
Federal Agency and Federal Library Reports

National Commission on Libraries and Information Science

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Since its creation in 1970 by PL 91-345, the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) has worked cooperatively with other executive branch agencies, the U.S. Congress, the library/information community, and the private sector to provide guidance and support for library and information policies, plans, and programs at the highest level of government. For FY 1985, NCLIS designated four major program areas: (1) improving library and information services to meet changing needs, (2) access to information, (3) information technology and productivity, and (4) policy, planning, and advice. Within these four areas, the commission undertook a broad range of activities to help improve the nation's access to library and information resources. Although it is a minuscule agency by federal standards, NCLIS is able to accomplish many things through partnerships with the many agencies, organizations, and individuals concerned with the future of library and information services in the United States.

Partnerships for Meeting Changing Needs

In May 1985, NCLIS and the Administration on Aging (AOA) jointly announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding that commits the two agencies to work cooperatively at the federal level and through their respective networks to improve the delivery of library and information services to America's elderly citizens. As a result of the agreement, staff from the two agencies began a series of meetings to become better acquainted with the operation of each agency and to develop plans for achieving the goals of the agreement. Every county in America has a library system and a local office on aging; NCLIS believes that better teamwork between these local agencies will foster improved library and information services to the elderly nationwide. NCLIS is receiving inquiries from both libraries and local agencies on the aging for information on how they can improve their cooperation, and already some states are developing their own memoranda of understanding based on the model agreement between NCLIS and AOA.

Because of the commission's long-standing concern about the problem of illiteracy in this country, NCLIS enlisted the Department of Defense in a project to transfer feder-

ally developed computer technology to public libraries for use in adult literacy education. Pilot projects were begun in late 1984 at the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland, and the Mary H. Weir Library, Weirton, West Virginia, where volunteers now use a computer-assisted instruction program to tutor adults and out-of-school teens whose basic reading skills are between zero and fifth-grade level. An evaluation of the project conducted by experts from Carnegie-Mellon University in 1985 found the computer program cost-effective for library-based literacy education programs. NCLIS is currently exploring extension of the literacy technology transfer project to the Pittsburgh area—a cooperative proposal has been drafted by several local groups and funding is being sought.

Thirty to 40 percent of U.S. citizens now live in rural communities, where they are cut off from most of the information resources readily available to residents of urban areas. A report prepared for NCLIS in 1985 found that neither public- nor private-sector information resources are currently accessible to many rural institutions and citizens, except occasionally and for certain topics. The report and recommendations of the National Advisory Board on Rural Information Needs (NABRIN) Planning Committee were unanimously accepted by the commission in April 1985, and the NCLIS chairman forwarded the report to the secretary of agriculture with the recommendation that a NABRIN be established in the Department of Agriculture without delay. In a closely related development, the Intermountain Community Learning and Information Services Program, which has been assisted by NCLIS since its beginning, received a \$4.1 million grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to help improve the delivery of educational and information services to rural Americans in four intermountain states.

Partnerships for Improving Access to Information

The issues surrounding fees and their effect on access to information have been of continuing concern to the commission and the entire library/information community. In 1984 NCLIS decided that an overview study was needed to gather existing information on this topic. With support from the Council on Library Resources, the study was completed and the report was presented to the commission in 1985. [The fee study report is reprinted in full in the Special Reports section of Part 1 of this volume—*Ed.*] Representatives of two major library associations have expressed interest in implementing the study's recommendations to gather statistical data on fees and to undertake studies on the impact of user fees.

A new NCLIS program begun in 1985 focuses on skills for finding and using information effectively. As the commission has noted in the past, these skills are an essential part of basic education at all levels in the information age. An informal meeting with representatives of the library/information and education communities was held in July to begin to define the concept of information skills and identify the work that has already been done in this area. As a result of this meeting, members of the group prepared a draft concept paper and an annotated bibliography on the subject.

Partnership for Information Technology and Productivity

One of the commission's most visible accomplishments during 1985 was a combination theme exhibit/working information center specially designed and constructed for the conference of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

(IFLA) in Chicago. Developed with extensive cooperation and support from the private sector, the center demonstrated a wide range of existing technologies appropriate to a small information center and its staff answered IFLA attendees' requests for information about new technologies, current activities in the library/information field, and the events of the conference itself. Resources of the center included unique databases of IFLA conference information, a basic reference collection of current books and journals, a new audiovisual show about NCLIS, and access to commercial databases, the holdings of other libraries, and the texts of older journals. After the IFLA conference, the information center was installed at NCLIS headquarters, where it will serve as a permanent exhibit for visitors from all over the world.

The 1985 *Bowker Annual* [pp. 85-90] featured a synopsis of a study by NCLIS on the role of information in improving productivity, and a more extensive report was prepared later in 1985 for the *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*. NCLIS is currently working with experts on information and productivity from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada to plan a 1986 seminar on the role of information in the economy. The 1986 meeting will implement one of the recommendations of the bilateral seminar "Information and Productivity: The Implications for Education and Training," cosponsored by NCLIS and the British Library Research and Development Department in 1984. It will be the first step toward the goal "to develop and promote, at an international level, public policy agendas concerning the use and effects of information resources on the economy and on the quality of life."

Partnerships for Policy, Planning, and Advice

In April 1985, Senator Claiborne Pell and Congressman William D. Ford introduced identical joint resolutions authorizing a second White House Conference on Library and Information Services in 1989 and directing NCLIS to plan and conduct the conference. NCLIS subsequently created a Preliminary Conference Design Group with federal, state, and local representatives to make recommendations and initiate planning for the 1989 conference. The group, chaired by William Asp of Minnesota, was charged with preparing a report for NCLIS by the end of 1985 to include the following: recommendations on appointments to a 28-member conference advisory committee; the conference scope and focus; funding alternatives; and initial planning for the schedule of events leading to the conference. The Preliminary Conference Design Group's report was enthusiastically accepted by the commission at its December 1985 meeting; single copies are available from NCLIS headquarters.

At the request of the Office of Management and Budget and congressional staff, NCLIS convened two meetings of OMB staff, congressional committee staff, librarians, and private-sector representatives to discuss the issues involved in contracting out library services under OMB Circular A-76. The purpose of the meetings was to identify appropriate and inappropriate library functions for contracting out, and to discuss the resulting benefits and problems. A third meeting on this topic is planned for 1986.

In March 1985, the Office of Management and Budget issued a draft circular, "Management of Federal Information Resources." NCLIS officially transmitted extensive comments on this proposed circular, as did many other members of the library/information community concerned with the effective dissemination of federal information. OMB staff reported that many of the NCLIS comments have been included in the revised version of the circular (A-130). [See "Federal Government Information Policies: A Library Perspective" in the Special Reports section of Part 1 - *Ed.*]

New Commissioners

NCLIS is composed of 15 commissioners nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate. During 1985, four new commissioners were nominated and confirmed for five-year terms: Daniel H. Carter, vice president for Strategic Business Services, Walter Ulrich Consulting, Houston, Texas; Barbara J. H. Taylor, former senior advisor to the U.S. delegation to UNESCO, Potomac, Maryland; Lee Edwards, president, Lee Edwards and Associates, Bethesda, Maryland; and Frank Gannon, editor, *Saturday Review*, Washington, D.C., and New York City. The new commissioners replaced Margaret S. Warden, Gordon M. Ambach, Paulette H. Holahan, and Charles Benton.

In addition, four commissioners nominated by President Reagan during 1984 were confirmed in March 1985: Margaret Phelan, owner of Phelan Business Research in Shawnee Mission, Kansas; Wanda Forbes, Clover, South Carolina, a member of the advisory council to the Museum of Education of the University of South Carolina; Patricia Barbour, Dearborn, Michigan, who serves on the National Advisory Council on Community Education and the Executive Board of the American Research Institute; and Daniel W. Casey, Syracuse, New York, a member of the American Library Association Council and former NCLIS commissioner.