

# Michigan eLibrary (MeL): A Vital Resource at Risk

## Why Additional State Funding Is Needed Now

### About the Michigan eLibrary (MeL)

The Michigan eLibrary (MeL) is the state's free digital library, administered by the Library of Michigan, an agency of the Michigan Department of Education, in partnership with libraries statewide. MeL includes two key services:

#### MeL Databases

80+ curated databases (used by students, job seekers, and researchers) accessed over 19.2 million times in 2024.

#### MeLCat

A statewide interlibrary loan system linking 435+ libraries, with access to 34 million+ books, films, and audio materials. Over 1 million+ items loaned in 2024.

### MeL Federal Funding Uncertainty

MeL is funded by both state appropriations and federal funds through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). In early March, a federal executive order directed IMLS to drastically reduce operations and on March 31, all of IMLS staff were placed on administrative leave. This effectively cuts more than \$4.8M in IMLS federal funds to Michigan, putting MeL at risk of severe service disruptions.

### **ASK of Michigan Legislators:**

***Fund the Library of Michigan's interlibrary loan program and other statewide initiatives at \$6.74 million in FY 2026, increasing the state's investment by \$5 million***

### By the Numbers

MeL saves schools, libraries, and residents millions by providing shared access to 34 million resources, career certifications, and academic databases—services that would cost 5–10x more if purchased independently. By leveraging bulk purchasing power and statewide partnerships, MeL provides these resources at fractions of individual costs. For less than \$0.77 per resident annually, MeL ensures all Michiganders—regardless of zip code or income—have 365/24/7 access to education, jobs, and opportunity.

## **Michigan Residents Rely on MeL**

Resource-sharing among libraries across the state is the current way libraries are surviving deep cuts to their budgets and still providing their faculty and students with the research materials they need. MeLCat gives Calvin University and other colleges and universities the opportunity to be good neighbors to one another and at the same time save money. If we believe that brainpower and ingenuity play a critical part in solving the state's complex problems, we will recognize that MeLCat is a lifeline for all of us.

**~Lew Klatt, Calvin University Library, Grand Rapids**

Discovering Melcat was for me the equivalent of discovering a secret door in my bookcase that swings open and allows me entry into a world of authors and subjects that would not otherwise be available to me. Melcat has let me explore many rabbit holes at no cost and gifted me with countless hours of new knowledge and enjoyment.

**~Judith, Kent District Library - East Grand Rapids**

Sodus, as a small public library, relies heavily on Melcat since we don't have a lot of our own catalog. The access to a broader range of materials through Melcat enriches our library services and provides our patrons with more resources than we could offer alone. It's heartwarming to see our community thrive with the help of this wonderful network!

**~Alexandra, Sodus Township Library, Sodus**

As a first grade teacher at a Tribal School, I find the services of MeLCat to be extremely valuable. I have borrowed books from all over the area; from picture books for read alouds to help with my students' reading comprehension, to early reader biographies and science books for our research writing, to books that help us know how to be Socially and Emotionally safe. The wide range of books offered through this service helps me be a better teacher so our children can have a bright future.

**~Bambi, Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Academy, Mt Pleasant**

I am a children's librarian and MeLCat is invaluable to the work I do. MeLCat is one of the best tools in my toolbox. It allows me to share so many more stories with the children that come visit our library. Storytelling to children is vitally important it promotes creative thinking, language development, emotional intelligence, and can help teach moral values.

**~Marisa, Rawson Memorial Library, Cass City**

As a library worker in a remote area, I see firsthand how MeLCat fills critical gaps in our library's collection. Our limited budget and space make it difficult to stock every book or resource our patrons need, and interlibrary transfers aren't always as fast as we'd like. MeLCat has been a lifeline, allowing our patrons to access a much broader range of materials quickly and efficiently. A big part of my current project focuses on promoting college readiness for local teens. Test preparation materials are expensive and can take up valuable shelf space, but MeLCat provides access to a wide range of these resources digitally—making it possible for our students to prepare for exams without added financial strain.

**~Asako, Portage Lake District Library, Houghton**

Through the years, MEL has helped me access books statewide. Most recently, as an online graduate student, MEL's interlibrary loan system helped me save \$600 in one semester by allowing me to use good sources to write a final exam paper. I am so happy that state libraries have this service available to their residents.

**~Christine, Livonia Public Library, Livonia**

As an individual rural citizen and taxpayer, I participate in a foreign policy discussion program at the Petoskey District Library called Great Decisions. The background reading for this group often refers to articles of periodicals that are no longer saved by libraries for more than a year or two.....they are digitized and available on Michigan eLibrary (MEL). The ability of rural citizens to have access to digital media is essential to move our democracy into the future.

**~John Kafer, Levering MI**