

Statement to Cumberland and Gloucester Counties
New Jersey Library Association and New Jersey Association of School Librarians
March 30, 2023

On February 21, Dr. Frederick Keating, the President of Rowan College of South Jersey, addressed the City Commission of the City of Millville, NJ, to discuss workforce development. He is eager to place the College's vocational programs in New Jersey's downtowns, where they would be accessible to more students. Commissioner Joseph Sooy suggested that it would be good to see Rowan College partner with public libraries since we are already providing these services. The New Jersey Library Association and the New Jersey Association of School Librarians applaud Commissioner Sooy's suggestion: public libraries have numerous successful collaborations with other educators, including K-12 schools, colleges, and universities.

New Jersey's libraries are dedicated to helping New Jersey residents find meaningful and rewarding employment. One of the many ways we do this is by helping our community members develop their workplace skills. For instance, the Millville Public Library received funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the New Jersey State Library to offer [Basic Computer Skills Classes](#). They also host Adult Basic Education courses (formerly known as GED classes) to assist community members in earning a high school diploma. Of course, all libraries are also happy to help anyone who visits the library find a great book or movie, assist them in getting online to file their taxes and access other digital services, or include them in one of our many free events.

During his remarks, Dr. Keating suggested that libraries only serve seniors and children, and everyone else uses the library solely to download ebooks. While it is true that New Jersey's public libraries loan millions of ebooks each year, and many residents appreciate the convenience of using their library remotely — who doesn't love free access to hundreds of thousands of ebooks? — we still loan more print than digital books to readers of all ages. These readers include thousands of college students who use New Jersey's public libraries every day as a place to study or take proctored exams, along with borrowing books for their school assignments and pleasure reading.

Librarians who work at schools and public libraries regularly discuss their work with elected officials, community leaders, and their colleagues in education and social services. This includes Dr. Keating: NJLA met with him yesterday and we expect to have further conversations about the best ways to serve our communities. There is no substitute for open communication and dialog.

Libraries enjoy widespread support, in part because of our ongoing success as educators and in part because we bring funding into our communities. Since 2020, the libraries of Cumberland and Gloucester County have earned \$4.687 million in grant support. This funding supports reading and literacy, job training, and the many other ways that libraries bring New Jersey residents together and help us all lead more fulfilling lives.

New Jersey's libraries are vibrant centers for civic life. We invite everyone to join us in serving our communities.

Ewa Dziędzic-Elliott

President of New Jersey Association
of School Librarians

Jessica Trujillo

President of the New Jersey Library
Association