Florida’s libraries are critical to the state’s economy and provide a foundation for education at all levels. Providing state funding for services and operations as well as opportunities for expansion and innovation will make our state more competitive in the economic sphere and give our residents the educational tools to succeed. These are the legislative issues that the Florida Library Association strongly supports:

State Aid to Public Libraries
The Florida Library Association (FLA) thanks the Legislature and Governor Rick Scott for increasing State Aid to Public Libraries by $5,110,989, to $27,409,823 in the 2014-15 budget. FLA strongly supports the restoration of the State Aid to Public Libraries program to at least $33,400,000, the amount appropriated in FY 2001.

Currently 51% of Floridians have a library card and they checked out an average of 6 books per person in 2013. Floridians visited their public library 78.5 million times in person and made 94.8 million virtual visits! A strong fiscal foundation for our public libraries is critical to the state’s economic and educational success. Florida’s State Aid grant program has been the cornerstone of public library support in our state since 1963 and is a national model. State Aid grant funding assists Floridians with:

- Economic development resources to small businesses and job seekers
- Access to government services, especially e-government – public libraries are the “go to” place for Internet access to, and librarian support to find, the vast array of services and products online.
- Education and reading – libraries are the safety net that insures school success for students of all ages.

Public Library Construction
FLA thanks the Legislature and Governor Scott for funding all 6 of the 2014-15 projects, and supports the Division of Library and Information Services’ Public Library Construction Grant requests for 4 projects of $500,000 each (maximum allowed) for a total of $2 million for 2015-16. These grants provide local jobs and funds for critical projects addressing infrastructure upgrades including those which address new technology in libraries, renovation, and expansion. Construction grants serve as a stimulus to local governments to provide Floridians with modern libraries capable of supporting their needs in a 21st century learning environment.

State University and College Libraries
Academic libraries are critical for student success, faculty research and accreditation. FLA supports funding for statewide library e-resources through the Complete Florida Plus Program (successor to Florida Virtual Campus), including more funding to cover rising costs and for adding a new institution, Florida Polytechnic, and to provide statewide STEM resources and streaming multimedia resources for Florida’s college and university students. FLA also supports funding for the statewide next-generation integrated library system for Florida academic libraries.

State E-Book Program
FLA supports the creation of a statewide e-book program that all Florida libraries can share to meet Floridians’ needs in an efficient cost effective manner. Florida has the opportunity to be a leader in providing e-book services.
Innovative Initiatives
FLA supports establishing a grant program for innovative library services administered by the Div. of Library and Information Services with a 2015-16 appropriation of $2 million, which will invest in the futures of Floridians and libraries. Libraries are transitioning from traditional libraries to community hubs. They are extending their services to the Web while at the same time providing a place for citizens to meet, engage, and learn, to develop new businesses, to teach early reading skills, to provide safe environments for children and teens, and for all Floridians to develop new skills to become a better fit for today’s workplace and to find greater civic engagement.

Multi-Type Library Cooperatives
FLA thanks the Legislature and Governor Scott for funding the Library Cooperative Grant program for the state’s five multi-type library cooperatives (MLCs) at $2 million in 2014-15 and supports an appropriation of the same amount in 2015-16. MLCs reduce costs for every library by promoting the sharing of resources across the state and by providing invaluable training opportunities to library staff to keep current in today’s ever-changing world of technology and library services. These funds are used to maintain Florida’s online database of library collections that makes possible resource sharing through interlibrary loan and supports statewide delivery services ensuring library materials are cost-effectively distributed to libraries and their customers throughout the state. MLCs train over 18,000 participants annually.

State Library of Florida, Department of State
FLA supports continued funding for the Division of Library and Information Services, its programs and services in the Department of State.

Public School Media Centers
FLA endorses the 2015 Legislative Platform of the Florida Association for Media in Education, particularly the restoration of professional supervision of school library media centers in all school districts. Studies conducted over the past 16 years in more than 20 states demonstrate the positive impact of strong library media programs on student achievement.

Bureau of Braille and Talking Books
FLA supports continued financial support for the Bureau of Braille and Talking Book Service to provide quality library services to all eligible residents of Florida. The State of Florida has one of the largest populations of sight-impaired individuals in the United States. More than 6.6 million people in the U.S. have a visual disability; 430,000 live in Florida, the state with the third highest population of sight impaired individuals.

Department of Correction Library Services
The Florida Library Association supports continued funding for correctional libraries.

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Our Mission:
The Florida Library Association is a statewide organization that promotes excellence in Florida libraries by advocating strongly for libraries and providing high quality professional and leadership development for a diverse community of library staff, volunteers, and supporters.