

U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, 1998

1110 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Suite 820, Washington, D.C. 20005-3522
202-606-9200; FAX 202-606-9203
<http://www.nclis.gov>

Robert S. Willard, Executive Director

Highlights of the Year

On May 21, 1998, Chairperson Jeanne Hurley Simon was confirmed for a second term on the Commission, ending on July 19, 2002, and reappointed as chair. Commissioner Martha Gould was also appointed to a second term, ending in 2002, and continues as vice-chair. Rebecca Bingham, a retired school library administrator from Louisville, Kentucky, was appointed to the Commission with a term ending in 2001; she succeeds Carol DiPrete. Commissioner Bobby L. Roberts, Director of the Central Arkansas Library System, was chosen "1997 Librarian of the Year" by the editors of *Library Journal*.

Continuing Commissioners are Abe Abramson, Walter Anderson, LeVar Burton, Joan Challinor, Mary Furlong, Frank Lucchino, Bobby Roberts, and Joel Valdez. (The terms of Commissioners Lucchino, Roberts, and Valdez expired on July 19, 1998, but they may continue in office one year unless a successor is named earlier.) Winston Tabb continues to represent James H. Billington, the Librarian of Congress, a permanent NCLIS member. Diane Frankel, Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, is an ex officio Commissioner. There are two vacancies in the commission because of the 1997 death of Commissioner Gary Sudduth and the resignation of Commissioner Robert Willard.

In February 1998, acting executive director Jane Williams resigned from the Commission staff to take a position at the University of Maryland Libraries. Commissioner Robert Willard assumed the role of acting executive director; shortly thereafter he was appointed executive director by the Commission and resigned from the Commission. Long time staff member Mary Alice Hedge retired from her position as Associate Executive Director. Judy Russell, whose library career included a time as director of the Federal Depository Library Program, joined the NCLIS staff as deputy director.

The Commission adopted a strategic plan in early 1998. Under this plan, it pursued a number of ambitious projects throughout the year: a study for the Government Printing Office on electronic government information; co-sponsorship with the American Library Association of a fourth survey of public libraries and the Internet; a major hearing on *Kids and the Internet*; and initial preparation for involvement in the White House Millennium Project. NCLIS also continued its role of advising on the Library Services and Technology Act

The NCLIS budget for FY 1998 was \$1,000,000 up from the \$897,000 for FY 1997 and the largest ever for NCLIS. The budget for FY 1999, which began October 1, 1998, remained at \$1 million. The Commission met in January, April, June, September, October and December.

Support for Executive and Legislative Branches

In FY 1998, the major contacts with the Legislative Branch concerned the proposed revision of 44 U.S.C. (S.2288), the Wendell H. Ford Government Publications Reform Act of 1998. The Commission supported S.2288 which, in the Commission's opinion, reinforced the importance of permanent public access to federal government information and provided means to improve public access to government information.

A major area of interest to the Commission continues to be intellectual property, with bills to implement the 1996 treaties of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and amend the Copyright Act to protect electronic information and databases. Although the Commission did not take a formal position on any of the bills, it did support U.S. participation in the WIPO treaty.

The Commission also provided information related to proposals for federally mandated use of filtering software for schools and libraries that offer children access to the Internet and receive federal funds. The Commission was able to offer data from its *1998 National Survey of Public Library Outlet Internet Connectivity*, sponsored by the Commission and the American Library Association. This survey contained questions about the use of Internet content filtering software to block pornography and also about the availability of an "acceptable use public access Internet policy."

The Commission's foremost involvement with the Executive Branch arose out of carrying out its mission under Section 703 of Public Law 104-208, the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). As a result of this new legislation (enacted in September 1996), NCLIS advises the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) on federal grant programs to libraries. The Commission participated with the National Museum Services Board (NMSB) in drafting the guidelines by which applicants seek leadership grants from the federal government for libraries and library-museum collaborations. Commissioner Challinor also participated as an observer in the peer review of grant proposals submitted to IMLS.

NCLIS established a Committee on the National Award for Library Services, a new award established by IMLS to complement awards currently made in the museum community. The Committee held its first meeting in September 1998. The initial award will be made in 2000.

NCLIS continues to work closely and meet with officials in a variety of federal agencies to obtain information and provide timely input on national and international policies affecting library and information services. During FY 1998, Commissioners and staff met with officials from the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, Commerce and State, as well as the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Government Printing Office (GPO), Library of Congress (LC), National Agricultural Library, National Institute for Literacy, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs at the Office of Management and Budget, and White House Millennium Council, among others.

National Information Activities

On April 7-8, 1998, the Commission met with the Big Twelve Plus Library Consortium at the Linda Hall Library in Kansas City, Missouri, to discuss challenges facing the Nation's academic and research universities and their libraries. Commissioners were told that the cost of scholarly journals increased 148 percent from 1986 to 1996 – more than three times the rate of inflation.

Recognizing the need for action at the national level, the Commission established a Working Group on Issues of Journal Pricing, Publishing and Copyright to address, as its first priority, the rapidly increasing cost of scholarly research material. The Working Group, chaired by Commissioner Jose-Marie Griffiths, plans four objectives: (1) identify available and ongoing research related to the issues; (2) conduct a series of discussions in individual meetings with various stakeholder groups: publishers, authors, universities, and the library community; (3) bring the stakeholder groups together to discuss their relative positions, issues, and concerns, creating a forum for constructive dialog on those issues and concerns; and (4) produce a report with recommendations that would be widely disseminated. As part of its efforts, the Working Group presented a well-attended session on the topic at the annual meeting of the American Society for Information Science in October 1998.

Library and Information Services in a Networked Environment

In June 1998 the Commission launched the *Assessment of Standards for the Creation, Dissemination, and Permanent Accessibility of Electronic Government Information Products*. The study is a direct outgrowth of congressional concerns about the impact of electronic publishing on the ability of citizens to obtain access to government information. To assist in the data collection and analysis, a contract was awarded to Westat Inc., a Rockville, Maryland, firm specializing in survey research.

This unprecedented study is based on a survey of 24 federal agencies in all three branches of government, sampling several hundred information products. The assessment will: (1) identify medium and format standards that are the most appropriate for permanent public access; (2) assess the cost effectiveness and usefulness of various alternative medium and format standards; and (3) identify public and private medium and format standards that are, or could be, used for products throughout their entire information life cycle, not just at the dissemination for permanent public access stage.

Data collection will be completed by January 1999 and the contractor will complete an analysis of the data and produce a final report that will be available in the spring of 1999. Once the results are available, the Commission will be considering the appropriate follow-on activities.

On July 16, 1998, Chairperson Simon spoke at a forum on *The Internet: Empowering Older Americans* sponsored by the Senate Special Committee on Aging. Chairperson Simon highlighted the positive roles of the Internet and public libraries in the lives of older Americans. During her testimony, she cited numerous examples of how the Internet empowers older Americans, and how America's public libraries continue to meet the challenge of helping seniors and others navigate the Internet effectively. Commissioner Furlong served as the Forum Moderator and provided an overview of how older Americans use the Internet.

During 1998 the Commission undertook two major initiatives in the area of library and information services to children and youth, issuing a resolution on the importance of libraries in the lives of America's children and conducting a hearing on *Kids and the Internet: The Promise and the Perils*.

In the resolution issued on September 8, 1998, the Commission advised officials and educators at all levels, as well as community leaders, parents and other adult caregivers, confidants and role models, to utilize the vast potential of libraries in assisting youth and children to seek positive outcomes through wise use of information. The resolution emphasized that libraries can serve as a major delivery point for information on better parenting, for positive learning experiences for young children, and for redirecting troubled older children and adolescents. Senator Christopher J. Dodd (D-CT) commended the Commission for its efforts to "lead the way" and "to mobilize resources for the purpose of curbing youth violence in this Nation" and inserted the full text of the Commission's resolution in the Congressional Record

For sometime the Commission has been discussing the problems arising from public access Internet terminals in libraries and the potential for the use of such terminals for predation by pedophiles. The Commission has also expressed concerns for children and youth regarding Internet access to inappropriate materials, generally sexually explicit matter, but also hate language, cult messages, and other troublesome material. Furthermore, the Commission has worried about violations of privacy, especially in the case of marketing efforts that entice children to provide a wide variety of consumer information about themselves and their families. The Commission recognizes that all these concerns must be balanced against the freedom of speech guaranteed by the First Amendment and the library community's aversion to censorship

The Commission held a hearing in November 1998 in order to focus attention on the enormous benefits of the Internet as well as the dangers it poses for children and to seek advice on appropriate means for libraries to protect children without denying them access to the benefits of the Internet. Testimony was received from federal and state government agencies as well as from concerned citizens, parents, public librarians, teachers, and other interested individuals and organizations.

At its subsequent December meeting, the Commission reviewed the testimony. It acknowledged that individual library policies on Internet use are appropriately local issues and passed a resolution urging governing boards to put in place such Internet use policies. It also directed the staff to produce a document based on the hearing that would help libraries and their boards address the issues. A summary brochure was published in early 1999 and a full report of the hearing will be published later in the year.

Library Statistics

In the area of library statistics, the Commission continued its long partnership with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) while also maintaining its role in the independent statistics collection activity regarding Internet and public libraries.

Fiscal Year 1998 marked the eleventh consecutive year of cooperation between the Commission and the NCES in implementing the Library Statistics Program (LSP). The Commission serves as a liaison to the library community, organizes meetings and training workshops, supports in-state training and technical assistance, monitors trends, and advises NCES on policy matters.

The major LSP events in FY 1998 included the following: annual training workshop and orientation for new state data coordinators, March 1998; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) workshop, September 1998; State Library Agency Survey Steering Committee meetings, February and September 1998; Steering Committee for Federal-State Cooperative System for public library statistics and its subcommittees in June and September 1998; and Survey of Library Cooperatives Advisory Committee meeting, September 1998.

Earlier, in 1997, the Commission initiated an assessment and planning project for the LSP that resulted in a report submitted by Consultant Howard Harris, *Assessment of and Planning for NCLIS Role in Library Statistics Cooperative Program (LSCP)*. The Commission hosted a meeting in September 1998 to respond to the report; attendees included a variety of individuals knowledgeable about library statistics from five types of libraries surveyed by NCES: state libraries, public libraries, school libraries, academic libraries, and library cooperatives. This meeting reaffirmed the interest in annual collection of statistics for academic libraries and called attention to the need for more frequent and timely collection of school library and media center data which is currently collected only once every five years.

The 1998 Helen M. Eckard Award for Exemplary Use of Federal-State Cooperative System (FSCS) Data was presented to Professor John C. Bertot, then at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Dr. Bertot received the FSCS data use award in recognition of his major contributions to research on public libraries, the Internet, and discounted telecommunications rates. The 1997 Keppel Award was given to forty-two states and one territory, acknowledging their submission of prompt, complete and high quality public library data to the survey. The first John G. Lorenz Awards were presented at the annual Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) meeting in October 1998. This special award is named after John G. Lorenz, Coordinator of the NCLIS Library Statistics Program from 1988 to 1997. The award was presented to 24 qualifying COSLA and State Library Agency (StLA) respondents and staff for their timely and accurate submission of StLA survey data.

The fourth NCLIS study of public libraries and the Internet was conducted between April and June 1998. The 1998 National Survey of Public Library Outlet Internet Connectivity was co-sponsored by NCLIS and the American Library Association, with research conducted by Dr. John Carlo Bertot and Dr. Charles R. McClure. The survey results indicate that 83.6% of U.S. public library outlets (main or branch libraries, excluding bookmobiles) are now connected to the Internet and 73.3% of public libraries offer public Internet access. However, public Internet access is substantially lower for libraries in rural areas (67.6%) than for those in urban areas (84.0%).

Moreover, the survey results indicate that only 68.6% of public library outlets offer graphical public Internet access to the World Wide Web. Only 45.6% of the public libraries offer high speed public Internet access (56 kbps or greater) on one or more workstations with a graphical

user interface, the minimum configuration currently necessary for *effective public Internet access* in the view of the Commission

The 1998 survey also provided the basis for additional insights into the numbers of Internet workstations in public libraries: 31.4% of all library outlets do not have any graphical public access to the Internet and at an additional 28.3% of library outlets only a single graphical Internet workstation is available for public access.

The Commission recognizes that the advent of the discount rate for telecommunications services authorized by the Telecommunications Act of 1996, popularly known as the E-Rate, and the importance of the Internet as a national resource ensure that questions about effective public Internet access will continue to be debated for the foreseeable future. The Commission intends to continue to work with the wide variety of organizations, both public and private, with a stake in the defining and implementing effective public Internet access. The Commission also plans to continue its support for the annual National Survey of Public Libraries and the Internet in order to track the evolving state of public Internet access and the implementation of the goals of universal service for public library Internet access.

International Activities

The Commission completed its thirteenth year of cooperation with the Department of State to coordinate and monitor proposals for International Contributions for Scientific, Educational and Cultural Activities (ICSECA) funds and to disburse the funds. The allocation for ICSECA, included in the State Department's International Organizations and Programs account, was formerly under International Conventions and Scientific Organizations Contributions (ICSOC). The amount for FY 1998 was \$100,000, the same as in FY 1997 and up from the \$35,000 for FY 1996.

NCLIS was represented at the 1998 general conference of the International Federation of Library Associations in Amsterdam. The Commission will be an International Distinguished Partner for the 2001 IFLA conference in Boston. The Commission also received approval from the Office of Management and Budget for a survey of U.S. participation in international library and archive activities and will use this baseline inventory to assess and develop its international role.

The Commission has chosen an international effort as its contribution to the White House Millennium Project. NCLIS is sponsoring a "Sister Libraries" project, pairing American libraries with libraries in other parts of the world to encourage an exchange of professional and cultural information. Although it will begin as a millennium project, the "Sister Libraries" initiative is expected to continue well into the twenty-first century. The Internet and Worldwide Web make it possible, as never before, for libraries in our country to communicate with each other and with libraries around the world. The Commission is particularly interested in using this as an opportunity for children to communicate with other children both nationally and internationally and through that contact to learn from one another about their similarities and differences. The project will also introduce children to languages and cultures other than their own.

The Commission continued to host or lead sessions to orient and share information with librarians and other officials visiting the U.S., usually under the auspices of the U.S. Information Agency. In 1998 visitors were from South Africa and the United Kingdom.

Publications

Annual Report 1996-1997. 1998, 77 pages.

Bertot, John Carlo and McClure, Charles R. *Policy Issues & Strategies Affecting Public Libraries in the National Networked Environment: Moving Beyond Connectivity*. NCLIS, December 1997.

Bertot, John Carlo, McClure, Charles R., and Fletcher, Patricia Diamond. *The 1997 National Survey of U.S. Public Libraries and the Internet: Summary Results*. November 1997. [The survey was sponsored by the American Library Association Office for Information Technology Policy in cooperation with the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science]

Harris, Howard. *Assessment of and Planning for NCLIS Role in Library Statistics Cooperative Program (LSCP)*. October 1997, Revised June 1998.

Copies of NCLIS print publications are available free of charge in limited quantities from the NCLIS office until supplies are exhausted. Electronic versions are available on the Commission's Web site. Also, selected reports, hearing testimony, comments on various matters before the Congress and the Administration, news releases, and other items are on the Commission's Web site.