

# Federal Agencies

## 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. The commission has four major roles: (1) to serve as a "resident expert" for both the executive and legislative branches; (2) to be an "honest broker," bringing together agencies in both branches to focus on problems of common interest; (3) to serve as a forum for the entire library/information community, including both the public and private sectors; and (4) to be a catalyst to help get programs implemented.

### WHCOLIS-RELATED ACTIVITIES

During 1981, NCLIS continued its strong emphasis on promoting implementation of the resolutions of the first White House Conference on Library and Information Services (WHCOLIS). As part of its ongoing planning process, the commission established priorities for the year. Among the major sources of ideas were the president's message to Congress transmitting the WHCOLIS report, the recommendations of the White House Conference on Library and Information Services Taskforce (WHCOLIST), the commissioners' own careful examination of the 64 WHCOLIS resolutions, and their own assessments of issues and program areas. The commissioners determined that NCLIS should emphasize three areas of activity for the next year: the development of specifications for revised library and information services legislation; improving the dissemination of federal information; and resource sharing and the application of technology.

In fulfillment of the commission's dual responsibilities of implementing the resolutions of the WHCOLIS and advising government agencies on matters pertaining to library and information services, the chairperson sent a letter to the head of each government agency, enclosing copies of the resolution(s) for which that agency was considered to have primary responsibility and requesting information on actions being taken or planned to implement the resolution(s). All agencies have responded and have provided information on their implementation of the resolutions.

The WHCOLIST held its second plenary meeting in Detroit in September, in conjunction with an oversight hearing on the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA).

The participants received reports of activities in 40 states and 4 territories engendered by the White House Conference and the pre-conferences. A number of speakers discussed critical issues and ongoing activities. Alice Ihrig, director of Civic and Cultural Programs, Moraine Valley Community College, spoke on the need for all types of libraries and librarians to work together and present a united front. Charles Benton, chairperson of NCLIS, brought the task force up to date on NCLIS activities. Margaret Warden, former state senator of Montana and member of NCLIS (and chair of its Legislation Committee) spoke on the necessity for communicating with legislators at all levels. E. J. Josey, chief of the Bureau of Specialist Library Services, New York State Education Department (and chair of the NCLIS Task Force on Services to Cultural Minorities) urged the use of existing groups to promote the cause of libraries. Other speakers included Eileen D. Cooke, executive director of the American Library Association (ALA) Washington office, and New York state senator Major Owens.

Eleven critical areas were identified by WHCOLIST for measuring progress, including, among others, the enactment of legislation to increase library funding and to authorize multitype library cooperation, adult/user education programs, continuing education for librarians, and efforts to heighten library visibility/public awareness. The next annual meeting is tentatively scheduled for September 1982 in Atlanta, with at least one meeting of the steering committee at the ALA Midwinter meeting in Denver in January.

### Specifications for Legislation

Recognizing that a fundamental element for improving library and information services is carefully constructed legislation, the commission has devoted considerable attention to developing specifications for such legislation. A first effort in this direction, the Proposed National Library and Information Services Act included in the *WHCOLIS Final Report: Summary*, was based on the 64 resolutions of the first WHCOLIS. Commission staff prepared additional documents for the commission, including an overall analysis of library/information issues and two detailed analyses in the areas of networking/resource sharing, and research, education, and training.

Beginning in September, the Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education of the House Committee on Education and Labor, under the chairmanship of Congressman Paul Simon, held a series of oversight hearings on LSCA in various cities around the country. Throughout these hearings, NCLIS assisted in identifying and scheduling witnesses to ensure input from all concerned constituencies. Additional oversight and legislative hearings are planned for 1982 and 1983. NCLIS has been asked to analyze the results of these hearings and make recommendations for specifications for legislation.

In addition to this direct assistance, the reports of two NCLIS task forces will provide valuable information for these specifications for legislation. The Task Force on Community Information and Referral Services, under the chairmanship of Robert Croneberger, director, Memphis-Shelby County Public Library and Information Center, has developed definitions and elements of information and referral, and identified the problems limiting the effectiveness of information and referral efforts to date. The task force, which has met six times, has prepared recommendations for corrective action to minimize these problems and to improve the provision of information and referral services. The final report is scheduled to be presented to the commission at its first meeting in 1982. The Task Force on Library and Information Services to Cultural Minorities, under the chairmanship of E. J. Josey, chief of the Bureau of Specialist Library Services, New York State Education Department, has met four times and held two open hearings at the annual meeting of the ALA in San Francisco in late June. A drafting subcommittee will be work-

ing on the final report for approval by the full task force at its final meeting in the spring. The report, which is expected to be submitted to the commission in mid-1982, will include recommendations for improvement in five broad areas: materials and resources; personnel; programming; funding; and needs. Elements of these recommendations will include legislative provisions; equitable distribution of available funds; programming for cultural awareness; cooperation with other service agencies; recruitment of minorities into librarianship; education (including continuing education) of library personnel; collection development, utilization and preservation; production of multimedia materials by and for minorities; and literacy programs. Recommendations from these two task forces will be incorporated into specifications for library/information legislation.

### Improving Dissemination of Federal Information

In 1979, after several years of planning, NCLIS established a task force on the roles of government and private organizations with respect to the dissemination of scientific, technical, business, and other information. This task force was carefully assembled to include seven representatives from each of three sectors: public, private not-for-profit, and private for-profit. Under the chairmanship of Robert M. Hayes, dean, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of California-Los Angeles, the members of the task force reached nearly unanimous agreement on seven principles that should guide federal government involvement in information activities. The members of the task force also reached substantial, and in most cases nearly unanimous, agreement on 27 recommendations for steps to be taken in implementation of those principles.

The principles relate to the following major issues:

1. The need for the federal government to take a position of leadership in facilitating the development and fostering the use of information products and services. As part of that, the open dissemination of information from governmental activities should be regarded as a high priority responsibility, especially through private sector means.
2. Private sector investment in information resources, products, and services should be encouraged and not discouraged. As part of that, libraries and other information services in the private sector should be used as a means for distribution of information from the federal government, in preference to using newly created governmental agencies.
3. The government should not engage in commercial information activities unless there are compelling reasons for it to do so, and there must be well-defined procedures for determining that such reasons indeed are present. Prices for government products and services should be consistent with the actual costs for making the information available.
4. If private sector information is included in any package of governmentally distributed information, the private sector property rights should be carefully protected.

Since the members of the task force strongly emphasized that the principles and recommendations should not be taken out of the context of the complete report, interested persons are referred to the final report, *Public Sector/Private Sector Interaction in Providing Information Services*, which will be available in the spring of 1982.

The NCLIS/LC-sponsored Intergovernmental Library Cooperation Project, under the direction of Alphonse F. Trezza, examined the interactions among library and information service operations at the federal, state, and local levels of government. The purpose of this project, which was undertaken jointly with the Library of Congress and the Federal

Library Committee, was to develop ways in which government agencies at all three levels can improve cooperation to meet national and local needs and to improve the dissemination of government information. The report concludes that the federal libraries represent a microcosm of the nation's libraries as a whole, encompassing libraries of all types, including academic, scientific, technical, other special libraries, general, and school. It also recommends that a federal library network be established to (1) coordinate efforts for more effective sharing of resources and services among federal libraries and information centers at both the field and national levels; (2) improve resource sharing and cooperation between federal and nonfederal libraries at the local, state, and national levels; (3) interact with cooperatives, state, regional networks, and organizations; (4) provide improved access to collections in federal libraries and information centers through the development of a data base of federal library holdings and government publications, in cooperation with the Government Printing Office (GPO) and National Technical Information Service (NTIS), and federal agencies generally; (5) provide coordination and consultant assistance to federal libraries in the selection, installation, and use of the most efficient information technologies; (6) develop guidelines for ongoing evaluation of federal library and information activities, projects, services, programs, and plans; and (7) provide for educational programs designed to encourage and support professional development in areas related to network concerns. [For further information on the Intergovernmental Library Cooperation Project, see the report in Part 4 of this volume.]

In addition to these projects, NCLIS has been working with the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on implementation of the Paperwork Reduction Act (PL 96-511), providing material and advice on information policy, standards, and information resources management, and forwarding draft recommendations from the Task Force on Public/Private Sector Relations. In addition, the commission has brought together key decision-makers from agencies in both the executive and legislative branches—including the General Accounting Office (GAO), the NTIS, the National Archives and Records Services (NARS), the Joint Committee on Printing, and the Federal Publishers Committee—to discuss information management issues and information dissemination. The commission also continues to work closely with state and local agencies, professional and trade associations, and individuals on issues in the library/information field. One of these efforts resulted in a study of federal information centers and their relationship to the GPO Depository Library Program and existing libraries. In another effort, the commission is carrying forward its mandated responsibility to study and analyze the informational needs of rural America by working closely with the National Agricultural Library and also by giving support and guidance to the program of the Intermountain Community Learning Information Center Project (Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming). This is a grass roots activity, essentially dependent on the state and local governments and the state extension services.

### **Resource Sharing and the Application of Technology**

While many of its programs and activities relate to resource sharing, the commission's principal effort in this area has been the Task Force on the Role of the Special Library in Nationwide Networks and Cooperative Programs (jointly sponsored by NCLIS and the Special Libraries Association). This task force held a total of four meetings, and its final report will be completed early in 1982. Even before its final report, this task force can take credit for a significant accomplishment. One of the major factors deterring special libraries from joining networks using the services of OCLC, Inc. (Online Computer Library Center), a major on-line cataloging service, was the OCLC requirement that libraries using

the service will contribute all of their current roman alphabet on-line cataloging to the OCLC data base as a condition for using that data base. This concern was expressed in a letter to Rowland C. W. Brown, president of OCLC, Inc., from the chairperson of the task force (Patricia W. Berger, National Bureau of Standards) and the president of the Special Libraries Association (James B. Dodd, Jr., Georgia Institute of Technology).

In his reply, Brown stated that the OCLC board does not intend to "require any library, including special libraries, to contribute holdings which are considered proprietary or classified and would not be available for general research, lending, etc. We understand perfectly your concern not only about divulging proprietary information itself, but even revealing the scope of special collections in a manner which would diminish competitive security." He adds,

our Board has specifically accepted the fact that we do not interpret the intent to withhold the cataloging of such materials as being in conflict with the requirement to catalogue *all* current holdings. We accept the judgment of the library and in effect place the burden of honoring in good faith the requirement to contribute all holdings other than those that would generally create security . . . difficulties for the library. Obviously, budgetary or economic considerations or other reasons one might choose to revert to searching without the obligation of contributing must not be permitted to enter these decisions or we will severely impair the viability of the system.

This reply removes a substantial barrier to special library participation in network activities.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

The commission has continued its efforts to promote awareness of NCLIS, its activities and its goals in the library and information service community, including public, professional, and private organizations and individuals. Simultaneously, NCLIS has sought to improve its own awareness of developments in the community by scheduling both of its 1981 meetings in conjunction with meetings of major associations. The April meeting was held in Chicago, in conjunction with the National Information conference and exposition sponsored by the Information Industry Association, and the June meeting was held in Atlanta, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Special Libraries Association.

## FUTURE PLANS

During 1982, NCLIS plans to continue its work on the development of specifications for legislation and to investigate other new areas such as services to senior citizens and the changing role of the public library. NCLIS will also continue its assistance to Congress in oversight and legislative hearings on library legislation. It will be continuing its work with OMB on the implementation of PL 96-511, and the work with all agencies at all levels, as well as with professional and industry groups, on the improvement of library and information services to all citizens.