

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

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The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) was established by PL 91-345 in 1970 as a permanent, independent agency in the executive branch, reporting directly to both the president and Congress. Its authorized functions include appraising the adequacies and deficiencies of current library/information services, studying library/information needs and analyzing the means by which these needs may be met, promoting research and development activities to improve library/information services, developing overall plans for meeting library/information needs of the nation, advising all levels of government and private agencies on library and information services, and advising the president and Congress on the implementation of national information policy.

WHCOLIS-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Much of the commission's activity during 1980 arose from, or was related to, the first White House Conference on Library and Information Services (WHCOLIS), which was held in mid-November 1979. The first order of business was completing and submitting to the president, within the required 120 days, the report of the conference. The multimedia report (audio- and videotape, microfilm, and paper) was submitted on schedule, and the president appointed a high-level interagency task force to review the recommendations and recommend responses to the president. In late September, the president transmitted the report of the conference to Congress with a message emphasizing four major points: the importance of libraries (emphasizing increased budgetary support for resource sharing, research and development, and research libraries); new legislation for library and information services; government information (affirming the key role of depository libraries and initiating co-location of Federal Information Centers with libraries); the needs of the disadvantaged (emphasizing combating functional illiteracy and minimizing barriers to information access); and the new information and communications technologies (encouraging their application). [The complete text of President Carter's report is reprinted in the Special Reports Section of Part 1—*Ed.*] The commission moved promptly to respond appropriately to the initiatives contained in the president's message. In addition to submitting a request for a supplemental appropriation for FY 1981 and a revised larger request for FY 1982 (which were disallowed by the Office of Management and Budget), NCLIS is actively seeking funding from other agencies and institutions to assist it in the many activities of implementation needed to maintain the momentum engendered by the White House Conference and the president's message.

Meanwhile, NCLIS had moved ahead in following up on several of the White House Conference resolutions. The one that involved the largest number of people was convening the first meeting of an ad hoc committee (now called the white house conference on Library and Information Services Taskforce (whcLIST).

After an intensive three days in Minneapolis, whcLIST agreed on a governance structure consisting of four officers chosen at large and five board members, elected on a regional basis. The 91 attendees reviewed the 64 resolutions from WHCOLIS and made recommendations concerning tasks to be undertaken to accomplish the goals of each resolution, which groups should act as agents for the tasks, and what time frame should be established for each task. The steering committee plans to meet during the American Library Association midwinter meeting, and the full whcLIST hopes to meet again in 1981. NCLIS served as a facilitator in organizing the follow-up meeting on whcLIST, and the commission, having served as a catalyst, is now in full support of whcLIST's desire to function as a separate, independent group.

The White House Conference also provided the impetus for NCLIS to initiate several other activities, some of which had been under consideration for some time, but deferred until the results of the conference were available. Three new task forces began their activities during 1980. The first of these is the Task Force on Community Information and Referral Services. This task force is based on the premise that, if the library is to become the first place in the community to which people turn when seeking information or services, it must provide the library user at all socioeconomic and cultural levels with information and, where appropriate, referral to sources (e.g., governmental, community, neighborhood, or voluntary organizations) that can provide answers and assistance to meet their needs. The task force is seeking to define appropriate roles for libraries in the provision of community information and referral ser-

vices and to define ways in which libraries can move toward fulfillment of these roles. The task force met three times during 1980, in conjunction with regular NCLIS meetings, and will continue its efforts through 1981.

The second task force, which held its first meeting in late October, is the Task Force on the Role of the Special Library in Nationwide Networks and Cooperative Programs. This task force will examine ways of making the underutilized and under-rated resources of the nation's special libraries available to the emerging nationwide network and of making the resources of the network available to the special libraries. An unusual feature of the task force is that the commission is supporting expenses only for commissioners and staff. The Special Libraries Association is paying the expenses of other members.

In early November, a third newly formed task force, the Task Force on Library and Information Services to Cultural Minorities, held its first meeting. This task force is charged with exploring the current status of library and information service programs in support of the needs and desires as expressed by minority groups; developing programs designed to encourage ethnic groups in local communities to cooperate in planning, delivery, and evaluation of library programs; determining the strength of existing collections in libraries; and developing criteria and methods for expanding and improving cultural minority materials for library and information services.

Also in response to concerns about better use of federal library and information resources expressed by the White House Conference, NCLIS undertook in 1980, in cooperation with the Library of Congress and the Federal Library Committee, an 18-month study of intergovernmental library resources and services around the country. Its purpose is to propose ways to improve coordination of federal libraries and information resources and services to meet both national and local needs. This project has been undertaken, in part, in response to several resolutions of the White House Conference and the NCLIS program document *Toward a National Program for Library and Information Services: Goals for Action*, which strongly emphasized the important contributions federal libraries and information services can make and the need to minimize overlapping and duplication.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

While activities engendered by the White House Conference occupied much of the commission's attention during 1980, its regular responsibilities were not neglected. The ongoing Task Force on Public/Private Sector Relations, established to make a significant contribution to the delineation of the proper roles of government and private organizations with respect to the generation and dissemination of scientific, technical, business, and other information, submitted to the commission at its December meeting an interim report and expects to complete its recommendations by mid-1981. The task force has identified eight principles involved in the interaction among the three sectors—private enterprise, not-for-profit organizations, and government. The final report from this task force is expected to be a document of considerable interest to the library and information community.

NCLIS also continued its efforts in the international arena by agreeing, at the request of the American Library Association, which was representing many of the major library and information associations in the United States, to pay approximately one-half of the U.S. national membership dues to the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). This commitment broadens the international activity begun by the commission's earlier support of the Universal Availability of Publications program. The International Cooperation Planning Group, chaired by Robert

Chartrand, completed its efforts and reported to the commission recommending the establishment of a task force on international cooperation. This effort was initially approved, but budget constraints forced NCLIS to defer the initiation of this effort, pending obtaining additional funding.

In July, on the tenth anniversary of the signing of PL 91-345 establishing the commission, NCLIS was finally able to hold a meeting at which day-to-day business took a back seat to thinking about the evolving roles and goals of the commission. Two days of intensive interaction among the commissioners produced a restructuring of commission committees; a list of proposed projects, which will be ranked in order by priority to provide an agenda for the coming years; suggestions for streamlining internal procedures; and a better understanding of the commission's current and potential roles. Many of the recommendations, particularly those pertaining to internal procedures, have already been—or are in the process of being—implemented.

Through an unusual agreement between the commission and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Science and Education Administration (SEA), Gerald J. Sophar, executive officer of SEA's Technical Information System (TIS), has been placed on loan to the commission for an indefinite period. The purpose of this is to provide a neutral focal point for encouraging other federal information-oriented agencies to follow SEA's lead to focus useful scientific, technical and social information to the small businessman, the farmer and local community groups. The program was started at TIS in 1978 in response to a congressional mandate to SEA in new authorizing legislation (Farm Bill 1977) that it should place greater emphasis than in the past on the transfer of the results of federally supported research to the people of the United States. SEA/TIS linked its new program to two conferences: The White House Conference on Small Business, and the White House Conference on Library and Information Services. This program uses a public library to transfer the results of research (e.g., Denver Public Library's Regional Energy/Environment Information Center) and incorporates a training program for community libraries in cooperation with Case Western Reserve's School of Library Science to acquaint the public and community librarians with the needs of small businesses, farms, and local community groups. In addition, it provides training on how to access the information and data that, until now, has been essentially available to large enterprises only. This program may serve as a prototype for the revitalization of the public library as an essential link between the federal government's research efforts and the public.

At the end of June, Alphonse F. Trezza, who had been the executive director of NCLIS since 1974, left the commission to join the Library of Congress staff. After an extensive search effort, chaired by Bessie B. Moore, vice chairman of NCLIS, the commission selected Dr. Toni Carbo Bearman as the new executive director. Dr. Bearman, who has had 19 years experience in the library/information field, began working at the commission in mid-November. Between Mr. Trezza's departure and Dr. Bearman's arrival, Colonel Andrew A. Aines, a former commissioner, served as acting executive director, on loan from the Department of Energy, Office of Scientific and Technical Information.

With the new guidance provided by the White House Conference and the president's message, the new priorities developed at the commission retreat, and the new staff leadership, the commission is looking forward to a renewed effort for serving the new administration, the Congress, and the people of the United States.