



## **MICHIGAN ACADEMIC LIBRARY COUNCIL**

### **MICHIGAN eLIBRARY (MeL) CASE STATEMENT**

Revised and Final Version

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Endorsed by the MALC Deans & Directors

#### Taskforce Members:

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## **Michigan eLibrary (MeL) Case Statement: Introduction**

Offering every resident of the state equitable and easy-to-use access to a core set of information resources is a goal shared by the Michigan library community, and the foundation upon which MeL, the Michigan eLibrary, was built. MeL allows users to search across a host of quality information resources, many of which cannot be found elsewhere on the Internet – all available at absolutely no additional cost to Michigan residents, 24 hours a day and seven days a week from home, work, school or the library.

All types of Michigan libraries and their users benefit from MeL, especially MeL databases and MeLCat. The annual cost to provide access to MeL databases and MeLCat is currently 5 million dollars and is borne almost entirely by **temporary** LSTA funding which cannot sustain even current needs over time. We seek permanent full funding at a level of 10 million dollars annually to eliminate the risk inherent in continued utilization of non-guaranteed grant funds for a project of such significance and magnitude. This funding would sustain current activities and allow for essential updates of technology and added content, and to offer new services as capabilities are assessed and developed to meet the future needs of Michigan residents.

### **FUNDING REQUEST:**

Michigan libraries seek a \$10 million annual budget to create permanent funding for MeL, replacing the temporary Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant funding. A three year gradual phase-in of permanent funding and phase-out of LSTA funding is recommended to ease the transition for the state.

**Target Audience: Michigan Legislators, Academic Institutions, Library Community, and Residents**

# Michigan eLibrary (MeL): The Case for Increased State Funding

<http://mel.org>

## What is MeL?

- MeL is the **Online Library** available anytime, anywhere at no cost for all Michigan residents and provides:
  - Millions of full-text articles from thousands of journals, newspapers, magazines and encyclopedias.
  - Books, CDs, DVDs, etc. from libraries throughout Michigan.
  - Practice exams and tutorials including those for the **ACT** (which replaced the MEAP test for all high school juniors), SAT, GED, civil service, teacher certification, etc.

## More Online Information

- 21,000 electronic books that can be viewed online or downloaded.
- Business resources to help residents find jobs or start new ventures.
- Health information about medical conditions, treatments, and alternative medicine.
- Statewide historical resources, including local and county histories.
- “Best of the Web” sites, with a special emphasis on Michigan materials.

## Statewide Online Catalog of Michigan Libraries (MeLCat) Since 2005

- Delivery of materials to a resident’s local library with a simple click of a button.
- Includes all types of libraries in Michigan. For example, a Marquette business owner can request a book from an academic library in southeast Michigan and receive it in 2-3 days.
- Provides residents with one-stop shopping to over 21 million items (and growing!) owned by libraries statewide, including books, books on tape and CD, books in large print, DVDs, videos, magazines, music and more.
- On a single day in September 2006, almost 1,000 items were delivered to residents.

## Easy Accessibility

- Available to **all** Michigan residents 24/7, regardless of time or place.
- MeL serves all school libraries plus the 160 academic libraries, 383 public libraries, and 140 special libraries in the state.
- Authoritative information for all ages, levels, interests and needs of the population: K-12, academic, general interest, education, health, business, genealogy, etc.
- Gateway to high-quality commercial information not freely available on the Internet.
- Since 2000, **82.7 million articles were used** by residents directly from their desktop.

## Cost Savings

- Statewide purchasing of online information saves millions of dollars for taxpayers.
  - In 2006, the Library of Michigan paid \$3.9 million for the online information databases provided to all residents. If each school, public, college and university library paid for this access, it would cost **\$193.4 million**, a huge cost savings for taxpayers.
- Over 350,000 books, music, and other items were delivered to residents since January 2005, a **savings of \$23.9 million** for taxpayers.<sup>1</sup>

## Levels the Playing Field

- Every resident, regardless of the size of their community, has access to a core set of information resources.
- Equalizes resources for libraries and students; smaller institutions can provide quality resources only available to large institutions with larger budgets.

- Allows all Michigan residents to obtain information for life-long learning.
  - For example, students in the Ovid-Elsie schools learn to use MeLCat to request academic library materials to complete an assignment in English class, which helps them prepare to attend college.
- Expands the role of higher education institutions in community development, as recommended by the Cherry Commission<sup>2</sup>, through resource-sharing among academic, public, school, and business libraries.
- Represents a major state-wide collaborative effort between the Library of Michigan, Michigan Library Association, Michigan Library Consortium, and libraries across the state.

#### MeL is a Proven Success

- Serving Michigan residents since 1992. Continually adding services.
  - MeLCat went “live” in 2005; it was the **first** multi-type library and multi-type local library system resource-sharing project in the United States that allowed any library to participate.
  - MeL Michigana began in 2003 with *The Making of Modern Michigan*, a rich digital collection on Michigan history for use in K-16 Michigan history modules.
  - MeL Databases began in 1997 and currently provides \$3.9 million worth of full-text magazine and newspaper articles.
  - MeL “Best of the Web” began in 1992, the oldest web directory on the Internet, **before Google or Yahoo!**
- MeL received a national honor for exemplary service to residents, winning the 2006 Digital Government Achievement Award from the California-based Center for Digital Government. MeL.org earned a top ranking in the “Government-to-Citizen” category of the annual “Best of the Web” competition.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the 2005 average price of a book being \$68.20 as reported in *The Bowker Annual: Library and Book Trade Almanac, 2006* Information Today, Inc. 2006, p. 499

<sup>2</sup> *Final Report of the Lt. Governor’s Commission on Higher Education & Economic Growth* Dec. 2004, p. 24

## MeL and Academic Library Testimonials

I am a big fan of MeLCat (as well as Iliad and other wonderful services). Just last week, I had decided to do a class module and simulation on business networks and networking (this was a last minute decision since I hadn't realized they hadn't any exposure to this important topic). Of course, MSU's library had a fine selection of books, such as Ron Burt's classic Social Capital, but I was hoping to supplement this more academic material with some for a practitioner audience. I know from experience that as HR generalists they are not only practitioners themselves, but are often asked by their units to deliver workshops on the topics such as these that are vital to their work.

With MeLCat, I could immediately access a very broad range of "how-to" books. And I can then pick the titles I find intriguing, and decide whether to drive to a nearby library (LCC) and look at the 2005 edition of "Networking for Dummies," or have it delivered directly to us (it arrived in a few days). The links allow me to see in just a few clicks if they are open late enough that I can go there after class that evening, or before work the next day.

I know that MeLCat's interface just underwent an upgrade, and while I haven't had time to look at it carefully yet, I noticed the K-12 resources page, I've bookmarked the ones for elementary students for my 11-year old son. And I use the resources through our local (CADL) library to retrieve beautiful (and expensive!) architecture books for my own enjoyment.

I don't know that I can say enough good things about this service -- it's helped provide many resources for every research project I've done, as well as the classroom preparation that I've described.

Best,  
Elaine

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## **From MSU**

"The microfilm reader in the copy center has been really helpful to my research. It allows me to print, burn a CD, and save information to a USB drive."

Dustin Lussier (Telecommunications)

"The library has a variety of resources that are helpful to me. While preparing to study abroad I used the Travel Collection to learn more about the countries I would be visiting.

Vibha Gunta (Pre-medicine)

"Whether I'm searching for articles, books, dissertations, or publications on microfiche, Reference always provides prompt and expert assistance."

Peter Youngs Professor, College of Education.

"The Vincent Voice Library has thousands of speeches, performances, interviews, and more really bringing history to life. It is great to have such a unique collection right here at MSU Libraries."

Karen Han (Advertising)

"The new Collaborative Technology Labs have a plasma screen, video conferencing capabilities and the latest software. It's the perfect place to meet for group projects."

Caitlin Gallagher (Studio Art)

## **From UM-Dearborn**

The Library is wonderful in so many ways. One of the ways is merely the staff and faculty. Every person on the staff and faculty is more than willing to help you out with so much passion and sincerity. Another way that the library is great is that the library has several different levels and within each level a student has different opportunities to exceed in. One of the levels that are most helpful with studying is the fourth level. Another level is the second level, where you could hold study groups at for exams. One more way that the library has its assets is the ability to have internet access to your laptops, with the supplement of the computer labs with internet access too.

Kim Kasham (Political Science major)

I think that MeLCat is one of the most important services this or any other library provides. There are way too many books out there for any one library to have even a fraction of them and every time a professor assigns a research paper it is nearly inevitable that some book you need will not come from the library you are using. Sometimes the topic is obscure and there is a certain library that happens to have the material you need. I am currently doing a research paper that I would not have been able to do if I did not get the books from MeLCat. The service is always fast and I see people checking books out from MeLCat. I think that it's a great service. I see people using it all the time and I like using it as well.

Velimir Stoikovski (Sociology and Philosophy major; also a library circulation assistant)