

**Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
Bonding Subcommittee**

**Testimony of State Librarian Deborah Schander
Connecticut State Library
March 20, 2025**

Good afternoon, Senator Miller and Representative Napoli, Senator Hwang and Representative Piscopo, and members of the Bonding Subcommittee. I am State Librarian Deborah Schander. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today and update you on the State Library's three projects.

Library Preservation Facility: State Archives

Let me start with the most pressing project: the need for a new, permanent home for the State Archives. The State Library has been the official State Archives since 1909 and holds over 53,000 cubic feet of historically significant records from all three branches of government, as well as municipalities, historically significant organizations, and individuals. Connecticut has never had a stand-alone State Archives facility.

Prior to 2019, the State Archives received an average of 500 cubic feet of records each year. The adoption of a hybrid work model by all three branches of government during the Covid-19 pandemic that led to consolidation of facilities and buildings due to the need for less physical workspace and Governor Lamont's digital government initiative for executive department agencies exponentially increased the amount of records transferred to the State Archives. Last fiscal year, it received 3,049 cubic feet. To date, we are on track to bring in at least 1,500 cubic feet this year.

Unfortunately, digitization is not a proven long-term preservation method, and retention of the original non-digital formats is preferred when available. Digitizing everything might seem like a quick fix, but it's not a permanent solution. While paper and microfilm are readable for hundreds of years if stored properly, digital files can become inaccessible after just a few years. Without constant monitoring and updates, which cost money, there's a risk of losing the very records we aimed to preserve. So even if materials are digitized, physical storage is still necessary for true long-term archival stability.

Currently, around 42,000 cubic feet of these permanently valuable paper and other non-digital records are housed in a leased off-site facility which sits in a floodplain and is perilously close to reaching its capacity. Once filled, the State Library will have to suspend accepting those records required by statute to be retained permanently, except in emergency case-by-case situations. Executive department agencies without access to in-house physical

storage will have to absorb the additional storage and retrieval costs charged by third-party vendors for these records until the State Archives can once again accept records.

Here's where we are in finding a solution: the agency is in the process of converting the last available area in our leased facility from static to compact shelving. We anticipate this will give us, at best, three final years of storage capacity. Simultaneously, we have drawn down \$80,000 from the \$10,264,000 awarded towards the development of a library preservation facility to conduct a study of a currently vacant facility at our Rocky Hill Campus. The study is intended to tell us whether we can renovate and expand this existing facility or if it would be best to build anew on the site. It will also provide us with solid cost estimates to bring back to this subcommittee in the midterm for a further appropriation. As an addendum to my written testimony, I am sharing information on similar archival facility projects recently completed or in process in other states (page 3).

Renovation of Middletown Library Service Center

The State Library has also been allocated \$755,000 toward the renovation of our 10,000 sqft Middletown Library Service Center (MLSC). This facility was built in the 1960s and is a critical location for statewide library services for public, school, and academic libraries. It houses the CT Digital Library, the Connecticut Library for Accessible Books, subject matter experts for all statewide library programs and projects, supplemental book and STEM collections, and the Statewide Technology Training Center. Using these funds, we will address some of the building's most critical needs, including the HVAC system. The urgency of the State Archives project kept this initiative on hold this past fiscal year, but we do intend to utilize the full award in the near future.

Construction Grants to Public Libraries

Finally, per CGS §11-24c, the State Library provides grants to public libraries for construction projects that create or improve usable space. These grants allow public libraries to not only address aging infrastructure, general deterioration, and meet ADA compliance needs but also respond to increasing need for flexible collaboration spaces to meet community use. All Connecticut public libraries are eligible for these grants and preference is given to libraries in distressed municipalities, principal public libraries, and main branches over branch libraries. Grants can provide up to ½ the total cost of a project (now capped at \$2 million), and libraries must raise the remaining funds through referendum, fundraising, donations, municipal capital projects, or other methods. Depending on the type of grant given, libraries have either one or three years after State Library Board approval to secure this funding. There is one statutory grant cycle per fiscal year, with applications due by September 1.

There are currently 18 active library construction grants. Approximately \$4.6 million has been authorized for use under this program but has not been allocated to public libraries. Three projects (totaling nearly \$1.4 million) have been approved by the State Library Board and have already obtained or are obtaining local funding; allocated funding must remain intact for these communities as they work to raise funds. The State Library anticipates 4-5 applications in FY26 and 5-6 applications in FY26, including at least four \$2 million grant projects. Libraries are requesting the full \$2 million allowable, which is straining resources; we are currently only awarding \$2.5 million per year overall.

Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer questions.

Addendum: State Library – Archives Building Request

Below is information on recently completed new state archives buildings, new buildings under construction or design, and renovated buildings. This is not an exhaustive list of state archives building projects, especially renovations.

Based off this information, we request our new archival facility at a minimum to have the following common features: climate-controlled archival storage rooms, mobile compact shelving, flat file storage cabinets, fire protection system, security cameras and systems, staff work areas, loading docks, an exhibit space to display records, and a reading room for researchers to view records.

Based on the information below, the State Archives is interested in including the following: no roof drains or roof penetrations located over the archival storage rooms and a blast freezer for water or insect damaged materials following floods and other disasters. There is no interest in a space-saving robotic retrieval system as it has been a major problem for several states.

New State Archives Buildings Which Have Recently Opened

Pennsylvania State Archives

- Opened: December 8, 2023
- Building cost: \$75 million
- Building square footage: 145,000 square feet
- Features: climate-controlled archive rooms on three floors, 12-foot-tall high-density archives shelving systems, refrigerated archive room, fire detection system, security cameras and systems, no roof drains or roof penetrations are located over the archive rooms, two points of electricity service, lobby, public reading room, staff offices, classrooms, exhibit space, and parking.

Tennessee State Library and Archives

- Opened: April 13, 2021
- Building cost: \$123.8 million
- Building square footage: 165,000 square feet
- Features: climate-controlled archive room with a space-saving robotic retrieval system, blast freezer to help save materials damaged by water or insects following floods and other disasters, fire detection system, security cameras and systems, public reading rooms, staff offices, conservation laboratory space, lobby, classrooms, exhibit spaces, and parking.

State Archives Buildings Currently Under Construction or Design

Indiana State Archives and Records Administration (IARA)

- Groundbreaking: August 15, 2023
- Construction: 2024-2026
- Cost: \$122 million
- Building square footage: 133,000 square feet
- Features: climate-controlled archive rooms on four floors, digitization equipment and space, fire detection system, security cameras and systems, lobby, public reading room, staff offices, classrooms, and exhibit space.

District of Columbia (Washington, DC) Archives

- The new building project is currently under review and approval by various city and federal agencies, boards, and commissions.
- Project Budget: estimated \$155 million
- Building square footage: 117,630 square feet
- Features: climate-controlled archive rooms, eleven-shelf-high compact mobile storage system, climate-controlled records center rooms, fire detection system, security cameras and systems, reception area, public reading room, staff offices, archival processing space, records receiving room, quarantine room, classrooms, event and exhibit spaces, and parking.

Recently Renovated State Archives Buildings

Massachusetts State Archives

- Completed: January 2019
- Cost: \$4 - 6 million
- Square footage: added 25,000 square feet of archives vault space on 3 floors in their existing building.
- Features: climate-controlled archives vaults, static archives metal shelving, flat file archives storage cabinets, security cameras and systems, and miscellaneous building accessibility upgrades.

Iowa Historical Society, Iowa State Archives

- Completed: Fall 2023
- Cost: \$13.5 million
- Features: a new atrium, significant infrastructure improvements including replacement of roof drainpipes, renovated public reading room and exhibit spaces, and new flooring.

South Dakota Historical Society

- Anticipated Completion: 2025
- Cost: \$20 million
- Features: maintenance and repair work on the building, including roof, HVAC, lobby, etc.; create more storage capacity to add an additional twenty to thirty years to the building's storage life; and update permanent exhibits.