

Notes on Meeting
Steering Committee for the Survey of State Library Agencies
March 25, 2000

The Steering Committee for the Survey of State Library Agencies met on Saturday, March 25 at the Menger Hotel, in San Antonio, Texas. Mr. Shubert called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Present were (all individuals were present for the entire meeting): Denise **Davis** (NCLIS), Patricia **Garner** (Census), Elaine **Kroe** (NCES), Mary Jo **Lynch** (ALA), Libby **Law** (Data Coordinator, South Carolina State Library), Kim **Miller** (NCLIS/LSP), Kate **Nevins** (ASCLA, SOLINET), Amy **Owen** (Utah State Library Director), Jeffrey **Owings** (NCES Acting Associate Commissioner for the NCES Elementary/Secondary and Library Studies Division), Peggy **Rudd** (Director and Librarian, Texas State Library), Cindy **Sheckells** (Census), Joseph F. **Shubert** (New York State Librarian *Emeritus*), Betsey **Sywertz** (IMLS), Diana Ray **Tope** (FSCS Steering Committee, Georgia), Lamar **Veatch** (Director, Alabama Public Library Services), and Alan **Zimmerman** (Data Coordinator, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction). Also present were Abe Abramson, Commissioner-member of the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, Ebonie Curry (Census), and Sondra Taylor-Furbee (Florida State Library Data Coordinator for Barratt Wilkins).

(1) Introductions

Members and guests introduced themselves; Mr. Shubert welcomed Ms. Rudd and Mr. Veatch to their first meeting with the Steering Committee.

(2) Chair's Remarks

Mr. Shubert described two milestones that characterize this meeting. First, it is an occasion for celebration of the first instance of all states having met the March 15 final date established by NCES for submission of data. Second, the meeting provides a platform for the next phase in the development of the Survey to be characterized by consulting customers, improving the data, further simplifying the survey process, and in encouraging easy and productive use of the data. He noted the prospect for a customer survey and NCES work to improve the ease of access to data as important discussions for this meeting. He expressed regret that illness prevented Mr. Wilkins' attendance at this meeting.

(3) Recent Developments in NCES Impacting on the Survey

Mr. Owings is continuing as the Acting Associate Commissioner for Elementary/Secondary and Library Studies Division. He reports to Acting NCES Commissioner Gary Phillips. He does not expect the Associate Commissioner position to be filled before another three months or so. He outlined several NCES initiatives and priorities:

- ❑ All NCES publications will be placed on the Web with software that enables users to search content. He said that the Westat project for geo-coding public library districts in relation to school districts and Census tracts ends this month. Henceforth, library geo-coding will be incorporated in an NCES overall state-of-the-art mapping project which is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2001.
- ❑ He is committed to a StLA customer survey and looks forward to the Committee's reactions to the current proposal.

- ❑ Throughout NCES, there is a priority for timely collection and publication of data. Web-based collection will be used in all NCES surveys. The success of the Web-based collection of StLA data and the states' positive response to the March 15 lock requirement has gained substantial notice within NCES. A task force that includes Ms. Davis and NCES survey coordinators will make recommendations for proceeding on web design.
- ❑ He emphasized his interest in having library questions in longitudinal studies and other surveys, noting his interest in data that show "libraries in the life of the user" as well as "the user in the life of the library."
- ❑ Data improvement initiatives include a developing a database of definitions across the several surveys (carrying forward the "data dictionary" work described to the Steering Committee in earlier meetings), completion of the *Digest of Libraries*, and a greater presence of the library data in education reports.

In response to questions from Steering Committee members, Mr. Owings expressed his interest in improving presentation of both printed and Web-based data. Steering Committee members urged him to review recommendations that the Committee made in September 1998, including those for

- (a) a subject or keyword index;
- (b) highlighting key words in table headings to enable users to distinguish among "lookalike" table headings in series; and
- (c) including historical data for key data items.

Mr. Owings expressed his interest in those recommendations. Steering Committee members urged that (a) and (b) above be considered for the 1999 E.D.Tabs.

Steering Committee members indicated their approval of the several improvements implemented in the last two years, including the adoption of Web-based collection, Mr. Owings' initiative that resulted in complete returns by March 15 and improvements in the E.D.Tabs and the Webpage.

(4) Recent Developments in the NCLIS Statistics and Surveys Office

Ms. Davis briefed the Steering Committee on changes in Commission officers (Martha Gould became Chair of the Commission following the death of Jeanne Simon, and Joan Challinor became Vice-Chair). She also described the *2000 Public Library Internet Connectivity Study* and the NCLIS Alliance with IMLS and the ALA Washington Office in concert with the U.S. Department of Education Community Technology Center Program. The latter is known as "The Alliance to Create Community Access (CAPS) Database." She provided a briefing sheet with details on these initiatives.

Ms. Davis also described an NCLIS archival project that will preserve documents and information about the library surveys now stored in the Commission offices. In ensuing discussion, she responded to Ms. Lynch's question about NCLIS interest in having Ms. Lynch's complete file of documents going back to the inception of the statistics project. Ms. Davis said that such materials that Steering Committee members might want to transfer to her can be accepted in August.

(5) The 1999 Survey and Preparations for the 2000 Survey

Ms. Sheckells reported that each of the States and DC had locked their 1999 data on or before March 15.

Ms. Kroe reported that editing of the 1999 data is proceeding well. Data will be adjudicated promptly and should be available on the Website shortly after adjudication.

In the course of the discussion of the 1999 data, Ms. Davis, Ms. Garner and others summarized how imputation of certain key data elements might have been constructed if one or more states had failed to submit data by March 15. That contingency planning also covered the steps to be taken to notify states for which data are imputed, and asking them to check the imputed data for reasonability.

Ms. Law and Mr. Zimmerman noted that StLA respondents with whom they had talked had positive comments about the process.

Members of the Steering Committee recommended that NCES and/or NCLIS publicly congratulate the states for their timely submission of the data under the new system. They also suggested issuing a press release when the data are mounted on the Website.

(6) Preparations for the 2000 Survey

Ms. Kroe reported that in the course of editing the 1999 data, she distributed to members of the Steering Committee a series of questions relating to definitions for 1999 data cells. She compiled a summary of comments she received, resulting in a two-page summary of the responses, titled "Data Elements and Definitions." These related to the possible need for a definition of "StLA budget," grants to libraries as a "service," the reporting of book and serial volumes, possible need for additional instruction on "financial assistance to libraries and systems), and clarification of "training for participation."

She invited advice from the Steering Committee on what changes, if any, should be made in these definitions for the 2000 survey. She also provided a full set of the 1999 survey instructions and the form. In discussion, the Steering Committee did not differ with the conclusions stated in Ms. Kroe's summary.

Steering Committee raised larger questions on the need for data that inform policy considerations, particularly data that demonstrate how StLA services and financial assistance relate to (1) education and education results, (2) government effort to reduce the "digital divide," (3) costs of connectivity, and (4) growth of networks. After considerable discussion of data that appear in Table 28, the Steering Committee agreed that question 33 should be revised for the 2000 survey. Mr. Owings requested advice on this by May or June. He also pointed out the need for larger review of the survey for its relevance to policy questions.

Recess. The Steering Committee recessed for lunch at noon and reconvened at 1:10 p.m.

Following the lunch recess, the Steering Committee returned to discussion of data relevant to policy and agreed with the formation of a task force to look at question 33 and other StLA Survey questions that relate to what StLAs are doing in areas of data relating to StLA focus on the policy considerations identified in the previous paragraph. By late May or early June, the task force will make recommendations to Mr. Owings on questions 33 and 5. By August 30, the task force will prepare recommendations for discussion at the September 13, 2000 meeting of the Steering Committee. These recommendations will deal with data to be collected for public policy information needs in the 2001 and later surveys

The following persons will serve on the task force: Ms. Lynch, Mr. Shubert, Mr. Wilkins, and Mr. Zimmerman. Federal participants in the task force will be: Ms. Kroe, Ms. Davis and Ms. Sywetz. Mr. Shubert and Ms. Davis will serve as co-chairs of the task force.

(7) Status of Plans for the Customer Survey

Mr. Owings invited discussion of a discussion document, *Proposal for a Phone Survey of Customers of the Annual State Library Agencies (StLA) Survey*. Steering Committee members made suggestions for the proposed schedule and process, and for questions 1-5.

Mr. Owings expects to move ahead on the survey by committing dollars to the project, finalizing the questions, securing OMB clearance, and engaging a contractor.

(8) Concluding Discussion of the 1999 Aneckstein Report

The Steering Committee discussed a March 12, 2000 memorandum prepared by Mr. Shubert summarizing the history of the September 1999 NCES Technical Report, *Evaluation of the NCES State Library Agencies Survey; An examination of Duplication and Definitions in the Fiscal Section of the State Library Agencies Survey* by Laura Riley Aneckstein of the Bureau of the Census. The memorandum described four key points and findings. These related to possibilities for duplication of data collection, confusion about key “income” data elements, concepts of “income” and “expenditure,” and consolidation of IMLS and NCES data collection. Following discussion, the Steering Committee approved the following conclusions:

- 1) The report and the length of time it took to complete it resulted in appropriate changes in the StLA survey in 1998 and 1999. The report should be useful as the Steering Committee continues to review data elements and definitions.
- 2) On the matter of the fiscal year reporting period for the StLA survey: It makes sense for IMLS to collect and report data on the basis of the federal fiscal year. However, the StLA survey is more than a financial report on federal funds. Policy makers at state and local levels and other customers expect state library agency data to be reported by the fiscal year of the state.
- 3) The StLA survey reports should continue to include both Federal “income” and Federal “expenditures.” Inasmuch as tables 15-17 intend to provide a full picture of state, federal and other income and tables 18-22 do so for expenditures, it appears that federal “draw down” funds should be reported as both income and expenditure. It *would* be possible to report the “draw down” funds only as expenditure, but not reporting them as income would cause great inconvenience for users of the StLA data who expect state library agency data to be reported for the fiscal year of the state.
- 4) The Steering Committee is impressed with the data collection and reporting systems IMLS has instituted and is committed to continuing cooperation with IMLS in this arena. We do not support the consolidation of data collection inasmuch as the reporting periods for IMLS and StLA are different and because the financial data are only two of the ten parts of the StLA Survey, and the financial data cells are some 30 of 230 data cells. NCES and IMLS reports are complementary and each is important.

- 5) The telephone surveys that the author conducted with respondents pointed out uneven understanding of StLA data elements and definitions and inconsistent reporting. The data the phone surveys provided are helpful and such brief surveys may be useful again for data elements/definitions that appear to be troublesome.
- 6) The Steering Committee affirms its concern for quality data and expresses its appreciation to NCES, The Bureau of Census, and Ms. Aneckstein for this report.

(9) COSLA Research and Statistics Developments

Ms. Owen reported that COSLA is conducting its survey of StLA salaries. Although some COSLA members have expressed interest in having the Research and Statistics Committee gather data on construction needs, the Committee's consensus is that such a national data gathering effort would be too demanding for the Committee and the states. Rather, the Committee believes that sufficient data already exist within states that have already established a state-funded public library capital construction program, and that these data would be used as national indicators if the legislation recently introduced in Congress shows signs of gaining momentum.

The Research and Statistics Committee is following closely the current research project directed by Dr. Charles McClure and Dr. John Bertot on standardized data elements and performance indicators for networked information.

The Research and Statistics Committee has also reviewed a request from the Urban Libraries Council to conduct a joint study of the relationship between public library governance models and public library funding formulas. The Committee's conclusion is that the project is complex enough to require significant funding and that several conceptual issues would need to be resolved before a competitive research project could be designed. Ms. Lynch observed that reporters ask what is the "best" government base for public libraries?

Steering Committee discussion ensued on: (1) tracking the development of connectivity and direction of statewide and consortium efforts in reducing the "digital divide" and (2) the possibility of the COSLA Research and Statistics Committee advising:

- ✓ Chief Officers on proposed new FSCS data elements to be voted on by Data Coordinators,
- ✓ FSCS leadership on strengthening rationales of proposed changes in data elements, and
- ✓ on StLA sharing licensing agreements.

(10) IMLS Data, Resource and Dissemination Developments

Ms. Sywetz provided a copy of draft graphs showing, for 1998 and 1999, numbers of grants to public, school, academic, special, multitype and SLAA recipients. She also provided current drafts of 1999 and 1998 "numerical/landscape" data on grants, graphs on types of libraries served, user groups, and other tables updated since previous meetings with the Steering Committee. Not all states have reported to IMLS and comprehensive data cannot yet be mounted on the IMLS Website. In response to a question, she affirmed that all data supplied by the states would be reported back by IMLS. She referred to a study of digitization projects supported by LSTA funds.

Ms. Sywetz is focussed on collecting and reporting data that will be needed for evaluation of the first five years of the LSTA program.

(11) Plans for Presentation of the John G. Lorenz Award

Ms. Miller reported that Mr. Willard and Mr. Wilkins will present John G. Lorenz Awards in October to the 33 states that submitted 1999 data by February 15, 2000.

If NCES uses a single date as a deadline for submitting 2000 data, the Award for future years may need to be restructured in September.

Adjournment and Next Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 4 p.m.

The Committee will next meet September 13-14, 2000 at the Embassy Suites in Washington, D.C. The meeting will begin about noon on the 13th and conclude at noon on the 14th.

J. Shubert, April 13, 2000

StLA Notes Mar 00 D drive

Attachments:

- StLA Survey Steering Committee Roster (updated April 17, 2000)

List of documents distributed before or at the meeting:

- Agenda
- StLA Survey Steering Committee Roster
- StLA Survey Steering Committee Meeting Participant List (Westat)
- The Survey of State Library Agencies: The Survey and Its Steering Committee; A Statement Approved by the Steering Committee February 20, 1998
- StLA Highlights – NCLIS and Library Statistics Program Update; March 2000 – **agenda items 4, 12**
- Copy of NCES letter sent to Chief Officers on February 14, 2000 regarding data submission schedules and the StLA survey due date and closeout date – **agenda item 5a**
- FY 99 StLA Survey Control Log – **agenda item 5b**
- Data Elements and Definitions – **agenda item 6**
- FY 1999 StLA Survey Instructions – **agenda item 6b**
- Part A – State Library Agency Identification form – **agenda item 6b**
- Attachment A Registration Certificate FY 1999 StLA Survey – **agenda item 6b**
- Draft for Discussion: Proposal for a Phone Survey of Customers of the Annual Survey State Library Agencies (StLA Survey) – **agenda item 7**
- Memo to the State Library Agencies Survey Steering Committee from Joseph F. Shubert, dated March 13, 2000; subj: Concluding Discussion (for now) of the Aneckstein Report – **agenda item 8**
- (IMLS Draft) Number of Grants Awarded – **agenda item 10**
- The John G. Lorenz Award for Timely and Accurate Submission of StLA Data – **agenda item 11**