

Notes on Meeting
Steering Committee for the Survey of State Library Agencies
September 17, 1996

The Steering Committee for the Survey of State Library Agencies met on Tuesday, September, 1996, at the Double Tree Park Terrace in Washington, D.C. Mr. Shubert called the meeting to order at 9 a.m.

Present were: Adrienne Chute (NCES), Gretchen Fairbanks (Louisiana Data Coordinator, for Thomas Jaques), Mary Alice Hedge (NCLIS), Carroll Kindel (NCES), Donald Fork (OLP), Elaine Kroe (NCES), Keith Lance (Contractor), Roz Korb (NCES), Libby Law (South Carolina State Library), John Lorenz (NCLIS), John Medina (Bureau of the Census Governments Division) Gerry Rowland (State Library of Iowa), Joseph F. Shubert (New York State Librarian Emeritus and chair of the Steering Committee), Tom Sloan (State Library of Delaware), Mark Smith (Texas Data Coordinator), Ellen Thompson (Bureau of the Census Governments Division), and Barratt Wilkins (State Library of Florida).

Review of 1994 Survey data

The Steering Committee discussed the data in the June 1996 Ed.Tab. that reports data for State Library Agencies, Fiscal Year 1994. (The Committee had discussed the October 1996 preliminary, incomplete data tables in December 1995). They touched on:

Hawaii and District of Columbia Data

The Steering Committee reviewed the definition of "state library agency" as it appears in the "Introduction" to the June 1996 Ed.Tab. and the caution in the second and third paragraphs regarding Hawaii and District of Columbia data.

Several members reiterated their recommendation made at previous meetings that District of Columbia data not be included in the State Library Agencies survey report inasmuch as the data (1) duplicate data already reported in the Public Library Survey and (2) describe the finances, resources and services/functions of a major metropolitan central library and its branches rather than those of a state library agency.

The discussion moved to the reporting of public library circulation, reference work, and costs of operating local public libraries in Hawaii and the consequent duplicate reporting between the Public Library Survey and the State Library Agencies Survey.

Ms. Lynch and Mr. Lance described the way in which they are

summarizing StLA data for an article in the library press. In this, they are using footnotes to indicate that they are not including data from the District of Columbia and, in some paragraphs, Hawaii where those data report on public library services. Ms. Lynch provided copies of the draft article and asked for comments by September 30.

Staff Effort by Ethnicity and Function

Several members of the Steering Committee pointed to the effort required to supply staff ethnicity data for question 20 and questioned the usefulness of these data.

Mr. Smith pointed out the difficulty of assembling data for questions 18 and 19 (staff/type of service) and question 20 (race, ethnicity and gender) (Tables in the 11 and 12 series).

State Aid Financial Data

The Committee discussed reporting of state aid in Table 19. The Committee agreed that "Financial Assistance to Libraries and Systems" would be better understood than "Aid to Libraries" as used in the Table 19.

Allied Operations

The Committee discussed the reporting of "allied operations" and suggested amplification of the paragraph in the "Introduction" relating to those data.

Special Collections

The Steering Committee noted the confusion and apparent lack of understanding of the definitions for collecting levels and questioned the usefulness of the data.

Report on 1995 Survey data received and quick survey of COSLA

Responses have been received from all states and DC, except Arkansas. Thirty-six states submitted data before February 29, 1996. There were relatively few problems with the data. Four states (Arizona, Ohio, Oregon, and Rhode Island) submitted data via Internet. NCES hopes to be able to complete adjudication and release the 1995 data by late January, 1997. Census staff will prepare the Text for the "Highlights" section of the Ed. Tab.

Kim Miller collected information by e-mail from Chief Officers in which she asked which staff member would coordinate the response for 1996 data, and seeking suggestions for improvement and/or changes for future surveys. In some, but not all, states Data Coordinators will coordinate the StLA survey response.

The responses indicated that individual who coordinates the response (whether the Data Coordinator or a member of the state librarian's office) apparently depends upon several and various people to obtain the data, some of whom are not familiar with the StLA survey definitions or those used in other standard library data surveys. It appears that in some states, the expertise of FSCS Data Coordinators who are familiar with FSCS and IPEDS data and definitions are not being used for the StLA survey.

The Steering Committee suggested that the COSLA Research and Statistics Committee brief chief officers on the survey and recommend fuller use of the Data Coordinators so as to reduce data and definition problems. The Committee also recommended that the FSCS training workshop include a session in which Data Coordinators can learn more about the StLA definitions and reports.

OMB and Data Duplication

The Office of Management and Budget has questioned the extent of overlap between the StLA expenditure data and the LSCA reports collected by the Office of Library Programs (OLP). Mr. Fork explained the need for OLP to collect expenditure data on the Federal fiscal year basis to document compliance with maintenance of effort laws.

He also noted that StLA questions 115-119 (library development transactions), 121-163 (staff), and 190-200 (expenditures) are closely related to LSCA, but a state whose fiscal year is not the same as the Federal fiscal year is likely to supply to OLP figures which are different from those reported to NCES. There is still a need for the Office of Library Programs to collect data for administrative purposes.

The Steering Committee recommended that COSLA support the continued collection of StLA data and OLP data which is required for administration of the law.

Recommendations for Future Surveys

The Steering Committee identified the following to be considered at the next meeting as possible recommendations for the 1997 survey:

1. Question 6 (electronic network functions, Table 3): Should the yes/no questions be replaced by expenditure data?
2. Question 12 (volumes/units in collections, Table 7): Delete films since this has been dropped from the public libraries survey.
3. Question 14 (special collections, Table 8): Delete.

4. Questions 18/19 (staff by type of service/staff by specialty, Tables 11c and d): Use the IPEDS definition for "other professionals."
5. Question 20 (staff by ethnicity and gender, Tables 13a and b): Delete
6. Question 22 (aid to libraries, Tables 19 and 24a-c): Change the heading for items 179 to 186 to "Financial assistance to libraries and systems."
7. Question 26 (combined libraries, Table 28): Delete

The meeting was adjourned at noon. The Committee will meet again in March or April 1997.

StLASep96