

# Tracing Pasts: Important resource faces huge cuts

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<http://www.newsherald.com/search/?q=Kleback&fstype=site&x=23&y=5>

There is a basic truth all librarians know. In times of financial hardships, people turn to their libraries even more than they usually do. And when the public needs us most, we need to be there.

We understand there are countless demands for every dollar, but it's important that we don't let our research libraries take the biggest hits. Their mission to preserve our history and make records available to the public is important. We need to stand up for those libraries facing the worst cuts.

One library in trouble is the State Library of Pennsylvania. An article published in The Patriot News and available online at [www.pennlive.com/news/patriotnews/index.ssf?/base/news/123449101112860.xml&coll=1](http://www.pennlive.com/news/patriotnews/index.ssf?/base/news/123449101112860.xml&coll=1) details the horrendous cuts planned. While it is reasonable to expect some cutbacks, Gov. Ed Rendell's plan to cut 50 of 57 positions and transfer one additional person leaves a staff of six to run one of the most important repositories in Pennsylvania.

Most of the researchers I know have at least one family line from Pennsylvania. Leaving a staff of six to maintain some open hours and try to catalog new acquisitions is tragic. This library owns the state newspaper collection, a rare book collection started by Benjamin Franklin and other historical documents. Will we have access? Will priceless items be protected?

The governor said he is focused on preserving public safety, social services and education. How can he separate libraries from education?

The article was just Feb. 13 so the genealogy community is just getting mobilized. I don't know if we can have much influence, but it surely is worth a try. We saved the Florida State Library once; hopefully we can help save at least some of the staff at the Pennsylvania library, too. Genealogists are terrific at advocating for the institutions we love and need.

Rendell has a Web site at [www.governor.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?](http://www.governor.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?). On his site he asks what "we" feel is important. We might not be Pennsylvania residents, but we can certainly make a case for access and preservation. Those of us who travel to libraries can talk about the money we spend when we visit.

Officials need to know that we value our libraries and want them to receive a fair share when resources need to be limited. If you agree, please take the time to contact Rendell and stand up for the State Library of Pennsylvania.