

## **State Bonding Funds for Public Library Accessibility and Construction**

Background: For most of the last 17 years the State of Minnesota has assisted public libraries with making buildings accessible to those with physical problems and in updating public library buildings to resolve those and other problems. A program to address these problems is already in Statutes (Minnesota Statutes 134.45). This is a matching funds program administered by the State Department of Education. In those years the State has provided grants projects for the remodeling and construction of buildings owned by cities and counties, mostly for accessibility adaptations. Those projects have ranged in size from \$ 1,997 to \$ 262,148 and have been awarded throughout the state. The grants have typically required substantial local dollars, usually raised by bond referenda and fund raising.

The Minnesota Library Association encourages the Legislature to continue those grants. Some additional information:

1. Minnesota has over 350 public library buildings which are old and need to be replaced.
2. There are a few buildings which are not readily accessible to users with wheelchairs, walkers and canes.
3. Minnesota has many more buildings which are partially accessible, but still lack the capacity for modern computer and data services. These buildings are often old and in need of replacement. Local units of government are often reluctant to provide funds for expensive modifications such as elevators when the buildings are not worth the extensive costs of remodeling and need to be replaced.
4. Minnesota has many buildings which are too small because of the growth in population and the demands for additional computer services.
5. Although all of Minnesota's counties provides library services to their residents, many of the counties still assume (and require) that cities provide the library buildings. This means that the tax base for construction is limited.
6. Older buildings are often difficult to adapt to newer wiring and technologies.
7. The program has averaged the use of seven local dollars for each state grant dollar.