

NCLIS News Release

**U. S. National Commission on
Libraries and Information Science**

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For Immediate Release

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National Commission Takes on Nation's LIS Challenges Special Report Describes "The New NCLIS" and its Plans

Washington, DC USA, February 23, 2005—The U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) today released a special report titled *The New NCLIS* (<http://www.nclis.gov/about/SpecialReporttNewNCLIS.pdf>).

The purpose of the report, according to Commission Chairman Beth Fitzsimmons of Ann Arbor MI, is to inform the American people that the Commission is investigating a number of areas in which recommendations to the President and Congress, as required by law, are needed.

"It is the policy of the U.S. government that adequate library and information services will be available to the American people," Dr. Fitzsimmons said. "The Commission's role is to identify what needs to be done to ensure that adequate services are made available, and then to advise the President and Congress on policy with respect to providing these services. As described in the special report, the current Commission—with 12 newly appointed members and a limited budget—has been spending much of the past year looking at areas where its work is needed. The report describes the Commission's current planning."

The planning is the first step in a larger process, according to Dr. Fitzsimmons.

"What we really need to do, not only for American citizens but especially for the members of the library and information science profession, is to identify those issues that are most pressing. There are many, many issues that impact library and information service delivery in America, and the Commission is enthusiastic about investigating these issues, and will do so as resources allow. But as they began their service on the Commission," Dr. Fitzsimmons continued, "the members realized that they could not do everything. So they wisely came up with

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three goals and then began to identify activities that would enable them to achieve their goals for the Commission.”

As noted in the special report, the three goals chosen for the Commission are:

- To appraise library and information services provided to the American people
- To strengthen the relevance of libraries and information science in the lives of the American people
- To promote research and development for extending and improving library and information services for the American people

To achieve these goals, the Commission has undertaken several initiatives. These include looking at the role of libraries in providing consumer health information and in promoting a healthy lifestyle for all Americans; studying how libraries can serve as the emergency preparedness and disaster response center for their communities; and investigating how library services for productive aging can be enhanced. These initiatives, and others currently in process or being planned, will generate findings to support the advice the Commission is obliged to provide to the President and to Congress.

“It is important that we publish a record of these early stages of the Commission's work,” Interim Executive Director Trudi Bellardo Hahn said in announcing the special report. “Since Federal agencies are no longer required to provide the traditional annual report, the Commission decided to publish *The New NCLIS* to describe its planning and how its work is moving forward.”

Dr. Fitzsimmons also pointed out that the special report serves as a general information document about the Commission's needs. “The Commission's present challenge is funding,” she said, “since appropriation funding is insufficient to support the Commission's work. We must now identify strategic partners, sponsors, and other collaborating organizations to work with the Commission. This document gets the word out. We hope that when more of the public knows of our work, the Commission will be able to continue its leadership role, and continue to provide advice to the President and Congress that is sound and authoritative and benefits the American people.”

About NCLIS

The U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) is a permanent, independent agency of the Federal government charged by Public Law 91-345 to advise the President and Congress on national and international library and information policies, to appraise and assess the adequacies and deficiencies of library and information resources and services, and to develop overall plans for meeting national library and information needs. Broadly speaking, NCLIS is responsible for addressing the library and information science needs of the American people.