

The Michigan Library Association supports funding of \$2.1 million for library services to the Blind and Physically Handicapped, as a part of the PLFIG funding reform program.

A seventh grade student from Marquette, a writer from Detroit, an artist from Alpena, a retiree from Grand Rapids ... these are just a few of the Michigan residents who receive reading materials and information from the network of Michigan Libraries for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

Mary Wurtzel, Past Chair of the Library of Michigan's network's Consumer Involvement Committee says, "The most important thing the Subregional Library provides is the person to person contact that makes sure this service meets the needs of each individual user".

Current Services

The Library of Michigan SBPH, the Wayne Regional LBPH and 11 sub-regional libraries provide

- large print books,
- magazines,
- playback equipment
- Braille books,
- descriptive videos,
- matched books and tapes –
- provide information, and references services
- access, and training for its users to a growing list of adaptive technologies including
 - vision aids
 - speech synthesizers,
 - screen readers, and
 - screen magnification software.

to any Michigan resident who is unable to read standard print materials because of a physical disability.

Statewide in 2001 these libraries provided over 800,000 items to close to readers. These users were:

- Blind or visually impaired
- Physically disabled
- Reading disabled due to an organic dysfunction
- students,
- working people,
- retirees
- Seniors.

In Michigan approximately 1.4 percent of the population or 139,138 people could potentially qualify for the specific services defined by the National Library Service (NLS) for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. The Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns reports a much larger number of Michigan residents who have "handicapping conditions". These individuals are also potential and currently un-served users of these library services.

Subregional Libraries

The primary delivery point for services to this special population is the Regional or Sub-regional Library Network. With the exception of the Library of Michigan Regional, these libraries are supported with a combination of state, and local funds. Local funding varies greatly but is often in the form of building space, staffing and donations from Lions and other service organizations.

The National Library Service provides materials and playback equipment but no financial support.

This level of funding leaves many current National Library Service standards unmet and users underserved. The federal LSCA program has been replaced by Library Services and Technology Act and funding from this source has been discontinued.

The Michigan Library Association supports an increase of state aid to the Library of Michigan and Wayne Regional libraries and the Subregional Network to \$ 2.1 million dollars.

This increase would enable the Michigan's regional and subregional libraries to:

- provide equitable access to all users statewide
- reach currently un-served potential users
- purchase and distribute additional materials of interest to this user population and not supplied by the Library of Congress

Michigan Library Association
Public Policy Committee
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