/22/digital-divide-persists-even-as-americans-with-lower-incomes-make-gains-in-tech-adoption/>
*Wait times are based on a 90 day report provided by OverDrive and vary by Network but all are more than 30 days.
**From the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission fact sheet



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Line Item Number	Line Name	FY2022 Budget	FY2023 Budget	FY2024 Request	Increase Over FY2023
7000-9101	<i>Board of Library Commissioners</i>	\$1,702,272*	\$1,731,586	\$1,904,745	\$173,159
7000-9401	<i>Regional Libraries Local Aid</i>	\$13,516,600	\$14,516,000	\$15,967,600	\$1,451,600
** 7000-9402	<i>Talking Book Program Worcester</i>	\$496,732	\$521,569	\$678,040	\$156,471
** 7000-9406	<i>Talking Book Program (Perkins) Watertown</i>	\$2,828,147	\$2,969,554	\$3,860,420	\$890,866
7000-9501	<i>State Aid to Public Libraries</i>	\$13,000,000	\$16,000,000	\$17,600,000	\$1,600,000
** 7000-9506	<i>Technology & Automated Resource - Sharing</i>	\$4,518,373	\$4,744,293	\$6,167,581	\$1,423,288
7000-9508	<i>Center for the Book</i>	\$300,000	\$400,000	\$440,000	\$40,000
		\$36,361,524,	\$40,883,002	\$46,618,385	\$5,735,383



* includes \$75,000 earmark on 9101
** Funding priorities

