



## NYSHEI and ARIA

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Collaboration and innovation are watchwords of the modern world. Among colleges and universities these themes are applied as "mission," and the success of that application is a determining factor in the success of the colleges and universities themselves.

A remarkable example of innovative collaboration is a proposal called [ARIA](#) (Academic Research Information Access), and it holds great promise for SUNY. ARIA is the principle focus of a public-private partnership called NYSHEI.

The New York State Higher Education Initiative ([NYSHEI](#)) was formed in 2002 under the leadership of then-SUNY Provost Peter Salins and under the guidance of Carey Hatch and the SUNY Office of Library and Information Services. NYSHEI brings together the academic and research libraries of the entire SUNY system, the entire CUNY system, and many of the state's private colleges and universities, among them Columbia, Cornell, NYU and Syracuse. The partnership of NYSHEI has served as a magnet in gaining the support and participation of the libraries at the United States Military Academy at West Point, the American Museum of Natural History, the Wadsworth Center and other notable institutions.



THE NEW YORK STATE  
Higher Education Initiative

NYSHEI recognizes that in its most Platonic form, higher education is about knowledge. The faculty are charged with transmitting this knowledge, but the information itself is entrusted to the library. From ancient wisdom to the latest innovation, libraries are tasked with storing, protecting and providing the knowledge of academia. Thus, the collection of a library aligns closely with the intellectual value of a university.



[ARIA](#) is an initiative that will dramatically expand the collections of all its member libraries. In addition it will serve the larger community by aiding the state's economic development efforts. Seeking \$15 million in annual state appropriations exclusively for statewide contracts and licensing of high-end electronic databases (with a distinct focus on science, medical, technology and business databases), ARIA is gaining traction among the state's decision-makers.

Recently the Governor's Commission on Higher Education, of which interim SUNY Chancellor John Clarke is a [member](#), gave ARIA a ringing endorsement. In its [preliminary report](#), the Commission wrote that they are "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."

Following this success is the introduction of legislation in both houses of the state legislature to enact ARIA. The ARIA legislation is being championed by the chairs of the respective legislative committees for economic development, Senator James Alesi (R-Rochester) and Assemblyman Robin Schimminger (D-Kenmore), and has the bipartisan support of a broad coalition of elected officials, including those who serve on the higher education and library committees.

It is the belief of NYSHEI that ARIA is the first step toward creating a vast statewide information infrastructure that leverages the strength of New York's higher education sector for the benefit of all. By making these resources available to students and faculty across the state we can attract top faculty to our institutions, empower graduate students, researchers and even entrepreneurs and other innovators. Access to the latest and most crucial research findings from around the world is critical to an information age economy, and a requisite of a leading institution of higher education.

In pursuit of this goal NYSHEI works closely with the SUNY Council of Library Directors, OLIS, the SUNYConnect Advisory Council, SUNYLA, and many, many more affiliated groups. With our allies at the State Library and at the New York Public Library, we gain added presence and prestige.

Certainly, there are many daunting obstacles to overcome before ARIA becomes reality, but for the first time individual librarians choose to participate in [NYSHEI advocacy](#), our voice will grow, and our song will be heard by all.



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