

State Library Agencies Survey Steering Committee

Notes on Meeting, December 18, 1992

The State Library Agencies (SLA) Survey Steering Committee met on December 18, 1992 at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 1250 22nd Street NW in Washington. Mr. Shubert called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. Committee members present were: Ms. Bolt, Mr. Cheski, Ms. Kindel, Mr. Lorenz, Ms. Lynch, Mr. Miele, Mr. Shubert, Mr. Wilkins, and Mr. Young.

Mr. Wunderly of Pinkerton was also present.

1. Purpose, status and anticipated development of the Survey of State Library Agencies

Kindel, Young, Lorenz and Shubert reviewed the developments to date in preparation for the Survey.

Kindel explained the relationship of the SLA Survey to FSCS and the need for a comprehensive picture of public library services and issues of "coverage." She pointed out that NCES is aiming for a pretest of the SLA Survey in 1993, and to be ready for that we need to identify the kinds of data we want.

NCES has engaged Pinkerton to develop electronic collection of data for the SLA Survey. Kindel pointed out the advantage of electronic data collection for information suppliers, NCES and data users, noting that full preliminary tables of 1991 public library data were available to NCES staff four days after the last state submitted data.

Kindel noted that Keith Lance (The Library Research Service, Denver, CO) had submitted an unsolicited proposal to develop the SLA Survey in two phases: an alpha test, including development, pre-testing and finalizing the survey instrument, and a beta test, including trial administration of the survey instrument to all SLA and analysis of the results and implications for revision of the survey instrument. Kindel supports this proposal and hopes that NCES will have the consultant engaged by February 1993.

Kindel also reported briefly on developments and staffing the NCES Library Statistics unit. She expects the staff will soon be increased by one person as a result of a transfer from another part of NCES, and the new person will work on the SLA Survey.

Young commented on the long term importance of the SLA Survey, the results of the FSCS planning, the continuing partnership between the SLA and the federal government, and the "political consequences" of data collection.

Lorenz described the SLA Survey as the "second step" in the public library data picture, noting also that surveys of library systems are planned.

Shubert noted that he and Bolt had met with Lorenz and Kindel on October 8 to plan for this meeting and the project. He proposed the following objectives for the day:

Get a "running start" on the SLA Survey, a project that looks ahead to a initial comprehensive report two years from now.

Be sure that the Committee and those involved with the SLA Survey have a clear understanding of "what, why, when, and how" of the SLA Survey).

Ground the Survey in a solid rationale and public purpose (we will need to develop a "why" statement that will be persuasive to successive administrations and decision makers in the U.S. Department of Education, NCES, Congress, COSLA, and other users of the data.

Begin some of the "grunt work" on parameters, policies and data, anticipating that staff will be available before the Steering Committee next meets.

Shubert and Bolt also identified several "basic documents" which will be useful to the Steering Committee. These included:

Notes of Discussion, October 6, 1992.

The April 1992 COSLA Proposal to Collect Data on State Library Agencies.

The Survey of State Library Agencies, 1977, by Barratt Wilkins, conducted for NCES and published as University of Illinois Occasional Paper 142 Bonus (ISSN-0073-5310).

The ASCLA biennial publication, The State Library Agencies, (the first edition was edited by Donald B. Simpson, 1973; the most recent is the 9th ed., 1989, compiled and edited by Amy Louise Kellerstrass. The 10th edition will be published by ASCLA early in 1993).

COSLA State Library Agencies Financial Survey (published annually) -- These were first collected in the early 1970s; the 1991 compilation was published in January 1992; the 1992 compilation will be published early in 1993.

Chapter IX of Libraries at Large, Tradition, Innovation, and The National Interest (the report of the National Advisory Commission on Libraries, edited by Douglas M. Knight and E. Shepley B. Nourse, Bowker, 1969, pp. 400-418; see also pp.515-521 from the "Recommendations" section.

Standards for Library Functions at the State Level, by the Subcommittee for Library Functions at the State Level, Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies, ALA, 1985, 3d ed. (4th edition planned)

Library Functions of the States: Commentary on the Survey of the Library Functions of the States, by Phillip Monypenny, ALA, 1966. (report of a 1960-62 survey of state library agencies financed by the Carnegie Corporation and conducted by Robert D. Leigh and, later, Dr. Monypenny -- these led to the first edition of Standards for Library Functions at the State Level in 1963).

The Committee discussed these several documents and asked for copies of the COSLA 1992 proposal, the 1977 survey, and the pages from Libraries at Large.

2. Public Policy Issues for which the Survey will produce information

The Committee identified several public policy issues and questions as:

What is the Federal interest in state library agencies (SLA)? As efficient, effective administrators of Federal library funds? What have been the educational, economic and other impacts of Federal and State dollars invested in SLA?

What is "consequential" about a SLA? Size, behaviors of significant SLA, staffing?

What is emerging in SLA services? What are the impacts? What is emerging in SLA organization.

What is the degree of comparability among SLAs? What is the role of the SLA as a party of total education interest of the Federal government? ... of the state governments?

What is the role of the SLA in a radically different information environment?

See also pages 1-3 of flip chart notes in Attachment 1.

Problems and Issues

Discussion ensued on various aspects of the changed information environment and SLA. These points were recorded on flip charts and notes were subsequently transcribed by NCLIS staff (see pages 1-3 Attachment 1).

Purposes and use of Data and Universe for the Survey

The Committee reviewed the Notes of Discussion, October 6, 1992 and suggested revision of that paper to reflect its thinking. Attachment 2 (Brief Information about the Survey of State Library Agencies) is a restatement of sections from the October 6 paper, reflecting the understanding of the Chair of the Committee. See also page 3 of the flip chart notes in Attachment 1.

3. Parameters and Policies for the Survey

The Committee discussed the nature of today's SLA and the environment in which it works. The Committee agreed that the role of the SLA is changing, and looks to the 4th edition of Standards for Library Functions at the State Level to define that role for the American Library Association.

The environment is also blurring distinctions among types of libraries as evidenced by multitype library systems, combinations of libraries, changes in library services as the result of the networked environment, and LSCA Title III program developments. See pages 2-3 of the flip chart notes in Attachment 1.

The Committee discussed the universe of the survey. Participation by the territories is optional now; it would be important to have all at the time the territories are included in the FSCS.

The Committee reviewed and modified the "Scope of the Survey" of the Notes of Discussion, October 6, 1992. Attachment 2 (Brief Information about the Survey of State Library Agencies) includes the modifications of the Steering Committee.

The Committee recommended that the section about users of the data and part of page 2 be picked up from the April 1992 COSLA report incorporated in a document about the survey. This is now included in Attachment 2.

The Committee made the following policy determinations:

1. This will be an annual survey; core data elements be the same from year to year; other data elements may be used periodically or occasionally and may include periodic surveys on specific services.

2. Data elements will be as consistent as possible with those in FSCS and other NCES library surveys.

3. Electronic data files will be available consistent with NCES policy.

4. Data Elements and Definitions

The Committee discussed data elements generally at some length. See pages 4-6 of Attachment 1.

The Steering Committee approved the "Scope of the Survey" section and footnotes in Attachment 2. NCES staff will use the sources as they do further work, and detailed work on data elements and definitions will be done by consultant. in advance of the next meeting.

5. Process and Work Plan; Timeline, Process, Communication

Wilkins will work with Shubert on the statement of policy issues; Lynch will work with Shubert on statement of the purpose of the survey.

The Steering Committee will meet early in 1993, possibly in late February or March 1993.

--J. Shubert 2/18/93

Attachments:

1. Notes from flip charts, 12/18/92
2. Brief Information about the Survey of State Library Agencies 2/1/93
3. Section II from ASCLA form on The State Library Agencies

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