



**Meeting of the
U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science
August 14-15, 2006
Washington, DC**

These minutes report actions and summarize discussion occurring at the Commission meeting. A verbatim transcript of the meeting is maintained at the Commission office.

Present on August 14

Commissioners: Beth Fitzsimmons, Chairman; Bridget Lamont, Vice-Chairman; José Aponte; Sandra Ashworth; Edward Bertorelli; Jan Cellucci; Carol Diehl; Allison Druin; Colleen Huebner; Mitzi Perdue, Herman Totten; Deanna Marcum (for The Librarian of Congress); Carol Scannelli (for the Director, Institute of Museum and Library Services).

Commission staff: Madeleine McCain, Director of Operations

Also present: Joan Challinor, Former Chairman; Nancy Davenport, Consultant; Guy St. Clair, Consultant; Miriam Nisbit, Legislative Counsel, American Library Association; Reporter, *Technology Daily*, Nancy Weiss, Legal Counsel, Institute of Museum and Library Services

Opening Remarks: After calling the meeting to order and welcoming those attending, Chairman Fitzsimmons noted that the Commission had just met in Executive Session and called upon Commissioner Totten, serving as parliamentarian, to speak to the meeting.

Commissioner Totten made two comments. First, that the changes to the agenda made in the closed session were cosmetic in nature and would have been ordinarily placed on the consent agenda. Second, Commissioner Totten reminded those attending that statutorily there are 14 voting members of the Commission and two ex-officio members without vote.

Agenda: The agenda was therefore approved.

Approval of Minutes. The minutes of the March 11-12, 2006 meeting were not distributed. The minutes will be presented for approval at the next meeting of the Commission.

Report on Closed Session: Chairman Fitzsimmons called on Commissioner Aponte to speak to the proposed consolidation of the Commission into the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the subject of the Executive Session.

Commissioner Aponte moved to record the opposition of the members of the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Sciences (NCLIS) to the proposed consolidation into the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) of the Public and State Library Statistics Program and of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Sciences activities, as described in the draft plan published by IMLS in July, 2006.

The motion was seconded. In discussion Commissioner Aponte asked to insert the entire text of the motion into the record. The text follows:

We so move, the members of the Commission: We oppose the consolidation of the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, the National Center of Education Statistics, Library Statistics Cooperative Program, and the Institute for Museums and Library Services, as described in the document "Draft for Consolidation into IMLS of the Public and State Library Statistics Programs and the National Commission on Libraries and Information Sciences Activities," dated July 2006.

In recording our opposition to the proposed consolidation, we the Commissioners state that the Commission was established with the enactment of Public Law 91-345, 20 U.S.C. 150, signed July 20, 1970. The law includes the following statement of policy:

SECTION 2. The Congress hereby affirms that library and information services adequate to meet the needs of the people of the United States are essential to achieve national goals and to utilize most effectively the Nation's educational resources, and that the Federal Government will cooperate with State and local governments and public and private agencies in assuring optimum provision of such services."

In declaring our opposition to the proposed consolidation, the Commissioners state that it is the Commission's responsibility to develop and recommend plans that will enable the American people to have adequate library and information services. In carrying out this responsibility, the Commission is directed by law to advise the President and Congress on the implementation of national policy with respect to libraries and information science.

Therefore, the members of the Commission oppose the proposed consolidation based on the following:

1. Under this plan the 36-year nonpartisan permanent statutory independence of the Commission and its essential policy development role is eliminated
2. The proposed merger of the statistics, policy development, and funding programs compromises the integrity of the programs

3. The Commission's statutory authority to advise the President and Congress on national and international policy with respect to libraries and information science is eliminated as it is omitted in the draft document
4. As noted in the statement of the American Library Association on the proposed merger of NCLIS and IMLS, responsibility for the United States as it relates to Public Law 91-345, sections 5A, 3, 4, and 6, dated July 20, 1970, and the former relationship in the standards community as a voting member of the National Information Standards Organization (NISO) is eliminated, as it is omitted in the draft document.
5. The purpose of the proposed consolidation for a more efficient and effective delivery of public services is unrealized in this proposal.

Following discussion, the Commission *approved* the motion, with one Commissioner voting against the motion, and eleven Commissioners, including one vote by proxy, in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Bertorelli moved that the Chairman be authorized to distribute documentation about the motion as she deems appropriate. The motion was seconded, and there was no discussion. The Commission *approved* the motion, with one abstention.

Chairman's Report: In her report, Chairman Fitzsimmons reviewed the history of the Commission since January, 2004 when President George W. Bush appointed and the U.S. Senate confirmed 12 new Commissioners, bringing the Commission to full strength for the first time in many years. She noted that the Commissioners chose three goals: to appraise library and information services provided to the American people; the strengthen the relevance of libraries and information science in the lives of the American people; and to promote research and development for extending and improving libraries and information services for the American people.

Chairman Fitzsimmons' report continued:

During the past three years, using private funds, support from foundations and corporations, and volunteer labor, with the exception of the NCLIS staff, who are employees of the federal government, the Commission has accomplished the following:

- Identified and recognized libraries that are providing the best health communications services for its citizens;
- Designed and began the development of a prototype emergency preparedness plan for states for using libraries as distribution centers for emergency preparedness and public warning information;

- Addressed the societal and research implications of large-scale digitization of books and other printed materials;
- Initiated the development of a national library “report card,” a national assessment of the nation’s library and information services in order to establish the value and relevancy of America’s public and school libraries; and
- Considered the library needs for an aging population, including attention to how aging Americans can be employed in libraries.

Chairman Fitzsimmons then reviewed how libraries and information science have changed since the enactment of the legislation which created the Commission in 1970. She noted how the library as a social institution has evolved from a repository of the written word to “information central,” where, as one citizen remarked to her, “access to real, everyday, and even life-saving information is available.”

Chairman Fitzsimmons then pointed out that libraries still have a role to provide enlightening and cultural material to its citizens, noting that libraries are often the only place in the community with a computer and the only place with individuals – that is, librarians – who can provide answers or help find answers to important questions. She did point out, however, that there is one weakness in our society where the work of libraries is urgently needed, and that is in the area of literacy, both childhood literacy and adult literacy. Commenting on the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy, Chairman Fitzsimmons said, “The findings showed the adult literacy levels have dropped in the last ten years. Some of the key findings were: Many people with very low literacy skills had dropped out of high school or didn’t speak English before starting school. Only 13 percent of the adults surveyed were considered proficient in literacy. Let me say that again: Only 13 percent of the adults surveyed were considered proficient in literacy.”

Chairman Fitzsimmons noted that “although literacy rates in the U.S. and other developed countries well exceed those of developing countries, the U.S. performs in the middle of the pack when compared with its main economic partners.” She stated that there is a role for public and school libraries to enrich language development, extend learning, and to support families committed to education and to economic independence. One step in breaking this illiteracy cycle, she noted in her report, is through the Battle of the Books program that NCLIS has launched in Chicago this past spring, along with Scholastic Books, Borders, NBC News, the Chicago Tribune, McDonald’s, and TCF Bank.

Concluding her report, Chairman Fitzsimmons said, “President Bush selected us to be members of the Commission based on ‘the special trust and confidence in the integrity and ability’ of each one of us. We have been good stewards of our small budget, supplementing it with programs paid by friends, partners, and

corporations. We have been fiscally responsible with taxpayer dollars and initiating policy and programs critical to today's libraries. Our strength, I believe, is in our representational base, both in terms of geography and professional backgrounds – public library directors, educators, a dean of a school of library and information science, current and former leaders of library organizations, and interested citizens from large cities to small towns across the country. Our strength is in our closeness to the people, to the American people and their information needs. That makes this Commission so very special.”

Financial Report: Director of Operations McCain pointed out that the report provides the third quarter statement of income and expenses. She noted that the Commission as an agency is not funded to cover any programs, and that its resources are used simply to keep the doors open, with the management of those resources still very tight. Without the assistance of the Commissioners and their friends and partners in helping the agency rely on independent sources to assist, the agency would not be able to do its work with such a diminished staff.

Policy Issues (ALA): Invited guest American Library Association Legislative Counsel Miriam Nisbit reported to the Commission on a variety of topics, including telecommunications, e-rate, Internet neutrality, the digitization of information, copyright (including orphan works, that is, copyrighted works whose owners cannot be found after a diligent search), and broadcast flag. All of these are topics in which the ALA has a great interest, on behalf of the Nation's librarians, and which ALA will monitor closely.

Net Neutrality, E-Rate: Consultant Nancy Davenport presented a summary of two studies done under contract for the Commission. In the first, “Internet Neutrality: Exploring the Legislative Issues in the Context of Libraries,” Davenport noted that the current discussion centers on whether content transmission on the Internet should be subject to a system of prioritization known as “tiered service.” At the present time, the underlying transmission of information treats all packets of information equally but this could change if Congress supports a move to a tiered service, and in this case, libraries would be seriously affected.

The Commissioners thanked Davenport for her report, and the following motion was made:

Resolved, that the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science advise the President and the Congress that the continuation of Internet neutrality is in the best interests of the American people.

The motion was seconded. Following discussion, the Commission *approved* the motion.

In further discussion, it was agreed that the Commission Chairman and/or her delegates prepare appropriate accompanying information as transmittal of this resolution.

Consultant Davenport also spoke to a second report prepared under contract for the Commission, "E-Rates: The Telecommunication Act of 1996." The report provides examples of how e-rate discounting has enabled communities to provide levels of library and information services that would otherwise have been unavailable to their citizens, and describes how recent proposed legislation, Deleting Online Predators Act (DOPA), if passed, will seriously impact service delivery in libraries and other information organizations.

The Commissioners thanked Davenport for her report, and the following motion was made:

Be it resolved that the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science strongly supports the continuation of the E-Rate program.

The motion was seconded. Following discussion, the Commission *approved* the motion.

Literacy/Educational Achievement/School Libraries/Battle of the Books: Consultant Guy St. Clair reported to the Commission that the broader subject of literacy, as an issue of interest for the Commission, had not previously been adopted as a specific Commission initiative. In the interest of matching the Commission's anticipated work in literacy with its initiative reviewing the connection between educational achievement and school libraries, the subject of literacy could be formally adopted. If so, the Commission could proceed with expanding its interest in educational achievement and include attention to adult and family literacy in its work in this area.

Hearing the report, the following motion was made, *that the Commission expand its strategic initiative about the relationship, based on scientific research and evidence, between school libraries and educational achievement, to include literacy and attention to and support of literacy efforts, especially in terms of reading initiatives and adult literacy for those who cannot read enough to carry out basic life skills, as demonstrated in the Commission's initiative with respect to health communication and the role of libraries in distributing consumer health information and promoting healthy lifestyles for all Americans' health literacy. This NCLIS initiative seeks to review and report on activities and programs that support adult and family literacy, in which children and parents learn together the educational values of literacy across generation of both children and parent pursuing educational goals.*

The motion was seconded. Following discuss, the Commission *approved* the motion.

The Commission then discussed the report done under contract for the Commission, in which Consultant St. Clair reviewed the background of the Battle of the Books reading program and provided information for consideration for further participation in the program by the Commission. Chairman Fitzsimmons and Commissioner Diehl reported on their participation in the Battle of the Books activities of the Chicago Public Schools Department of Libraries Battle of the Books program. Chairman Fitzsimmons also commented about how the Commission has participate with other interested groups,

including Borders, the Quills Foundation, Scholastic Books, NBC News, McDonald's, and TCF Bank. Rotary International has also expressed interest in partnering for next year's competition.

School Librarian of the Year/65% Solution: A motion to table discussion of the subject was moved and seconded and the Commissioners *approved* the motion

Consumer Health Information Task Force: Commissioner Perdue and Consultant St. Clair spoke about the work of the task force, which resulted in the 2006 Health Information Awards for Libraries and the Libraries and Health Information Forum at the National Library of Medicine on May 3, 2006. The formal report, "Libraries and Health Information: The NCLIS Health Information Awards for Libraries and The Libraries and Health Information Forum May 3, 2006" has been published and can be seen at <http://www.nclis.gov/award/NCLIS2006HealthAwardsFinalRept.pdf>. The purpose of the awards and the forum was to encourage libraries to do what they already do very well. It was the consensus of the Commissioners that congratulations are in order for the success of the awards and the forum.

Digitization: Consultant Guy St. Clair reported to the Commission that the subject of digitization and the impact of large-scale digitization on libraries had not been previously been adopted as a specific initiative for the Commission, although the subject generally fits into several of the initiatives considered when the Commission's Strategic Work Plan was adopted in April, 2004.

At the conclusion of Mr. St. Clair's report, the following motion was made, *that the Commission adopt as a strategic initiative the study of the subject of the large-scale digitization of books and other materials for the purposes of preserving them for future generations and making them available to a much wider audience. The initiative seeks to inform American citizens about the legal, societal, economic, cultural, educational, and other impacts of large-scale digitization and to identify opportunities for research and the development of policy recommendations as large-scale digitization is implemented through the larger field of library and information science.*

The motion was seconded, and following discussion, the motion was *approved*.

Present on August 15

Commissioners: Beth Fitzsimmons, Chairman; Bridget Lamont, Vice-Chairman; José Aponte; Sandra Ashworth; Edward Bertorelli; Jan Cellucci; Carol Diehl; Allison Druin; Colleen Huebner; Herman Totten; Carol Scannelli (for the Director, Institute of Museum and Library Services).

Commission staff: Neal Kaske, Director, Statistics and Surveys

Also present: Nancy Weiss, Legal Counsel, Institute of Museum and Library Services; Guy St. Clair, Consultant.

Appraisal/Assessment Initiative: Commissioner Aponte and Dr. Kaske reported on the status of the Commission's appraisal and assessment initiative, a statutory responsibility of the Commission and one that connects with the Commission's cooperative work with the National Center for Educational Statistics with the U.S. Department of Education. The objective of the initiative is to identify a metric, a benchmark with some uniformity wherein library and information services managers can measure how well they are serving their customers.

Library Services for the Aging: Commissioner Ashworth reported on the status of the Commission's initiative on library services for the aging, a statutory responsibility of the Commission and one for which Ms. Ashworth was specifically appointed. The report focused on the White House Conference on the Aging, held in December, 2005, and the Commission's role in the conference, including the distribution of a position paper on library services for the aging authorized by and prepared for the Commission.

Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Response: There was no report on the initiative for this meeting.

Other Business: Reference was made to the closing of the libraries of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. However, no further information was available for the meeting, and a motion to table the discussion was made and seconded. The motion was *approved*.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the August, 2006 meeting of the Commission was adjourned.