

**Meeting of the
U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS)
December 11-12, 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 December 11

Commissioners: Beth Fitzsimmons, Chairman; Bridget Lamont, Vice-Chairman; José Aponte; Sandra Ashworth; Edward L. Bertorelli; Jan Cellucci; Carol L. Diehl; Allison Druin; Stephen Kennedy; Mary H. Perdue; Diane Rivers; Herman L. Totten; Carol Scannelli (for Dr. Anne-Imelda Radice, Director, Institute of Museum and Library Services)

Commission staff: Madeleine McCain, Director of Operations

Also present: Joan Challinor, Former Chairman; Cynthia Borys, International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State; Judith Russell, U.S. Government Printing Office and past Deputy Director, U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science; Guy St. Clair, Consultant

Opening Remarks: After calling the meeting to order and welcoming those attending, Chairman Fitzsimmons remarked that it had been only three years earlier, in December, 2003, that most of the Commissioners had met for the first time. She noted that the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) has been involved with activities to promote, encourage, and enhance the Nation's libraries, pointing out that with NCLIS efforts ranging from issues dealing with consumer health information, disaster preparedness, school libraries, services for seniors, and literacy to digitization and international issues, NCLIS is having an impact on libraries for the people of America. She commented that the agenda and schedule of discussions for the meeting provide insight into the potential and capabilities of the Commission, and while many might question how these efforts could be given attention with a possible consolidation underway, she stated that NCLIS is moving forward, having submitted the NCLIS FY2008 budget and expecting a passback from the Office of Management and Budget shortly.

Chairman Fitzsimmons announced that NCLIS had sent a letter to the President and to Congress in November, recommending the continuation of and the support of the E-rate program, and another letter to the President and Congress, also in November, urging all necessary action to ensure net neutrality. She stated that she has been asked by a Congressional staff member to elaborate on some of the issues relating to net neutrality, and another Congressional staffer has been in touch with her about the NCLIS consumer

health information awards program and the role of libraries in this effort. She cited this interest as another good example of interaction between NCLIS and the Congress, as was initially intended in the NCLIS legislation, to provide policy advice to Congress. Although NCLIS is a small commission, Chairman Fitzsimmons said, “we do have an impact.”

She then thanked the Commissioners for attending, thus concluding her opening remarks.

Agenda: The agenda was approved as distributed.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the March 11-12, 2006 NCLIS meeting in Ann Arbor, MI were approved as distributed. The minutes of the August 14-15, 2006 NCLIS meeting in Washington, D.C. were also approved as distributed.

Operations: Chairman Fitzsimmons thanked Madeleine McCain, NCLIS Director of Operations, and the NCLIS staff for their efforts on behalf of the Commission without the benefit of an executive director. The Commissioners then honored Ms. McCain with a standing ovation.

In her report, Ms. McCain noted that the primary subject for consideration is the pending consolidation with the U.S. Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) proposed in the President's FY 2007 appropriations request and her role in dealing with the mechanisms for that consolidation: the disposition of NCLIS staff, the transfer of assets, and the proper closeout of the agency.

Another subject for consideration is current funding, as Congress has not passed the majority of the FY 2007 budget bills. The latest continuing resolution will provide funding through February 15th or until the FY 2007 bill has passed. In the event NCLIS does not have a final budget by February 15th, funding will continue to be provided through the continuing resolution process.

As for NCLIS initiatives, the FY 2007 budget provides no funding for Commission programs, and Ms. McCain noted that if the Commission is to undertake a project, it should be a major one, one that is essential to the White House and Congress, as it will entail gaining White House support, additional Congressional funding, and augmentation of those funds with private sector contributions. She pointed out that the NCLIS 2008 budget request was completed and delivered to the Office of Management and Budget on October 6th, submitted as a placeholder in the event the pending IMLS-NCLIS consolidation plan was not completely implemented by the end of the fiscal year.

Other topics covered in the operations report had to do with compensatory time carryforward, staff training, and the migration of newer systems for financial, travel, and payroll. There is no inter-agency agreement in place for the statistics program and the NCES effort at the present time, but the terms of this agreement are presently being developed to expedite the agreement process when the FY 2007 budget bill is passed.

The report also noted that the library statistics program is being managed based on a cessation of this activity by the end of the fiscal year.

Consolidation Issues: Chairman Fitzsimmons reported that there had been confusion about the sharing of comments about the consolidation sent to IMLS with NCLIS, but that they had now been received and were available for Commissioners to review. She noted that many of the comments had to do with the NCLIS Library Survey and Statistics Program, since the IMLS had primarily focused on that program.

Chairman Fitzsimmons welcomed Ms. Scanelli, who was representing Dr. Anne-Imelda Radice, Director, IMLS to the meeting (Dr. Radice serves as an ex-officio member of the Commission). Chairman Fitzsimmons noted that she had not seen any documents reporting on the progress of the plan for consolidation, particularly in terms of the Commission's role in advising about policy and how that role would be filled after the consolidation. Commissioner Cellucci commented for the record that in reviewing the press release about the consolidation, the announcement of the reconfiguration of the position of Deputy Director for Policy, Planning, Research, and Communications is a response to the consolidation, but that the Library Survey and Statistics Program did not seem to be clearly allocated. Ms. Scanelli replied that it was her understanding that the Library Statistics and Surveys Program would stay with the information technology section of IMLS and also, as noted in the press release, that Dr. Rebecca Danvers, Director of Research and Technology, is retiring and in her place IMLS will be hiring a fully certified, experienced chief information officer.

Ms. Scanelli then described specific tasks that she had undertaken for the reorganization of IMLS during the past several months, noting that the NCLIS-IMLS consolidation is included in the planned reorganization.

Policy Issues (American Corners): Chairman Fitzsimmons opened the Commission's discussion of policy issues and its several initiatives by asking invited guest Cynthia Borys to speak about the American Corners Program of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State, of which she is Director. Ms. Borys thanked the Commission for providing her with the opportunity to describe the American Corners Program.

Ms. Borys described how, when the State Department's information resource centers came about as the successors to the department's library programs, they eventually evolved into the American Corners program. The program serves as an important element of the Nation's public diplomacy program. Specifically the role of public diplomacy as practiced in the international information programs and for the State Department is to shape public perceptions of the United States, to advance the country's national interests. This underscores almost all activities that are at the disposal of the Department to produce this type of positive perception of the United States. As Ms. Borys ended her presentation, she indicated that the Commission might be involved as the Bureau of International Information Programs moves further along with the American Corners program. She introduced Wendy A. Simmons from the IIP office and invited the

Commission to contact her if there is interest in having the Commission work with the program. Chairman Fitzsimmons thanked Ms. Borys for sharing information about the program with the Commission.

Consumer Health Initiative: Chairman Fitzsimmons asked invited guest Becky Lyon of the National Library of Medicine to speak about the impact of the Commission's work, particularly with respect to the NCLIS Health Information Awards which had been presented in May, 2006 to ten libraries in recognition of their work in providing consumer health information. Ms. Lyon thanked the Commission for the opportunity to speak about the awards, and expressed her pleasure and that of all National Library of Medicine staff in being about to host the 2006 forum and awards presentation. Noting that since many of the winners of the awards received funding from NLM through its National Network of Libraries of Medicine, Ms. Lyon commented that NLM has a particular interest in the program. One of NLM's missions is to improve the health status of the American public through providing health information, and these awards, she said, are an important way to recognize those organizations throughout the country which are doing just that.

Ms. Lyon stated that NLM had received feedback from eight of the ten finalists and her report was divided into types of impact. Among these are increased visibility within and beyond the communities where the libraries are located. Other finalists had their work described for the public and featured in newspapers and on radio and in TV programs and other publications, and one was recognized in a presentation to Congress by the Centers for Disease Control.

Ms. Lyon described that another impact that these libraries have felt has been through increased outreach opportunities, including increased numbers of inquiries and interest in their programs. In a related effort, there has been interest in starting similar programs in other public libraries, and local agencies are contacting the libraries and expressing interest in working with them in this effort.

So far, Ms. Lyon reported, no libraries have described increased funding as a result of this recognition, but many of them are still hopeful. It is early yet, she noted, so there's still a possibility this impact may be felt.

Finally, Ms. Lyon noted, personal satisfaction was reported by all recipients, with feelings of empowerment, encouragement and validation for their hard work being expressed. Many recipients feel their libraries have won credibility from peers, partners, communities, and their parent institutions.

Following Ms. Lyon's report, Chairman Fitzsimmons led a discussion about the importance of the award, and it was the consensus of the Commission that the momentum be kept alive and that further efforts, perhaps involving other organizations such as the American Medical Association and the Association of Family Physicians be invited to discuss future activities.

Battle of the Books Update: Chairman Fitzsimmons spoke briefly about the program, noting that at its August meeting, the Commission made a commitment to support literacy efforts, especially in terms of reading initiatives and adult literacy for those who cannot read enough to carry out basic life skills. In connection with this initiative, the Commission is partnering with the Chicago Public Schools Department of Libraries, Borders Books, Scholastic Books, Quill's Literacy Foundation, TCF Banks, McDonald's, and the Downtown Chicago Rotary Club. She noted for the record that NCLIS acts as the partnership facilitator and no tax dollars are spend in support of the program.

Chairman Fitzsimmons commented on the value of the program, and noted that it can be replicated around the country. Rotary International, in particular, wants to use this "Battle of the Books" program as a model for use throughout the country if it is successful.

Literacy: Chairman Fitzsimmons invited Vice-Chairman Lamont to introduce Ms. Cyndy Colletti of the Illinois Literacy Program. Commissioner Lamont noted that it was the former Librarian of Congress, the late Daniel J. Boorstin, who once spoke eloquently about what he referred to as the twin perils of *aliteracy* and *illiteracy*, with the difference being people who can read but don't make the time to read, and people who can't read at all. She speculated that it was probably that leadership from Dr. Boorstin that led to librarians becoming involved in literacy efforts. These efforts were paralleled by similar efforts, such as the Business Council on Effective Literacy and the Literacy Volunteers of America. The latter has recently been reconstituted as the Blue Ribbon National Commission on Literacy, chaired by David Perdue of Tennessee.

Ms. Colletti thanked the Commission for inviting her to speak and began her description of the Illinois Literacy Program by noting that the program has been operating for 20 years, beginning in 1985 under Commissioner Lamont's direction when she was Illinois State Librarian. Ms. Colletti described her organization as a grant-making agency and that its total purpose is to make grants to other agencies to enable them to offer instructional services to adults (and with adults, to their children) who read at the very lowest levels. All of these grants can be accessed by Illinois agencies that want to participate. There is an annual grant competition, and the funding is provided by the state legislature, linked to available state dollars (funding for 2005 was \$6.7 million). Illinois is still among the few state libraries that have such programs, and one of the few state libraries that has literacy programs at this high level.

The connection with libraries is that many of the adult volunteer tutoring programs are often presented in libraries. Also, libraries obviously bring to literacy programs their wealth of materials, since literacy programs require authentic materials for people to work with, and many literacy programs are strapped for funds and cannot purchase these materials. The libraries have the books that the programs can access, and these materials are incredibly important to the literacy programs. At the same time, the libraries give participants access to technology, attracting them to the library where they learn to use computers and help their children learn to use the computers, (schools often require computerized and computer-composed work).

Finally, in ending her presentation, Ms. Colletti remarked that one of the most important assets of the Illinois Literacy Program is that it creates library users where library users did not exist before, where the people were unaware of or unable to use the library.

Chairman Fitzsimmons thanked Ms. Colletti for her remarks, and opened the floor for discussion, which followed. In the discussion, attention was given to research in the area, and the following motion was made:

Resolved, that the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science initiate the investigation of a study to quantify the value add for literacy programs to the greater population, as well as an analysis of best practices, using the Illinois model as the genesis of our product.

The motion was seconded. There being no further discussion, the Commission voted to *approve* the motion.

The Commissioners agreed informally that Commissioners Totten and Druin will travel to Springfield, IL to meet with Ms. Colletti at the Illinois State Library about possible refinements and next steps for the approved study.

Emergency Preparedness: Commissioner Kennedy, who chairs the Emergency Preparedness and Libraries Task Force, reported on the on-going work with State Librarian Michael York and other state officials. It has been the Commission's goal to encourage New Hampshire – with 235 libraries in the state – to develop a prototype program on how libraries can provide emergency preparedness and first response information for citizens. Mr. Kennedy remarked that with the recent elections, operational personnel in the state government are changing, and that it will be later in 2007 before the subject can be brought to the table. The libraries, by and large, seem ready to participate, in favor of going forward. At the present time it is just a question of educating the new people, finding out what committees are going to be where.

Asked what he sees as his goal, Mr. Kennedy responded that he would like to have a demonstration where libraries have taken a prominent role in homeland security to provide a communications support that is unbiased, reporting just the honest truth of the situation that has occurred. What is available in libraries, he noted, is people who (to use the Arlington model in the 9/11 situation) can utilize a communications base already established at the library, where the community web site could be maintained, and inform the public, giving the public access to the information it requires. Commissioner Kennedy also stated that this interest is not just about emergency preparedness for terrorist attacks. It is for any catastrophe that could happen to a state, to help people get redirected and back on their feet again.

As a member of the State Library Commission, Mr. Kennedy expects to continue these efforts, and he and Mr. York expect to continue their work together. He will report their progress back to the Commission.

Science Information Policy: Chairperson Fitzsimmons opened the discussion by explaining that at the Commission's August 15-16, 2006 meeting, reference was made to the closing of the libraries of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. However, no background information had been prepared for the meeting, and a motion to table the discussion was made and approved. In introducing the agenda item, Chairman Fitzsimmons invited Vice-Chairman Lamont to lead the discussion.

Vice-Chairman Lamont introduced the following resolution:

Resolution on Access to Information in Federal Libraries

Whereas the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) affirms that the Federal government's public information resources are a strategic national asset owned by the people, held in trust by the government, and should be permanently available to the people, except when restricted by law; and

Whereas public information resources serve a clear, broad national public policy interest by ensuring the recording, preservation, and availability of the nation's heritage as that heritage is documented by its public information resources; and

Whereas public information resources serve as a building block for the national policy of freedom of opinion and expression and enable wide, easy, and equitable public access to government information resources; and

Whereas public information resources guarantee researchers, students, parents, teachers, and businesses, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and ordinary citizens access to a comprehensive and authoritative research collection of the government's knowledge holdings; and

Whereas public information resources facilitate active and informed citizen participation in government programs and processes; and

Whereas the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Services (NCLIS) has addressed and provided recommendations on these issues in its "A Comprehensive Assessment of Public Information Dissemination" published in 2001: Now, be it therefore

Resolved, that the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) urges that prior to making any decision to close a Federal library, cut services, or dramatically restructure an agency's library system, public and Congressional input be solicited in an open process.

A motion to accept the resolution was made and seconded.

The Chairman called for discussion.

In opening the discussion, Vice-Chairman Lamont stated that the proposed closing of the libraries of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is a subject of concern within the library and information science profession and in the scientific community. As the independent Federal agency charged with advising the President and Congress on policy having to do with libraries and information science, the topic should be considered by the Commission.

Noting that she was pleased to recognize how well served the present Commissioners had been by previous Commissioners, Commissioner Lamont provided the information that, as noted in the resolution, NCLIS had conducted a major study and submitted its report to the President and Congress in 2001. In the report, "A Comprehensive Assessment of Public Information Dissemination," the Commission took a very strong stance on the role of the Federal government in assuring access to Federal government information.

At the present time, although the current focus is on EPA libraries, other agencies with libraries have quietly closed the libraries or cut back services significantly, so instead of taking action only on EPA library closures, the suggestion was made to go back to this earlier work done by the Commission and broaden the approach to communicate to the President and Congress the Commission's interest in the continued responsibility of the Federal government to assure access to Federal government information as it affects all kinds of libraries at the Federal government level.

Quoting from the study report, Commissioner Lamont pointed out that the Commission had affirmed already that the Federal government's public information resources are strong, are considered to be strategic national assets, owned by the people, held in trust by the government, are required to be permanently available to the people except where restricted by the law; and that as public information should serve a clear broad national public policy interest.

Following further discussion, the Chairman called for the vote, and the Commission voted to *approve* the motion.

Following the vote, Commissioner Totten, as parliamentarian for the Commission, commented on the resolution and for the record noted that the Commission does not have to take any further action. The motion is to approve a resolution with respect the posture of the body [the Commission], and the body is not saying the Commission is going to be an advocate for either side in the debate.

Following further discussion, and with reference to the 2001 report, Commissioner Totten recommended that the Commission look seriously at policy documents produced by the Commission from its inception, noting that the body of NCLIS policy documents is large and impressive. Commissioner Totten commented that, as previous Chairman

Challinor had noted on several occasions, the Commission has throughout its history served as the “think tank” for the Nation in matters having to do with library and information science.

Recess: There being no further business for the day, the Commission was recessed, to reconvene the following day.

Present on December 12

Commissioners: Beth Fitzsimmons, Chairman; José Aponte; Sandra Ashworth; Edward Bertorelli; Jan Cellucci; Carol Diehl; Allison Druin; Stephen Kennedy; Mary H. Perdue; Diane Rivers; Herman Totten.

Commission Staff: Dr. Neal K. Kaske, Director, Statistics and Surveys

Digitization: Chairperson Fitzsimmons introduced the Commission’s next guest speaker by referring to the symposium sponsored by the Commission and the University of Michigan University Library in March, 2006, “Scholarship and Libraries in Transition: A Dialogue about the Impacts of Mass Digitization.” She commented that the Commission had recently added the study of the digitization of information to the Commission’s initiatives and welcomed invited guest Doug Loynes.

Mr. Loynes, Director, Content Initiatives, OCLC, Dublin, OH described his role at OCLC as connected with a project called WorldCat. It is a shared resource with about 73 million records and over 1.1 billion holdings associated with those records. OCLC has an initiative called WorldCat.org, which is an attempt to make those resources more readily available to patrons, wherever the library patrons are. Mr. Loynes’s role is to design a service that will allow libraries to customize the product for their individual needs. His presentation to the Commission described how the product helps people find things on the network, and then link back to libraries, thus providing channels to libraries for end users.

Mr. Loynes reported on OCLC’s strategy, as a cooperative, and how the company is making its plans based on the results of a report that OCLC did a couple years ago on the perceptions of libraries. For example, one finding of the survey is that when end users are asked about libraries, the first thing they refer to is books. They make a complete association between libraries and books, which Mr. Loynes noted is both a good thing and a bad thing. On the whole, end users have very good will towards libraries, which is very positive. At the same time, though, end users’ expectations are limited to books, and there are of course many more services provided through libraries. The WorldCat.org program is designed to build on the good will that people have about libraries, both positive associations and their expectations, and then to help libraries exceed those expectations to show how libraries can fit into their lives in other contexts.

Mr. Loynes described the “Amazoogle effect,” a term that was coined by Lorcan Dempsey in OCLC’s Office of Research, the idea being to look for clues, following the examples of Amazon and Google. The “Amazoogle effect” has the following characteristics:

- comprehensive (enough)
- accessible
- immediate gratification
- user behavior factor in defining service
- major internet hubs

That research informs OCLC's strategy, which is in three parts:

- to develop a consumer platform to deliver library services (a slight but important departure from how OCLC has framed its business up until recently)
- to develop value-added network library services, so now that OCLC – on top of that consumer platform – can build additional services to help libraries extend their reach while lowering costs, which is OCLC's historical mission; and finally,
- to syndicate content and services

Mr. Loynes then described how the product, using the library links, can enable the end-user conducting the search to enter the ZIP code, and the location of the title is displayed, in the library in the user’s area. The link from WorldCat to the local library OPAC enables the end-user to establish that the book is available locally.

Following further discussion, particularly about the larger role of OCLC in enabling libraries to enhance their services to library users, Chairperson Fitzsimmons thanked Mr. Loynes for speaking to the Commission.

Appraisal/Assessment Initiative: Commissioner Aponte described the initiative as seeking to build an instrument (a “report card” on America’s libraries) that better reflects what's happening in public libraries and evaluate that instrument and, secondly, how to build a digest of the tools available for librarians to use with funding authorities.

Commissioner Aponte noted that library managers can speak about growth, but there needs to be substantive work in evaluating programming. So developing an instrument that includes programming is a high priority, an instrument that includes web use, database use, database instruction, and much more than comparative numbers.

Commissioner Aponte then described a study done in Ohio, Southwestern Ohio's Return from Investment in Public Libraries, dated June 22, 2006. This seems to be the first model that addresses creating public value based on computer use within the library and on training for computer use.

Dr. Kaske then distributed a chart that described the impact of libraries on the individuals and society, as well as the beneficial effects in economic terms that a library has on the

community. He then noted that most of the evaluations do not attempt to look at the value of the library because it is very difficult to measure. It is called an intangible, and information, as far as its value is concerned, is different for each person. There is no fixed market value for information.

There followed a wide-ranging discussion about evaluation and evaluation metrics for libraries, with a major problem being that most governing authorities expect libraries to be counting products, when in reality what a library provides is services. Dr. Kaske pointed out that evaluating services is very different than evaluating the efficiency of products getting into and out of a library, and he asked the Commissioners to give thought to how the Commission might move forward in figuring out how to evaluate library services.

Library Services for the Aging: Commissioner Ashworth reported that a number of strategies came out of the White House Conference on Aging, dealing with “changing awareness to action,” a conference theme. As the conference report summary describes, the aging of the population is one of the most important demographic trends in the United States. Indeed, it is one of the most important demographic trends worldwide, but exactly how this unprecedented change will affect America and the rest of the world is not known with any certainty. The obvious need, Commissioner Ashworth reported, is that informed planning and preparation is required.

The value of libraries is of course a given among all who work with libraries and library organizations, but (as Mr. Loynes’s presentation had noted) that is not necessarily the mind set of users. Too many users in the United States view a library as books, and those who work with libraries, including the Commissioners, know that a library can be more than books, should be more than books, and should continue to be a useful resource for Americans in general.

Commissioner Ashworth reported that what she had identified in going through all of strategies from the conference is that for far too many libraries in the United States, the ability to provide needed resources and services is severely compromised by limited access to high-speed connectivity and expertise. That situation is going to be increasingly more important as far as accessing consumer health education (or accessing any kind of resources within the immediate geographical area of the library) is concerned. Commissioner Ashworth noted that this situation has huge ramifications for the individual, for the communities, and for the nation.

Stating that she was selectively quoting Dorcas Hardy, who was the chairman of the policy committee for the White House Conference on Aging, Commissioner Ashworth directed her questions to the Commission as a whole: Can America's libraries afford *not* to rethink old ways of doing business, afford *not* to act in more modern strategic ways and cut across existing stove-piped programs and organizations, afford *not* to seek innovation and collaboration?

From Commissioner Ashworth's point of view, it seems critical that America's libraries should be able to help America's people, whether they're aging, the younger generation, the illiterate, or whoever they are and whatever the needs might be. The questions have to do with improving access to resources and funding and to build capacity and diminish the gap between those who have and those who have not.

Commissioner Ashworth ended her report with an appeal to the Commission, asking the Commissioners to help her identify how, within the Commission's legislative mandate, the Nation can plan and prepare to ensure that America's libraries meet the needs of the Nation and its people in this time of unprecedented demographic change. She listed three particular areas of concern, beginning with, of course, the change of the aging population (Commissioner Ashworth's particular area of responsibility as a Commissioner), the change in terms of immigration, and the change in terms of the growing population of young people.

Commissioner Ashworth suggested that one approach might be to follow the suggestion of Allen Kleiman, who has been instrumental in the development of ALA's "Successful Aging at Your Library Program" (to be unveiled at ALA Midwinter in January). Kleiman sees a very vital role for the Commission to serve as a connector or convener, because there are some very serious issues with respect to stove-piping or silo-ing of programs. This was the strongest outtake from the White House Conference on Aging, and the Commission is positioned to be the voice for bringing these issues to the attention of those who need to know about them.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the December 11-12, 2006 meeting of the Commission was adjourned.