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Appropriations Committee  
March 04, 2013

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[AGENCY 34]

ROD WAGNER: (Exhibits 32 and 33) Senator Mello, committee members, good evening. I thought the pizza idea was a good one. (Laugh) Very pleased to have the opportunity to testify. I am Rod Wagner, director of the Nebraska Library Commission. That is spelled R-o-d W-a-g-n-e-r. I just wanted to give you a word first that our state's libraries, all 1,000-plus of them, are doing great work, continuing to see steady increases in their programming and services. And we're very pleased as well that those services include those of all ages. And based on earlier testimony today, our libraries are doing some especially great work in providing preschool opportunities, helping kids with learning language and reading skills. Also just wanted to take a moment to tell you that, as you are aware, the Library Commission's funding is roughly two-thirds federal...or, excuse me, two-thirds state and one-third federal. We, like many others, are waiting for the federal government to eventually, and perhaps some time this month, determine what funding will be for the remainder of the federal fiscal year. At this point we're looking at perhaps a 5 percent reduction in our federal Library Services and Technology Act funds. I have four items that I'd like to address and address briefly. The first of those concerns...the first item concerns the Library Commission's funding request for the six Regional Library Systems. In our biennium budget request the Library Commission requested an additional \$90,000 in state General Funds that would be allocated among the six regions. That would be \$15,000 each, added to their funding for the coming year. And after that we requested \$19,236 for the second year of the biennium. These regional programs are very beneficial and valuable to the libraries across Nebraska. They provide training. They provide programming. They provide consulting, information services, and lots of help to our many libraries across Nebraska. We have another individual who will be following me who will provide some additional comments about the regional library system funding. I'd like to mention also another item in our agency budget request, and that is for funding that would allow us to extend the eLibrary subscription service that we provide across Nebraska. That is one of the databases that we license to make available across the state. Currently that

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subscription does not include schools. We've not been able to include schools in that subscription in past years because we just haven't had funding sufficient to cover that. So in this budget request we have included a request that would permit us to extend that service to schools. And we have another individual who also, I believe, may offer some remarks about the value and benefits of those services to our schools and the staff and students of our Nebraska schools. And that would extend both to the public and private schools, small and large schools, so it's really an issue concerning the availability, the equity of access that the...that service would provide. The third item is the Nebraska eReads initiative. And this is not actually a new initiative, but the funding request that we have presented to you for consideration is a new request in the Library Commission's biennium budget. And there is a second document you have there concerning, specifically, Nebraska eReads. And one of the things that you might note on that is the graph that shows a very dramatic increase over the last few years in the availability and the interest in and the borrowing requests that are being made for electronic books, downloadable books, and including digital audio books. The libraries are doing a great job in responding to that, but we're just not anywhere near able to meet the rapidly growing demand for digital books and audio books. In fact, just over the last couple of years, we've had a significant increase in a project that brings together libraries to jointly purchase eBooks and make them available across the state in our communities. And we went from a couple dozen libraries a few years ago; now we're up to 139 libraries. This is a group of libraries that go together to make these purchases. They make the decisions together and they have common borrowing policies and procedures. We also have the Omaha and Lincoln and Ralston libraries, and those libraries came on a little earlier and they have their own, separate arrangements. And those libraries are also separate because of vendor requirements. They want to deal with those libraries exclusively. But combined, the 139 libraries that are part of our statewide purchasing group and the Omaha, Lincoln, and Ralston Libraries, we are now serving...those libraries are serving over 90 percent of the state population. So our funding request, which we submitted for \$925,000, would be allocated among all of those libraries that are providing those services. Omaha would get a share based on its

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population, Lincoln would on its population and so forth, and then the other libraries, based on their combined population. So this is something that would be a tremendous help to our libraries and a great benefit to the thousands of Nebraskans who are borrowing those books from their libraries. The last item I want to mention is in concern of a recommendation that the Governor included in his budget recommendations for the Library Commission. And he has an item that would transfer a staff position and the funding for that position from our library development program to our library operations program. And we do support that request, largely for accounting purposes--just wanted to acknowledge that. With that, I will stop and be pleased to respond to any questions you may have. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you, Rod. Are there any questions from the committee at all? Rod, I have one question, and it's maybe a general philosophical question. Sometimes I think we sometimes lose track of, I think, in regards to the direct connection the Library Commission has to property taxes in regards to the services that you provide--municipal libraries across the state--... [AGENCY 34]

ROD WAGNER: Yeah, um-hum. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: ...in the sense of, sometimes, the appropriations that we may provide, the Library Commission ultimately has that ability to reduce and/or at least stop potential property tax increases at the local level that would normally go to municipally funded libraries. Is that something that, in general, something that you talk with your local libraries about or municipalities bring that issue up? [AGENCY 34]

ROD WAGNER: I haven't really looked at it in that sense but, you know, some of the things we do help supplement that local funding, such as the state purchases we make for subscription databases. And if we were able to do the Nebraska eReads project,... [AGENCY 34]

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SENATOR MELLO: Um-hum. [AGENCY 34]

ROD WAGNER: ...that takes...that supplies assistance to those libraries so that they can use their local dollars for the basic operations they have. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Okay, thank you. [AGENCY 34]

ROD WAGNER: Yep, sure. Thank you. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you. [AGENCY 34]

ROD WAGNER: Thank you very much. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Next testifier on behalf of the Nebraska Library Commission. Good evening. [AGENCY 34]

BARBARA HEGR: (Exhibit 34) Good evening. Barbara Hegr, B-a-r-b-a-r-a H-e-g-r. I am the library director for Morton-James Public Library in Nebraska City, Otoe County, and the current president of the Southeast Library System. I am not going to take up too much of your time this evening because it has been a long afternoon, but I did want to point out just a few things. I'm not sure how familiar you are with the six Nebraska Regional Library Systems. They are 501(c)(3) organizations, and they're contracted by the Nebraska Library Commission to service all the libraries in their regions. Those libraries include academic, school, public, special, and institutional. As an example, Southeast serves 15 counties. As you look at the sheet there you can see that that includes 12 academics, 28 special institutional, 53 public, 154 school libraries. Many of these public libraries are from very small communities and have one librarian staffing their buildings. What is their purpose? Well, they do training, consulting, promotion, advocacy, leadership, and mentoring, as well as managing their system resources. You

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will see there a small example of some of the services that the Southeast administrator provided for our region in 2011-2012. This is just two-person office, an administrator and an assistant. The assistant is part time. We do have financial expenses that are for generally maintaining a business office, as well as salaries and benefits, and then providing educational opportunities and workshops for the librarians in each region. Funding, as you can see, we receive state funding and also federal funding. It's almost 50 percent each. Federal funds have been lowered in the last couple years, and that figure for the next couple of years is unknown at this point. State funds have also decreased. I think, as the president of the Southeast Library System, we have taken as many cuts as we can without losing our effectiveness. I've been part of that budget process, and we have trimmed as deeply as I feel we can go. We are asking, for the Regional Library Systems, \$90,000, as Rod said. That is \$15,000 additional to each system with an increase again that will add another \$3,206. These administrators are tenacious, creative. They're knowledgeable. They're dedicated. They come to us. We don't come to them. They come to us. They put a lot of miles on the road coming to see us. What we learn from them, whether it is the newest social media, a new electronic gadget that's out there, a new law that might affect how we operate our libraries or how it affects how we interact with our patrons, maybe just some information on how to put that budget together--it can be as simple as right now there's a workshop being planned for the librarians in the prisons to learn how to mend books; if you can mend a book you don't have to buy a new copy--these are all simple things, but they all come together for us to do our jobs better. And when we do our jobs better, then we serve our communities much, much better. And we do provide a lot of opportunities for our people in our communities. If you would like any...some more information, there is a Web site there that you can go to and get some more information on an annual budget for Southeast Library System, and my information is there, too, if you would think of any other questions you might like to ask me. I will take any questions now. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you, Barbara, for your testimony. Are there any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you so much. [AGENCY 34]

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BARBARA HEGR: Thank you. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Next testifier on Agency 34, the Nebraska Library Commission.  
[AGENCY 34]

JOHN SEYFARTH: Good evening. My name is John Seyfarth, spelled J-o-h-n; the last name is spelled S-e-y-f-a-r-t-h. And, frankly, you wouldn't have been ever...made it to spell that. If you need a pronouncer to spell this, what did...I just...what I've lived with all my life. I want to talk a little bit about...I'm on the Eastern Library System board and we also operate on a shoestring. One of the things that we have...we are...the 2013 budget there is about the same level we were ten years ago, so...and we've had, you know, we've had to increase our personnel costs because people are...our personnel costs more money. So one of the things that I feel like we've lost a little bit of is we've lost the ability to fund some programs and grants, things like we've been able to do. And we do an awful lot of things. We do some fundraising ourselves, too, as well. You know, we've had garage sales; we've had all kinds of things like that. But it's tough. It's tough to get money, and I've personally contributed about \$1,500 in the last three or four years to the system because I think it's a very important thing. And I have also been involved in a lot of workshops that have...actually, I've had workshops in several other libraries as well because I'm a wirehead--technology person--I guess. I am retired now, by the way, but I'm still on the library board in Bellevue. I'm the president of the library board there, so...and they have kept me. I'll be off the board from the library system this summer, but I really think it's a very important program. And I also really think it's very important. The other issue, of course, that Rod talked about was NebraskAccess. And one of the things that this will do is...really, when you think about it, it's \$70,000, but it's not...this enables our little schools systems that are around to have access to the databases, the full-text databases that kids from fourth or fifth grade up are going to need to get their research done to write their essays, to write their term papers, and stuff like that. So I think you've got a really...you know, that's cheap, cheap stuff, so...and that's really the bulk of what I

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have to say. I would entertain any questions. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you, John, for your testimony. Are there any questions from the committee? I have one. [AGENCY 34]

JOHN SEYFARTH: Okay. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: And I probably could ask Barbara that as well, and she can follow up with the committee as well from the Southeast Regional Library System. It is: What's the general of community usage right now of access to broadband Internet in some of the libraries that you serve? Does that seem to be more of an ongoing service that libraries are seeing, obviously,... [AGENCY 34]

JOHN SEYFARTH: Well,... [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: ...or that individual libraries are noticing that that may be an issue where we could see potential private-public partnerships or some cross-collaboration with the Public Service Commission somewhere down the road? [AGENCY 34]

JOHN SEYFARTH: We...I think the vast majority of libraries have broadband but not everyone. Now something that has helped in the last year...and correct me if I'm wrong, say something to me. But in the last year the retired Microsoft CEO has provided some help in that area throughout...in a lot of rural libraries. So even the larger libraries got that pretty early. And, you know, my library that I worked in...I retired from the Sump Library in Papillion in 2010. Our library was the first one in the state to have, you know, WiFi because it was a cheap thing for us to do. You just put a router in and we were ready to go. But I think vast...I think we've got about 75 percent of our libraries now have WiFi in their libraries so people can bring their iPads or their computers in and do that. [AGENCY 34]

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SENATOR MELLO: Um-hum. [AGENCY 34]

JOHN SEYFARTH: So we have gotten...and I'm...there are libraries that don't have it right now and...but there are also libraries in some of our areas that provide the only WiFi service available in the town that they're in, you know. I know that's true as well. So have I said it correctly? [AGENCY 34]

ROD WAGNER: Yeah. There are...we have some more details that will be following. [AGENCY 34]

JOHN SEYFARTH: Yeah. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Okay, that would be appreciated around. [AGENCY 34]

JOHN SEYFARTH: Yeah. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you. Thank you, John. [AGENCY 34]

JOHN SEYFARTH: Okay, thank you. [AGENCY 34]

GAIL FORMANACK: Good evening. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Good evening. [AGENCY 34]

GAIL FORMANACK: (Exhibit 35) Senator Mello, members of the committee, my name is Gail Formanack. It's G-a-i-l F-o-r-m-a-n-a-c-k, and I'm representing the Nebraska School Librarians Association. With the increase of mobile devices such as this, all these young people now have phones, smart phones, and information has become more accessible than ever. However, the best information is not necessarily obtained from a Google search. Young people today have a natural affinity for technology and

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turn to the Internet to find the answers to their quick questions and also to do research for their assignments. I just retired after 34 years of school librarianship, and I saw a huge change in those 34 years in how we all access information. Teachers and school librarians find it a constant struggle to help students understand how to sift through and evaluate the immense amounts of information at their fingertips and, unfortunately, many of our students have difficulty assessing the qualifications of a Web site's author or in detecting bias. And for that reason we attempt to steer students toward magazines and journals which only publish articles that have been vetted and which meet an editorial standard. This content is available on-line, but it is not free. An example would be Time Magazine. The last issue had a wonderful report on medical bills. The author reports that it took him seven months of research to get to the bottom of all of this and make this article happen, and so somebody is paying for that. And so, in turn, that information is really worth a lot of money. And so it's these on-line databases that license and organize and publish the full text of these articles, and it can be quite expensive. And I was fortunate enough to work in a large district where we had the resources to be able to provide access to databases, but many of our smaller schools do not have the funds to do that. And so then those students go to the free Web sites. Now the Nebraska Library Commission has recognized this need and has added this request for funding to extend an existing subscription to our school users. This would be a huge step in the right direction for Nebraska's students and teachers that serve them. It would also ensure that all students in Nebraska have access to the best information that leads to the best quality learning. It's also a smart fiscal decision that will save thousands of dollars due to the economies of scale available when a vendor can only provide one bill, does training one time, etcetera, so I hope you will grant this additional funding. I will also just chime in on the Eastern Library System. I'm also a board member. Budget limitations, as you've heard, have caused us to cut programs, and we are also in the unenviable position of right now searching for a new director. And it's very difficult to meet with candidates from even out of state and have to tell them that, you know, funding for this position is pretty tenuous at this. And so it's a struggle, so we'd ask that you would also grant the funding for the systems. Any questions?

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[AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you, Gail, for your testimony. Are there any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you. [AGENCY 34]

FRANCINE CANFIELD: (Exhibit 36) Good evening, Senator Mello and members of the committee. I'm Francine Canfield, director of the Baright Public Library in Ralston. I've been director of a couple of other libraries. I also serve on the Nebraska Library Association's advocacy committee, and I am the treasurer of the Eastern Library System board. You've heard everybody's support and comments, so I want to keep this simple and then, at the end, if you'd like a demonstration of eBooks, Jake is here again to show you those. What I'd like to do is just keep it simple and put eReads into the larger perspective of publishing new technologies and the impacts on libraries. For nearly 100 years Nebraskans have been developing their communities' public libraries with books, computers, and programs customized to their residents. In the past few years libraries have struggled to balance the steady use of print books and to make eBooks available as usage and demand for eBooks have grown nearly 1,000 percent. Just think about it. It has taken 1,000 years from the invention of the printing press--first in China, then in the 1440's, in Germany, with Johannes Gutenberg--for publishing and paper to get where it is today five hundred years ago, and it was less than 30 years ago the computer came in. We went from those 16 bits to 32 to 64 to "tetrabytes" before you could blink your eyes almost. So today, nearly 30 years later, we think nothing of accessing the Internet multiple times a day on our desktops, laptops, notebooks, and phones. Our personal, business, and professional lives are four gigs of power at our fingertips, 24/7. It took nearly 1,000 years to make books commonplace. But within only three decades, technology has made eBooks more common, so common that in 2011 the nationwide sales of adult fiction eBooks increased 121 percent over the prior year as the sale of hard-core fiction declined 6 percent. The tide has turned. While print usage remains strong in our libraries, Nebraskans are using 1,000 percent more eBooks from their public libraries than they did five years ago. Nebraskans' libraries

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need the state of Nebraska's help now to provide more eBooks to fellow Nebraskans. Please invest state funding in public libraries. The budget request is only the cost of a couple of gumballs. So help Nebraskans have books and information at their fingertips, 24/7. Thank you so much for listening to everything today. Thank you. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you for your testimony, Francine. Are there any questions from the committee? Senator Nelson. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR NELSON: Thank you, Francine. What is the cost of a couple of gumballs? [AGENCY 34]

FRANCINE CANFIELD: Fifty cents, fifty cents. For two gumballs that's all it costs. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR NELSON: You're asking for thousands of dollars here. [AGENCY 34]

FRANCINE CANFIELD: I know it's \$925,000. It's \$0.50 per Nebraskan. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR NELSON: Per Nebraskan is... [AGENCY 34]

FRANCINE CANFIELD: Yes, \$0.50 per Nebraskan. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR NELSON: Oh, okay. I follow that. There's still a strong use of books in print. [AGENCY 34]

FRANCINE CANFIELD: Yes, there is. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR NELSON: That hasn't decreased any? And is there some reason why you wouldn't reduce the amount of books in print so that you can fund the eBooks? [AGENCY 34]

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FRANCINE CANFIELD: That is a very good question, and that is something that librarians are struggling with across the state. We have, for example, about 45 percent of our circulation is children's books. And preliteracy is so important to us that we firmly believe and there's...research shows that children need that tactile experience of books so, therefore, we spent money on books for children. The baby boomers and the mature adults are a strong part of our population. Many of them still like the print books, so that's a high circulation of people that we have as well. So we are...the tide will turn. We will change our budgets as times go along, but right now we need that money to get us over the hump, so to speak, because everything...that's the way it goes. You go along for awhile and sometimes just need that extra push to get you ahead. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR NELSON: And persons come in and obtain eBooks. Do they get one or two or take a whole bunch with them? [AGENCY 34]

FRANCINE CANFIELD: They can, I think, get up to five... [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR NELSON: Five. [AGENCY 34]

FRANCINE CANFIELD: ...downloaded onto their devices. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR NELSON: Okay. All right, thank you very much. [AGENCY 34]

FRANCINE CANFIELD: Did you want to see a demonstration? Jake is here. It's up to you. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: John, you want to see one? [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR NELSON: How long will it take? [AGENCY 34]

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FRANCINE CANFIELD: Jake? [AGENCY 34]

JAKE RUNDLE: Two minutes. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR NELSON: What? [AGENCY 34]

FRANCINE CANFIELD: Two minutes. [AGENCY 34]

JAKE RUNDLE: Two minutes. [AGENCY 34]

FRANCINE CANFIELD: Jake will do it in two minutes. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: That's fine. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR NELSON: Well, if the committee would like to see it, I'd like to see it.  
[AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Absolutely. [AGENCY 34]

FRANCINE CANFIELD: Thank you. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Actually, I have a couple... [AGENCY 34]

FRANCINE CANFIELD: Sure. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Jake can ask...I can...should I ask Jake the question or...?  
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FRANCINE CANFIELD: It depends. [AGENCY 34]

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SENATOR MELLO: Just in the sense of the kind of statewide system, the Nebraska...your chart here obviously...I was just remarking to Senator Harms, the chart here obviously shows the eBooks are the future. [AGENCY 34]

FRANCINE CANFIELD: Right. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: And the question is, is if we can start meeting some of that future demand now, how would the funding aid break down a little bit? And maybe this is a question for Rod in the sense of the OverDrive system or the state OverDrive system, which is more of the smaller libraries outside of the metropolitan Omaha-Ralston-Lincoln areas. How would the funding break down, so to speak, in general, percentage-wise? [AGENCY 34]

FRANCINE CANFIELD: (Inaudible.) [AGENCY 34]

ROD WAGNER: Well, the value of the group purchase, where we have 139 libraries, they all go together and they all have access to everything in that collection, no matter how small the community. I think we have a community of under-200 population that's part of this, and... [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Come up a little bit, Rod, if you could. [AGENCY 34]

ROD WAGNER: And they...each library each year contributes money to the purchasing of the books, so they would continue to do that. Whatever money that we could add to that pot of funds would help all those libraries together. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Okay. [AGENCY 34]

ROD WAGNER: And then separately there would be a portion for Omaha Library, Lincoln City Libraries, and Ralston, so. [AGENCY 34]

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SENATOR MELLO: Okay. [AGENCY 34]

ROD WAGNER: This is a portion based on population. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Okay. All right, thank you. Jake, you want to provide us a quick overview of what eBooks look like? [AGENCY 34]

JAKE RUNDLE: Sure, (inaudible) the important part. Hi. I'm Jake Rundle, J-a-k-e R-u-n-d-l-e. I am the collections librarian at Hastings Public Library in Hastings, Nebraska, (inaudible) that I get this turn. OverDrive is the statewide system that allows users to download eBooks to their personal devices--I brought two iPads; I've got a MacBook Air--and they just updated to make themselves even easier. So if can I wander? [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Yep. [AGENCY 34]

JAKE RUNDLE: This first iPad has got a book that I pulled up. The system we have in place sets up rules so that we don't own more than ten copies of any one book because, the way the publishing companies dictate, it's one to one. So if you've checked out a book, I can't, unlike most things that are digital--you can make 1,000 copies of it and it's still just as good. They have us by that. So Gone Girl is a popular mystery book out right now. It has 115 people on hold for it. We have nine copies. We only will purchase ten, and that's all based on a metric. Another book you might be familiar with, Fifty Shades of Grey, has 195 holds, or at one time it did. We are at ten copies and we will not purchase any more. And that's just outbound Nebraska, the 139 libraries sharing a collection. The second iPad has got what it looks like. The reason eBooks...I had this whole thing nicely worked up. (Laugh) eBooks are big for the elementary schools and the high schools, good for the young professional population because they don't have to access the library during business hours. And they're

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growing in population and popularity for seniors because you can mess with font, you can mess with sizes, you can mess with all that stuff without having to buy a large-print book. Being a collections library, large-print books cost more money and not everything gets purchased...or not everything gets printed. So, for instance, I bought the Killing Lincoln and Killing Kennedy right away on eBook. We could blow them up. We could check them out to seniors because they could read them. Lastly, recently OverDrive moved onto reading it in the browser. So I don't even have to download this. I can check it out. I can read it on my computer. If I have a portable device, I can move it with me wherever I go. It's always there. At the end of my three-week checkout period, it goes away and I don't have to worry about it, don't have to think about it. And it's really just as simple as having your library card, which you should all, I hope, have. (Laughter)  
[AGENCY 34]

SENATOR BOLZ: Jacob, all I have to say is that I hope that this brings about the end of library fines because I'm afraid I'm a repeat offender. [AGENCY 34]

JAKE RUNDLE: It is actually really helpful because they don't charge you. Because there's a digital...essentially, you grab permission to read it on your device and then, at the end of three weeks, you don't have to worry about forgetting to bring it back because it's just gone from your life. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Thank you, Jake, for your testimony and for the presentation. Are there any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you, Jake. [AGENCY 34]

JAKE RUNDLE: You're welcome. Thank you. [AGENCY 34]

SENATOR MELLO: Are there any further testifiers on Agency 34, the Nebraska Library Commission? Seeing none, that will close the hearing on Agency 34 and will end tonight's hearings. Thank you so much. [AGENCY 34]