

# Library services threatened by Trump funding cuts

Local libraries are primarily funded by local property taxes to operate, but they depend on federal dollars to pay for statewide services, like databases and e-books, that interconnect every library

April 2, 2025. [Read at WBUR.org for more content.](#)

Libraries across Massachusetts are worried about how they'll provide vital services such as interlibrary loans, e-books and access to databases in the wake of an executive order President Trump signed Monday.

The state gets \$3.6 million in federal funding for library services, and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners distributes that money to local libraries to supplement their budgets. This funding pipeline was disrupted this week when Trump ordered the entire staff of the Institute of Museums and Library Services to be placed on paid leave for 90 days, effectively halting the processing of grant dollars.

Maureen Amyot, director of the state library board, said concern had been building since the Trump administration's [first pause on federal funding in January](#), but she and her colleagues were still shocked when Monday's executive order came down.

Amyot and her board worry they'll have to cut funding to local libraries if the federal money doesn't start flowing again soon. Any cuts would disrupt services that libraries must provide to the public under state law, she said.

Local libraries are primarily funded by local property taxes to operate, but they depend on federal dollars to pay for statewide services, like databases and e-books, that interconnect every library. Without those federal dollars, libraries would not be

able to afford those services on their own, and the state would not be able to make up the difference, Amyot said.

While the order leaves the grants in limbo, Amyot said, the staff also wonders what will come next from Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, which is firing workers across federal agencies.

"It's such a fluid situation right now – everything is changing – that we're just sort of in a holding pattern," she said.

Libraries across the state are awaiting word from the Massachusetts library board about funding cuts or delays. Their level of concern varies depending on how much they rely on federal money. In a community like Waltham, the public library is fully funded by the city, while federal funding helps pay for staff salaries in Amherst.

Libraries can also apply directly for funding through the state library board's three grant categories — Explore, Impact and Inspire — provided by IMLS's federal dollars. Before Monday's executive order, Amyot said the board was set to award 18 libraries with smaller "Explore Grants," which come in \$4,000 and \$7,500 checks totaling \$93,000 in awards. They allow smaller libraries to implement things like English learning classes, citizenship resources and preservation services.

Jean Canosa Albano, assistant director at Springfield City Library, said her library is scheduled to receive one of those grants. It would help purchase materials for people who want to gain U.S. citizenship and improve English language skills, highly desirable resources in her community.

Now, they have to wait.

"If we did not have [MBLC's] expertise or the services they help provide, we would not be able to quickly rush in and fill that void that will be left," Albano said. "We don't have those funds elsewhere."

Another concern is funding for information access. That's secured through June 30, but librarians worry about how they'll pay for databases and subscriptions after that

date, especially for patrons who can't afford to subscribe to periodicals they enjoy. The impact is expansive: Last year, Massachusetts residents downloaded over 9 million texts, according to the MLBC, and 60% of database usage comes from schools.

“These databases are not only for researchers but also for families who are going to buy their next car [looking] up Consumer Reports,” said Sharon Sharry, director of Jones Library in Amherst. “It’s the way people can afford information.”

The statewide e-book and summer reading programs are also paid for with federal funding, and many libraries say they would not be able to fund them locally.

Boston Public Library has received several hundred thousand dollars to support things like curriculum development and digitization of resources, such as an [online high school program for adults](#). BPL president David Leonard said he worries about funding for next year and hopes Congress will act to preserve IMLS.

“Is this something that Congress can act on, because support for libraries and museums nationwide has generally been a very bipartisan act?” Leonard said. “We just don’t know.”

Librarians hope politicians representing Republican-leaning states will step up to protect funding. In response to Trump’s initial order for IMLS to be “eliminated to the maximum extent,” [a bipartisan group of senators sent a letter](#) to the administration defending federal funding for both cultural institutions.

“We are so lucky to live in Massachusetts, where library services are supported by our state officials,” Sharry said. “On the flip side, we are kind of left preaching to the choir ... What we really need are people in the red states to advocate.”

Andrea Fiorillo, head of public services at the Reading Public Library, said her library is using a \$20,000 grant for a program called “Rooted in Reading,” which explores community gardening. She pointed out that federal funding for libraries constitutes a miniscule portion of the federal budget.

“That comes out to about 87 cents per person per year,” said Fiorillo, who co-chairs the Massachusetts Library Association’s intellectual freedom committee. “What libraries turn around for our communities with that little bit of funding is almost miraculous. We take our tiny little bit and we just create these vibrant community centers.”

[Contact Us](#) [Work at the Library](#) [Volunteer at the Library](#) [City of Springfield](#)

Springfield City Library | 220 State Street, Springfield MA 01103 | 413.263.6828