

INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES

MR. MARGOLIS: Bernard Margolis and I am pleased and honored to serve as the New York State Librarian. One of the wonderful, remarkable assets and resources that libraries can provide are the tools for inventors for new entrepreneurs to have really, really basic as well as comprehensive resources. People told me the story of a couple of business enterprises -- one of them that comes to mind was the LoJack. You know it is the thing you put on your car if you are worried about someone stealing it and it has now morphed into a whole variety of automobile security systems. Well, the LoJack was invented in a public library. The man who invented it had an idea, researched the patents, found out all the legal issues he needed to address in getting it patented. He found out how to manufacture a device, found out how to connect with law enforcement agencies that would be involved in the preparation of how they offer a warranty that your car wouldn't be stolen if it had a LoJack. That was done in a public library.

Many, many enterprises that we take for granted in common life had their beginnings in someone researching something in the library or someone learning how to create a business in the library and I think it is one of those

opportunities that we have now to build on -- that skill set and that resource base to tell people not only come to the library we will help you find a job but come to the library and we will help you create jobs.

Well, the other probably big example and many cities have them now. The Duck Boats, you know that tour. Boston has one. New York has one. Albany has one. I think Chicago has one. It is these amphibious vehicles that give sort of city tours and then go into a body of water and come out of the body of water. They are called Duck Tours usually. The first one of those was invented at a public library. Not only did the man figured out how to buy these surplus from the government but got all the repair manuals from the government documents collection and figured out how to get permits to drive them, how to get spare parts for them, how to train the tour guides in terms of creating a tour and the rap that they give pointing out the historic buildings and other important places along the way all happened at the public library.

When I have friends approach me and say, 'I have an idea for a business.' The first thing I do is say, 'go the public library.' Any material from the Small Business Administration, from economic development corporations, from think tanks, anything from the Federal Government, Department of Commerce, et cetera, are available today at

the public library. I think one part of the economic crisis is obviously to help people get jobs, job employment information, the one-stop employment centers that we have in many public libraries in New York, but also how do libraries use the information base, the knowledge industry support to help people who are envisioning new businesses and as a result of those businesses creating new jobs. The creation of jobs is what it is all about. New York's unemployment today is about 7.7 percent, in New York City about 8 percent. We have lost just about 200,000 private sector jobs last August. So finding people work is very dependent upon creating new jobs.

I think one very critical aspect of what libraries are doing in New York State is helping create new businesses, helping people with business plans, helping people understand the laws involved in creating business enterprises, what it takes to create a payroll and put people on the payroll, what insurance you have to get, what services do you have to engage and I think that's a very critical and important role that libraries throughout the state and small towns and large cities are doing to help respond to the economic crisis.

Now on the other side, obviously all the traditional things that libraries have done in New York from the beginning of time to help give people a chance for

economic opportunity is part of what is happening in New York. We are working with the Department of Labor. We are working with other kinds of social service organizations. What we are doing in many of our branches is coordinating outreach so that we are trying to serve groups that include people who are both unemployed and underemployed, developing new skill sets, helping people improve their English language skills, helping people in rural and agricultural communities create new opportunities and, in fact, new markets as well. We are working with the Department of Labor, as I mentioned, and hopefully one of the results is that there will be Department of Labor people actually stationed in many of our public library facilities. The Department already has one-stop employment centers in partnership with local libraries, but we are actually hoping that that can be expanded.

We also are working on some of the traditional areas around literacy not only English language skills, but GED exam preparation work both with adult literacy and family literacy as well.

And of course all the things that are necessary for people to be successful looking for jobs, how to write a resume, how to fill out an application, how to use today's Internet resources to apply for work which is necessary for even the lowest paying jobs today. Very few

places will take a resume put in an envelope mailed by the US postal service. It is all online. We are trying to develop library capacity. We have all of our 1100 libraries and branches - all have Internet access but in some places it needs to be beefed up. It needs to be much more robust and we are working on several programs to increase broadband capacities in that way.

Clearly in response to the economic crisis the library still is one of the best bargains. We don't charge for the books we loan. We don't charge for the periodicals or magazines that are available. We don't charge for the story times for kids. We don't charge for family movie nights. We don't charge for the lap-sit sessions with the preschoolers. We make available at no cost or low cost high value entertainment for people who don't have the economic resources to look for alternatives.

We cannot today yet envision what broadband will be and we actually are doing a major summit with the Yates Foundation. Our theme has been the magic of broadband but I will tell you the sort of punch line is broadband isn't magic. Broadband is necessity. We will need broadband for our people to be competitive, for our people to be safe, for our people to be healthy. Broadband is a way of equalizing the playing field. It is a way of really promoting lifelong education everywhere in a very diverse

state. While we are best known probably for our urban areas, rural New York, agricultural New York is a lot of what our state's territory includes. We want to be sure that everyone has access and broadband is really a magical tool, an important tool to be able to do that but our capacities are lacking. The governor of Australia -- just announced that its goal is to have every Australian connected with a hundred megabytes capacity and he expects that 90 percent of Australia will have a hundred megabyte service and he is looking at the low end of the service to the Outback and very remote places at being 15 or 16 megabytes.

While there are many parts of America and many parts of New York where we are barely at 1.5, one and a half megabytes so we have a long way to go in terms of investing and increasing the kind of capacity that I think will be necessary. As I said earlier, you can't apply for a job today without doing it online and if you don't have capacities that are over one and a half megabytes you cannot do an effective online application for many, many jobs. You can't do many things today online with having much more robust capacity. I think it is critically important as a tool not only for the information economy but a tool for people to have good quality of life.

I think there is keen interest in looking to

libraries as places where people can in fact get resources to find new jobs and to build new jobs. I think we have partners in the business community, Chambers of Commerce, and so on. I no longer look at those as unexpected though. I look at the broad communities that we have in New York and expect people in many different aspects of our communities to be supportive of the library and to be helpful to the library. There is not an aspect of the community that isn't helped, that isn't supported, by robust library services and I think we see that in communities throughout the state.

In my first few months here and visiting many libraries it is not unusual for people who represent many different aspects of the community whether it is arts community or the business community or the education community to come visit with me and talk with me. They share their ideas and their aspirations of how what they do might help improve the economic life of the community, but if it doesn't do that at least improve the quality of life in the community for everyone.

The state library has been challenged as well as all the libraries in the state of the libraries that we serve but personally I hope we don't have to make choices. I hope we continue to figure out creative ways of continuing service levels. Clearly, I think the demand is

so great that giving up anything means that we deprive people of some element of service that is not only desirable but in some ways necessary and required. We have had the reports that we have libraries in the state reducing their hours, closing branches, laying people off. The libraries in New York City, New York Public Library, the Queens Public Library, and the Brooklyn Public Library are particularly under challenge, potential budget cuts in the high 20 percent. The figure is being tossed about now. But those libraries are being heavily used and so we hope that the people who make public policy and come up with resources, particularly resources in limited times, will be prudent and wise and will see the library as an essential service, which it clearly is.