

Michigan Library Advocacy Day 2026



LIBRARIES LIGHT THE WAY

STATE SUPPORT FOR 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 and MeLCat. MeL Databases include 80+ curated databases used by students, job seekers, and researchers. In 2025, Michiganders accessed over 24 million articles. MeLCat is a statewide interlibrary loan system that links 435+ libraries and provides access to more than 34 million books, films, and audio materials. In 2025, over 1 million items were loaned between libraries.

MeL is funded by both state appropriations and federal funds through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). In 2025, both a federal executive order and the federal administration's executive budget attempted to shutter IMLS, which would effectively cut \$4.8 million in IMLS funds to Michigan, putting MeL at risk of severe service disruptions.

With this funding threat in mind, the Michigan legislature included a one-time increase of \$900,000 in the MeL General Fund budget for FY26. Those dollars allowed the Library of Michigan to renew contracts for databases and keep those resources available to Michiganders. While IMLS funding was eventually approved for FY26, the federal administration's FY27 budget draft calls for the permanent closing of the agency, eliminating federal support for MeL and MeLCat.

MeL saves schools, libraries, residents, and local communities millions by providing shared access to research articles, eBooks, career certifications, and other academic databases. By leveraging bulk purchasing power and statewide partnerships, MeL provides these resources at a fraction of individual costs. The current cost of MeL databases is \$2.5M annually. If each library were to purchase those resources independently, the total cost would skyrocket to \$61M. MeL ensures all Michiganders, regardless of zip code or income, have 24/7 access to educational resources, workforce development tools, and endless opportunities.

Every school district, public university, and community college in the state benefits from MeL resources. If students do not retain access to MeL's suite of digital databases, all of Michigan's educational institutions will reckon with a massive loss in curricular primary sources and struggle to meet high learning standards in their absence. Between these two flagship programs, they provide a hard return on investment of \$26.52 for every \$1 spent.

ASK: We respectfully request that the Michigan legislature include the FY26 one-time \$900,000 General Fund investment for MeL in the FY27 budget to sustain essential statewide services and reduce reliance on uncertain federal funding.