



Talking Points

Minnesota Library Association & Minnesota Educational Media Organization

Public Library/K-12 Schools Telecommunications Access

MLA/MEMO supports continued, equitable, and improved high speed connections to library catalogs, online resources, and Internet access for all Minnesota students and residents through full funding for a permanent telecommunications network for K-12 schools and public libraries.

The State of Minnesota needs to permanently fund the full operational costs of the shared, statewide telecommunications infrastructure known as the Learning Network of Minnesota. The Learning Network provides equal access for all students and public library users through high-speed bandwidth connecting all K-12 schools, public libraries and public institutions of higher education throughout Minnesota. It provides a strong incentive for increased collaboration among schools, libraries, higher education, local governments and communities in under served areas of the state. It allows individual institutions to employ higher capacity at lower unit cost.

For public libraries in Minnesota, the network enables:

- computerized library catalogs, acquisition and circulation systems
- connections to regional and state electronic databases, including the state funded Electronic Library for Minnesota
- access to the statewide library catalog – the MnLINK Gateway
- public Internet access
- ITV sites for public and educational purposes

For K-12 school media centers, the network enables the following:

- computerized library catalogs
- connections to state electronic databases including the state funded Electronic Library for Minnesota (ELM)
- ITV sites for public and educational purposes

Permanent Funding Needed

Although this network has been established and funded by the MN State Legislature since 1995, the funding for public libraries has become inadequate and funding for schools ceased in 2002. Increased Internet use and larger bandwidth required by today's integrated library systems means that regional public libraries must increase bandwidth at local libraries to the equivalent of T-1 access. Funding to provide these upgrades, as well as continued funding for K-12 schools, is essential for all Minnesota students.