

# SECTION II

**Findings from the State Library Agency  
Chief Officers' Qualitative Questionnaire**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**M**uch of the news in 2008, particularly at the end of the year, focused on the suffering economy—including home foreclosures, rising jobless rates and growing budget deficits at all levels of government. Public libraries have been affected by the recession both as a unique location for connecting residents with resources and information when residents are most challenged economically, and as a public institution largely dependent on property taxes and other forms of local revenue.

In light of these trends, several of the questions in the December 2008–2009 qualitative questionnaire to the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) focused on state and local funding for public libraries. Additional contacts were made in January and May to gather and clarify funding data. More than half (53 percent) of the state library agencies that provide state funding to public libraries report declines in that funding in FY2009. These cuts compound decreases or flat state funding for public libraries between FY2007 and FY2008 reported by a majority of states.

The December questionnaire also asked about connectivity initiatives, e-government, library staff certification requirements and resources available for library trustees. Key findings from this questionnaire include:

- The most significant factor affecting local and state funding for public libraries in 2008 is state budget deficits, followed closely by reduced property tax revenue;
- While most states still offer paper options for government services, 30 percent of states report that applicants for state government jobs are required to apply online, and about 13 percent of states require application for unemployment benefits be filed online;
- About half of states have certification requirements for public library staff; and
- About 85 percent of state libraries provide a handbook or manual to educate public library trustees about their obligations and liabilities.

## METHODOLOGY

The COSLA questionnaire (Appendix B) intended to elucidate and elaborate on other findings from 2007–2008.<sup>1</sup> Specific areas queried in 2008–2009 were:

- **Budget and funding:** State libraries were asked whether state and overall funding for public libraries had increased, decreased or stayed the same. They also were asked about the percentage of increases and decreases and what the most important factors were affecting state financial support. States were asked if any funding cuts were commensurate with decreases in funding for other public agencies and if states had enacted caps on property taxes.
- **Connectivity and e-government:** State libraries were asked about state e-government services and if they had any state broadband initiatives planned or underway.
- **Library staff and trustees:** State libraries were asked about certification requirements for public library staff, barriers to improving library staff technology skills and state resources available to public library trustees.

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1. *Libraries Connect Communities: Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study 2007–2008*. [www.ala.org/plinternetfunding](http://www.ala.org/plinternetfunding).

The questionnaire was made available via a Web survey hosted by Survey Monkey. COSLA members were e-mailed on December 2, 2008, and asked to complete the questionnaire. Ninety percent of states and the District of Columbia (46 of 51) responded. Duplicate responses were removed, and only those answers attributed to each state's chief officer were used for the results.

COSLA members were contacted again in January 2009 to review and confirm the changes in state funding for public libraries that had been reported in the past two years and to report the size of any mid-year declines in state funding for public libraries. Thirty-one state libraries responded, and corrections and additions were made as needed. Figure D3 reflects changes to FY2009 budgets as compared with FY2008.

A second questionnaire was sent in May 2009 (Appendix C) asking COSLA members an additional question to clarify year-to-year funding changes and about any changes to the overall state library budget. Thirty-three state libraries (66 percent) completed the questionnaire.

## FINDINGS

### State Funding for Public Libraries

In the 2007–2008 *Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study*, the majority of state libraries (64.4 percent) reported level or modest (1–4 percent) increases in state funding for public libraries in FY2007 compared with the previous fiscal year.<sup>2</sup> This year's questionnaire asked again about year-to-year change, this time for FY2008 compared with FY2007.

**Figure D1: Changes in State Funding, 2008**

Census Region	Decreased = 12				No Change = 18	No State Aid = 5	Increased = 11				Total
	1–2%	3–4%	5–10%	11%+	No Change	No State Aid	1–2%	3–4%	5–10%	11%+	
Midwest	1	0	0	1	5	1	0	1	0	2	13
Northeast	0	1	0	0	3	2	1	1	0	1	9
South	1	2	2	1	4	1	0	1	0	2	15
West	0	0	1	2	6	1	0	0	0	2	12
<b>Total</b>	2	3	3	4	18	5	1	3	0	7	46

While not surprising, the year-to-year change in state funding for public libraries reported by state libraries is of concern (Figure D1). The number of responding states that report decreased state funding for public libraries from FY2008 (12 states) tripled when compared with those reporting funding decreases from FY2007 (four states). Southern states are particularly affected (six states reporting decreased funding compared with two states last year). Five states report that they do not provide state aid to public libraries.

These downward trends in funding for public libraries echo data reported by local public library systems referenced earlier in this report (see the Public Library Funding Landscape and Figures C38 and C39). Fewer state libraries report funding increases, and more state libraries report decreases in FY2008 and FY2009. Last year 53 percent of responding state libraries reported some increase in state funding for public libraries, compared with 24 percent this year.

State libraries cite that state budget deficits are the most significant factor affecting local and state funding in FY2008, followed closely by reduced property tax revenue and reduced consumer spending and

2. Ibid. Page 120. NOTE: The 2007–2008 report inaccurately stated (1–2 percent). This information is corrected here.

accompanying sales tax revenue. A majority of responding state libraries reporting or anticipating cuts in funding report these declines are comparable with those faced by other state agencies.

Thirty-nine percent of state libraries also report a property tax cap is in place at the state level. About 4 percent of responding state libraries report a cap is being considered, and 52 percent indicate there is no tax cap. One state reported there is a tax cap in place, but a special library tax is not limited by the tax cap.

**Figure D2: Changes in Local Funding, 2008**

Census Region (CR)	Decrease = 6				No Change = 20	Increase = 16				Total
	1-2%	3-4%	5-10%	11%+	No Change	1-2%	3-4%	5-10%	11%+	
Midwest	1	1	0	0	4	1	0	0	1	8
Northeast	0	1	0	0	2	1	3	0	1	8
South	0	0	2	0	9	0	2	1	0	14
West	0	1	0	0	5	2	1	0	3	12
<b>Total</b>	1	3	2	0	20	4	6	1	5	42

When asked about local public funding for public libraries (Figure D2), the picture is more positive, but libraries report that funding is down compared to results from a question about *overall* public funding asked last year. Thirteen percent of states report a decline (7 percent in FY2007), 43 percent report no change in both FY2007 and FY2008, and 34.8 percent report an increase (less than the 50 percent in FY2007). Four states report there is no majority of libraries in any of these categories (decrease, no change or increase). This data should be considered concurrently with data reported by library systems (see the Public Library Funding Landscape section starting on page 11).

Researchers had multiple contacts with state libraries in FY2009. Figure D3 presents data from the January 2009 email and the May 2009 follow-up questionnaire. In January, 41 percent of responding states reported declining state funding for U.S. public libraries in FY2009, compared with FY2008. Twenty percent of these states anticipated an additional reduction in the current fiscal year.

Among states reporting in May (66 percent), 42 percent reported they had experienced no change in state funding for public libraries between FY2008 and FY2009. Thirty percent reported declining state funding between the fiscal years, 6 percent reported increased funding, and 21 percent of responding states do not provide state aid to public libraries. Twenty-eight percent of responding state libraries reported they had experienced midyear declines in state funding for public libraries.

While reductions have been seen from coast to coast, the South has been the hardest hit, with declines as large as 30 percent in South Carolina and 23.4 percent in Florida in FY2009 compared with FY2008. Per capita state aid in South Carolina has fallen back to 2003 levels; at the same time inflation has averaged between 2.5 percent and 3.4 percent annually.

Other states reporting significant reductions include:

- Georgia reports funding decreased 7 to 8 percent between FY2008 and FY2009, and there was an additional midyear cut of 7 to 8 percent in FY2009;
- Hawaii reports funding declined 9 to 10 percent between FY2008 and FY2009, and there was an additional midyear cut of 5 to 6 percent in FY2009;
- Louisiana reports funding decreased more than 11 percent between FY2008 and FY2009;
- Nevada reports funding decreased more than 11 percent between FY2008 and FY2009 and there was an additional midyear cut greater than 11 percent in FY2009;

- New Jersey reports there was a decline of 9 to 10 percent between FY2008 and FY2009;
- New Mexico reports funding decreased 3 to 4 percent between FY2008 and FY2009 and there was an additional midyear cut of 3 to 4 percent in FY2009; and
- New York reports funding declines 7 to 8 percent between FY2008 and FY2009.

North Carolina reports funding increased 3 to 4 percent between FY2008 and FY2009, but the state subsequently saw a midyear cut in FY2009 of 9 to 10 percent. West Virginia was the sole state to report an increase between FY2008 and FY2009 without a decline in FY2009.

**Figure D3: State Funding for Public Libraries: Declines Reported for FY 2009**

<i>State</i>	<i>Change from FY2008 to FY2009, reported in May 2009</i>	<i>FY2009 Decline (midyear cut), reported in May 2009</i>	<i>FY2009 Decline reported in January 2009</i>	<i>Percentage change</i>
Alabama	No response	No response	Yes	-9%
Alaska	No change	No decline	No decline	0
Arizona	No change	No decline	No decline	0
Arkansas	No response	No response	No response	No response
California	No response	No response	Anticipated decline	--
Colorado	<i>No state aid</i>			
Connecticut	No response	No response	No	0
Delaware	No response	No response	Yes	-1.60%
Florida	No response	No response	Yes	-23.40%
Georgia	-7 to 8%	-7 to 8%	Yes	-8%
Hawaii	-9 to 10%	-5 to 6%	Yes	-7%
Idaho	<i>No state aid</i>			
Illinois	No change	No decline	No decline	0
Indiana	No change	No response	Don't know	--
Iowa	No change	-1 to 2%	Yes	-1.50%
Kansas	No response	No response	Yes	-5.90%
Kentucky	-11% or more	No decline	Yes	-12.4%
Louisiana	-11% or more	No decline	Yes	-7.10%
Maine	<i>No state aid</i>			
Maryland	No response	No response	Yes	--
Massachusetts	No response	No response	Yes	-1%
Michigan	No change	-3 to 4%	No	0
Minnesota	No change	No decline	No	0
Mississippi	No change	-5 to 6%	Yes	-5%
Missouri	No response	No response	Anticipated	--
Montana	No change	No decline	No	0
Nebraska	No change	No decline	No	0
Nevada	-11% or more	-11% or more	Yes	--
New Hampshire	No response	No response	Yes	--
New Jersey	-9 to 10%	No decline	Yes	-8%
New Mexico	-3 to 4%	-3 to 4%	No	0
New York	-7 to 8%	No decline	Don't know	--
North Carolina	+3 to 4%	-9 to 10%	Yes	--
North Dakota	No response	No response	No decline	0
Ohio	No change	No decline	Anticipated	--
Oklahoma	No change	No decline	No decline	0
Oregon	No change	No decline	No decline	0
Pennsylvania	No response	No response	Yes	--
Rhode Island	No change	No decline	No	0
South Carolina	-11% or more	-11% or more	Yes	-30%
South Dakota	<i>No state aid</i>			
Tennessee	-1 to 2%	No decline	Yes	--
Texas	No response	No response	No	0
Utah	No response	No response	Yes	--
Vermont	<i>No state aid</i>			
Virginia	No response	No response	Anticipated	--
Washington	<i>No state aid</i>			
West Virginia	+11% or more	No decline	No	0
Wisconsin	No response	No response	Don't know	--
Wyoming	<i>No state aid</i>			

Key: -- No data supplied.

Aside from state aid to public libraries, two-thirds (67 percent) of responding state libraries reported in May 2009 they have been impacted in their ability to support public libraries in FY2009. In most cases, state libraries reported frozen or lost staff positions, loss of funding for statewide database licensing, and overall budget reductions affecting purchasing, training and staff travel. One state library reported one-third of its library development staff positions are vacant, another state library has had its staff reduced by 30 positions since January 2008, and another state has 11 FTE positions vacant (accounting for 22 percent of all staff).

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“In some instances statewide services had to be suspended or eliminated even though funding was technically still available, due to the burdensome and lengthy review and approval processes. One example of delays are the RFPS for competitive public library grant programs normally approved in December and posted in January with applications due in March, have just been approved for posting May 11. Libraries will have less time to apply and less time to carry out their grant projects,” responded one state librarian.

In an open-ended question soliciting any additional feedback related to state library funding or state aid for public libraries, several state librarians noted they are awaiting revenue estimates that will determine FY2010 funding. Several state libraries expect funding to decline again in FY2010, perhaps by a greater percentage than was experienced in FY2009.

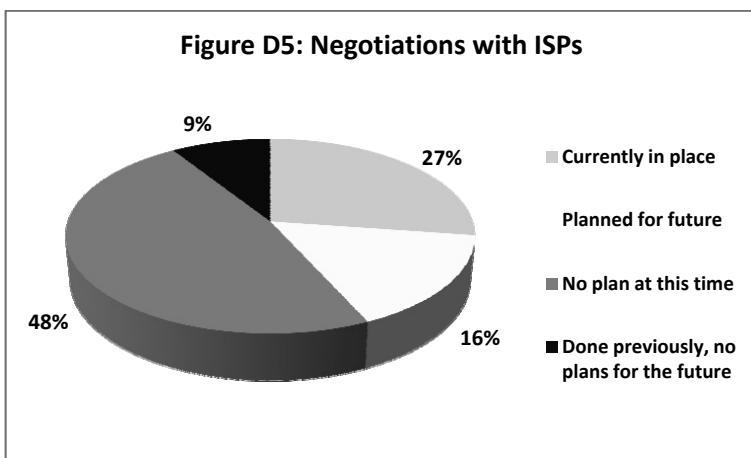
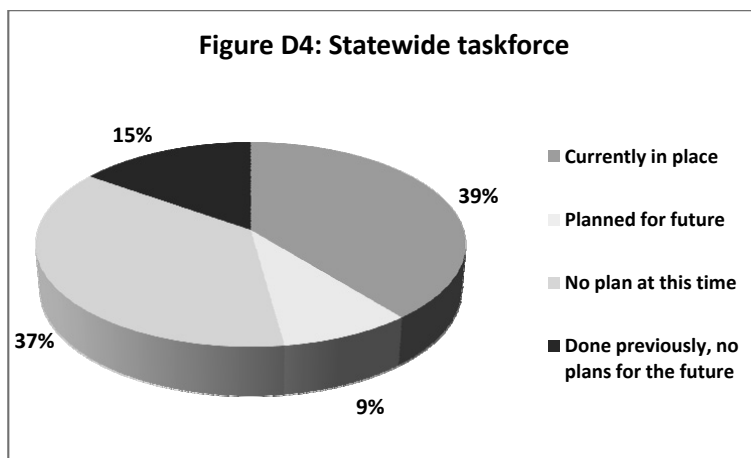
“Public libraries expect a greater downturn in revenues in FY10 than this year due to lags in property tax accounting mechanisms. The governor’s office has verbally supported the idea of ARRA funds<sup>3</sup> for library services, but to date has not been specific about how or if such funds would be provided,” wrote one state librarian.

### Broadband Initiatives

When asked about recent or upcoming broadband initiatives, more than half of the state libraries indicate that they either have begun planning, are in the process of planning or have completed these activities.

Some states also indicate other plans related to broadband initiatives, including:

- ▶ Rebidding the existing public library statewide broadband network;
- ▶ Conducting a statewide assessment;
- ▶ Taking advantage of the Opportunity Online broadband grant program; and
- ▶ Using other state telecommunication granting opportunities like “ConnectMe.”



3. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-111publ5/content-detail.html>.

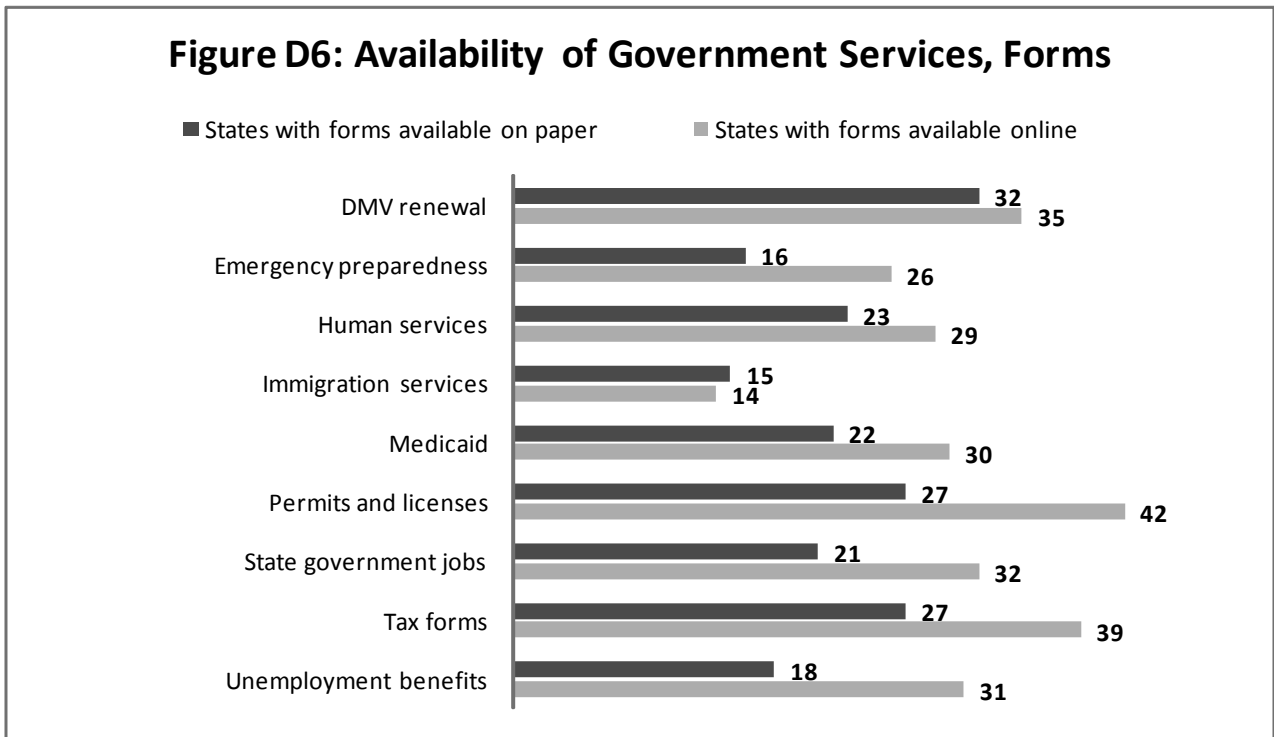
Partnerships with other state institutions also are helping to facilitate broadband initiatives. Connecticut’s libraries are working with the Commission for Educational Technology and the Connecticut Education Network to include public libraries. The Broadband Council in New York State has been working in conjunction with the state’s Office of Telecommunications.

**E-Government Services**

In site visits and focus groups, public library staff report that library computers increasingly are being used to access e-government resources, including unemployment benefits, making appointments with immigration officials, filing court petitions and downloading tax forms.

This year’s questionnaire to COSLA members sought to better understand which state-level e-government services are available online, and what role the state library might play in state e-government efforts.

According to respondents, many of the services have not yet become available exclusively online. At just under 30 percent, only state government jobs have made a marked shift to exclusively online access. In most states, however, state libraries report that online availability has outstripped paper availability for most e-government services (see Figure D6).



The most common role states libraries play within e-government is to raise awareness of the library as a venue for those services (69.6 percent), alert public to new e-government initiatives (63 percent) and partner with other agencies on e-government efforts (47.8 percent) (Figure D7). Respondents provide specific examples of how they serve on taskforces to develop state Web sites that allow transparency of all state financial transactions; distribute informational brochures to the public library patrons about a new series of online services created at a state agency; and disseminate information about cessation of printed tax forms.



**Figure D7: State Libraries' Role in E-Government Efforts**

<i>Response Options</i>	<i>Percent of libraries reporting</i>
State library raises awareness of the public library as an e-government venue	69.6%
State library alerts public libraries to new e-government initiatives	63.0%
State library partners with other government agencies on e-government efforts	47.8%
State library has developed or assisted in developing e-government portal(s)	39.1%
State library is represented on state-level e-government coordinating group	32.6%
State library advocates with other government agencies for funding and/or training for public library staff to support state e-government efforts	26.1%
The state library does not have a role in state e-government efforts at this time	13.0%
The state does not have any e-government efforts under way at this time	2.2%

Some state libraries support public libraries with funding for e-government as part of improved library services. The Office of Commonwealth Libraries in Pennsylvania works with the Department of Labor and Industry to provide a webinar on using PA CareerLink (a portal for online workforce services). The state library in Tennessee helps the Department of Taxation coordinate training in public libraries.

### **Certification Requirements for Library Staff**

Consistent with findings described in the section about site visits in the *Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study*, COSLA members report library staff report frustration in their ability to keep up with the rapid pace of change in technology through continuing education and technology training. This year's questionnaire to COSLA members seeks to better understand if there are state-level requirements for certification of library staff or requirements for technology training.

About half of the responding states (47.8 percent) indicate they have certification requirements for library staff, and another 2 percent are considering adding such requirements in the future. While only about half the states responded to a related follow-up question, the most common certification is at the library director level. Ten states have a one-time certification process for public library directors, and another 10 states require that certification be renewed periodically.

The number of states that have state certification requirements for librarians (staff with a Master's degree in Library and Information science [MLIS]) fell to 11, and five states report that they had such requirements for paraprofessional staff members.

About two-thirds of states with certification requirements have no specific requirement related to technology training or skills. Four states report they have such a requirement for public library directors.

In order to assess what COSLA members consider the leading barriers to improving technology skills of public library staff, the questionnaire asked them to rank the following options:

- ▶ Funding to pay for training opportunities.
- ▶ Quality of existing training opportunities.
- ▶ Ability of staff to participate in training opportunities.
- ▶ Interest/willingness of library staff to participate in training opportunities.

State libraries indicate that the greatest barriers to improving technology skills of public library staff are staff's ability to participate in training (21 of 43 respondents ranked this as the most significant barrier) and funding to pay for training opportunities (19 of 40 respondents). This finding is consistent with anecdotal responses from public library directors. Additional information related to staff continuing education may be found in Section III.

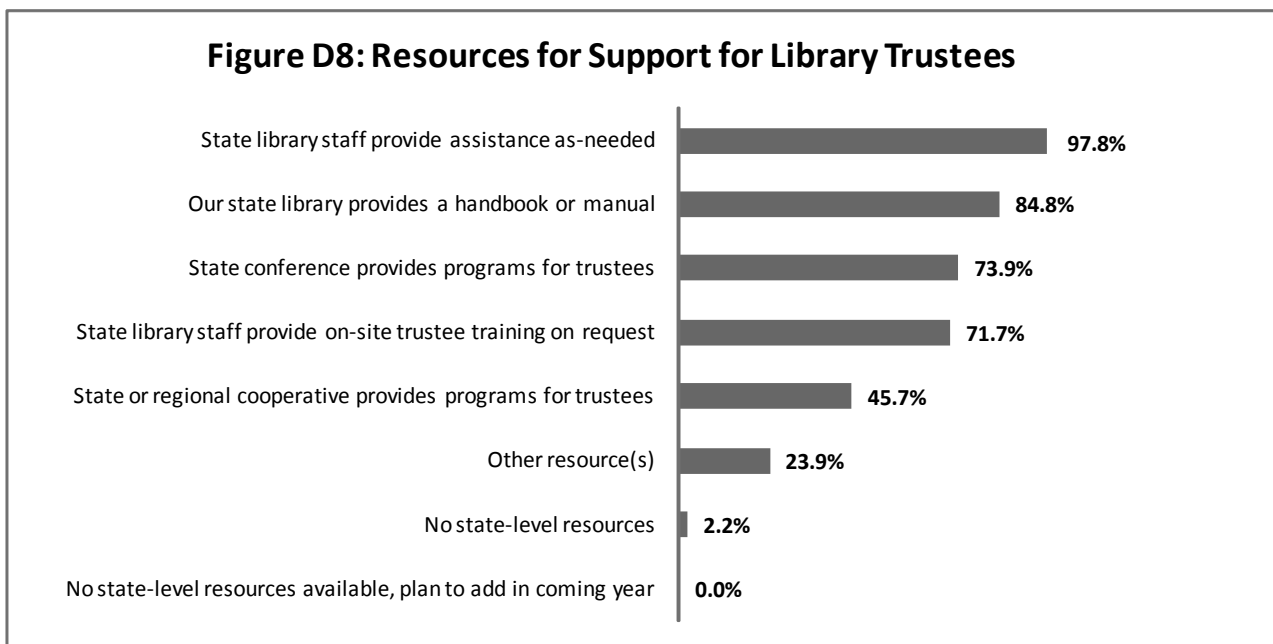
## Resources and Support for Library Trustees

**“Imagine the library as a community garden—a place for work, pleasure, and learning. And then imagine the trustees as gardeners, well equipped with all the tools they need for sowing, cultivating, nurturing, and enriching.”<sup>4</sup>**

Trustees play a key role in the success of public libraries—serving as community liaisons, participating in the development and approval of library policies, controlling library finances, hiring and evaluating the library director, and more. In addition to governance responsibilities, library trustees are likely among a library’s most important and knowledgeable advocates.

State libraries report a variety of resources available to educate and orient public library trustees about their obligations and liabilities as stewards of public libraries. Nearly 85 percent offer a handbook or manual, and 98 percent reported that state library staff answer questions and provide assistance as needed. A list of these handbooks or manuals available online may be found online at [www.ala.org/plinternetfunding](http://www.ala.org/plinternetfunding).

Thirty-three states out of the 46 (71.7 percent) that responded to the questionnaire offer on-site training for trustees upon request. State library association conferences also provide an opportunity to host programs for trustees, and 34 of the respondents (73.9 percent) indicate that their state uses this conference venue to support trustees (Figure D8).



4. Office of Commonwealth Libraries. “Cultivating Pennsylvania’s Growing Libraries: Training Resource Kit for Pennsylvania Public Library Trustees.” 2005. <http://www.statelibrary.state.pa.us/libraries/lib/libraries/TrusteeToolkit.pdf>.