Hello, I'm Steve Bowers, from The Library Network. Today I want to talk to you about the importance of building a strong library ecosystem in Michigan. Our library ecosystem is the interconnected network of all libraries, library workers, volunteers, and associations that work together to support library services in our communities.

By working together, we can accomplish more than when we stand on our own. Whether we are supporting a local township, creating programming for an educational public forum, or having discussions with the Michigan Legislature about the value of libraries for the people of our state, a unified ecosystem of libraries working together is a powerful example of a maximized investment in all of the communities we serve.

It's important to have a connected ecosystem in place to ensure that each of the libraries in Michigan is supported. There are school libraries, libraries in higher education, public libraries, and specialized research libraries. The communities we serve value our diverse collections while viewing us all as part of a single cherished institution: The Library. If we work together we are understood and supported together. If we speak on issues together we are heard with an amplified voice. If we provide services together we are appreciated and valued by our shared Michigan community.

Strong and visible libraries are important to the public because we can provide resources and services that build our communities in Michigan. We do an excellent job of working together to share resources and maximize the investments made in each of our libraries to help create a reliable institution. Strong libraries are centers of culture and community that welcome and provide access to everyone. Strong libraries are created by developing and investing in a connected library ecosystem. Together, libraries educate, inform, and provide.

The library ecosystem includes shared resources and infrastructure: books to entertain and educate, technology to support and create, spaces to meet and facilitate, and people to ask and depend on. The people of Michigan can have a shared trust in dependable services, accurate and unbiased information, and access to our libraries. The Michigan library community supports working together in our library ecosystem and it is important because connected libraries can provide shared resources and services for the people we serve.

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