



Commission on Higher Education Puts a Focus on Academic Libraries

Governor Spitzer's Higher Education Commission has issued its preliminary report

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"The Commission shall conduct a review and analysis of New York's colleges and universities, with particular emphasis on public higher education and the SUNY and CUNY systems. To the maximum extent possible, the Commission shall consider, and where appropriate incorporate, the expertise and learning of prior commissions devoted to higher education in New York State, and that of State agencies and instrumentalities with authority over and expertise in higher education." (pp.ii,iii all quotes are from the [Commission's Preliminary Report](#)).

Various [library leaders](#) (including [some from SUNY](#)) put relevant issues in front of the Commission. The report indicates the importance of academic libraries in the context of the Commission and governor's goals for higher education in New York. Portions of the report are included here to highlight this.

In fact, libraries are mentioned in the report's very first "opportunity" and "challenge": "We must build on our strengths and seize opportunities.

"One of the most exciting opportunities is strengthened research. New York is well positioned with impressive cyber infrastructure and library connectivity..." (p.6)

[SUNYNet](#) and [SUNY's Library Automation Implementation Program](#) brought inter-networking and linked library resources to all parts of New York State. Such shared endeavors resulted in updated technical and research infrastructure for some institutions that might not have seen such developments for a number of years.

The report explicitly acknowledges the critical role our libraries serve in the future development of New York:

"Connecting Faculty, Researchers and Students to a World of Ideas Technological Infrastructure

"The capacity of New York State colleges and universities can be strengthened through enhanced connections. Too many of our colleges cannot individually afford the scale of investment that the 21st Century demands. Two scale-intensive infrastructure investments are particularly critical to participation in the knowledge economy: technology and

academic libraries." (p.20)

The very next opportunity described in the report is specific to academic libraries. More resources for our libraries are essential to achieving major goals. In addition, the Commission deserves credit for acknowledging needs at smaller campuses.

"There is a second opportunity for the sharing of infrastructure: academic library pooling of electronic information. Not only are scientific discoveries shared through electronic journals, but faculty and students in both the sciences and humanities increasingly rely on electronic resources such as collections of primary literary texts and historical archives. Academic libraries are now contending with rapidly expanding information sources, and facing increasing costs for licensing fees. Some small campuses simply cannot afford what they need.

"Other states have taken steps to achieve powerful economies of scale through state-wide licensing (New Jersey, Ohio, and Virginia are examples). New York can strongly benefit from the efficiencies gained through this pooling of effort. The Commission is persuaded by the arguments advanced by hundreds of academic librarians throughout New York and recommends that the State invest \$15 million to facilitate college and university libraries moving from individual library licenses to state-wide shared licenses." (p.21)

Hallelujah! Praise is deserved for these academic librarians and to the Commission for this recommendation. The specific details conform with the ARIA initiative from NYSHEI (see [Jason Kramer's article](#) in this issue of *SUNYergy* for more on these topics).

[Nylink](#) and [OLIS](#) are mentioned. We like to be associated with creating cost-saving opportunities, the notion of research and public service.

"SUNY System Administration supports additional functions that fall into the category of "University-wide Programs" which are system-wide in nature, creating cost-saving opportunities through economies of scale, and/or are related to research or public service. University-wide programs include entities such as ...Nylink (a statewide membership organizations consisting of libraries both within and outside of the SUNY system), and operation of SUNY-wide information technology systems with services such as ...electronic library resources..." (p. 42)

"Incentives for Academic Libraries to Pool Electronic Information Access to electronic information should be expanded throughout the State by facilitating college and university libraries moving from individual licenses to state-wide shared licenses." (p.55)

As mentioned, this recommendation is laudable. And, it is subject to approval via the New York State budgeting process. Additional advocacy is in order.

The distinguished Higher Education [Commission](#) places academic libraries front and center. The group makes it clear that we are an integral part of their goals. Far from the notion of "the library is going away," this reports

shows the continuing prominence of libraries in the realms of education, research and a knowledge economy. Good work everybody!



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