



The Relationship of the State Library Agency To Public Library Service to Children

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THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY in its service to children and provision of books and reading for them has been a concern of many state library agencies from the very early years of their establishment.

At a meeting of the American Library Association in 1894 Lutie E. Stearns¹ pleaded for the removal of the age limit for children's use of the public library; there was scarcely a library in the country at that time which allowed children under the age of twelve to take books. It was at this gathering that she first heard of the work of the Massachusetts and New Hampshire Commissions and secured copies of the laws under which they were established. Upon her return to Wisconsin, Miss Stearns and Frank A. Hutchins drafted the enabling law for the Free Library Commission in Wisconsin.

State library agency training activities and the compiling and publishing of book lists for the public librarian serving children are a matter of early historical record. In a course on children's work, given by a state agency in 1902, it was reported that, "No time was given to preliminary arguments for or against work with children, but the problems which librarians meet or attempt to meet were approached directly. . . . Miss Dousman gave five lectures on the following subjects: furniture and equipment for the children's room, administration of the children's room, government and discipline and relations with children, books that are read and some that are not, children's rooms in American libraries."² And in 1905, a state agency staff member wrote, "Nothing is more welcome to librarians than aids in the selection of children's books. There is a section devoted to children's books in the 'Wisconsin Suggestive List' and this is supple-

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Relationship of State Library Agency to Public Library Service

mented by current lists. The Iowa Library Commission issued last year a list of books for children compiled by Miss Moore, of Pratt Institute.”³

In 1963, the relationship of the state library agency to public library service to children varies with the resources, needs, and organizational pattern of each of the 50 agencies, all of which have, however, as a major function library extension. Advisory and technical assistance to librarians, library authorities, interested citizens, and state institutions, the distribution of books and other library materials, the establishment of standards for library development, and the stimulation of co-operative and co-ordinated library systems are roles accepted by today's state library extension leaders.⁴ That these roles include concern for public library service to children can be taken for granted in 1963. Approaches vary from state to state, but adequate public library service within easy reach of everyone is a universal goal.

The only specific guides in the form of standards to the relationship between the state library agency and public library service to children are those concerned with children's services and state library services that appear in *Public Library Service: A Guide to Evaluation, with Minimum Standards*.⁵ Two projects under way will undoubtedly be of assistance: the American Association of State Libraries' survey of the functions of state library agencies and the resultant development of standards for state library services, and the standards being developed by the Public Library Association's Subcommittee on Standards for Work with Children in Public Libraries.

Because this paper is concerned with the relationship of the state library agency to public library service to children throughout the United States and includes consideration of state-directed or implemented public library service to children, a check list was prepared and distributed to the 50 state library agencies. Forty-four replies were received, one state returned the questionnaire with the notation that its state library agency was in the organizational stage, and five states did not reply. An examination of relevant literature proved it to be very limited except for one unpublished thesis.⁶ The information gathered from the check list in no way reveals the quality or depth of services; however, it does provide some quantitative measurement and assists in determining current concepts of relationships. An evaluative study of the work of the state library agency in assisting public libraries to serve children would be most helpful.

The underlying concept of state library service to local libraries is

described thus, "The various library systems within the state should function together as a network to make the full resources of the state available to every resident. An agency within the state government should carry responsibility for guiding and reinforcing adequate local service."⁷ The relationship between the state library agency and local libraries in regard to their children's services is usually one of friendly persuasion and counsel, backed up in some states by standards, by requirements for grants-in-aid, and by mandatory certification. Its relationship is that of a supplier of books and other materials; an adviser through consultation and field visits; a guide in building quality materials collections; a source of training activities; a leader in library development, planning, and coordination; a promoter of the active role of the public library in community life; and a developer and implementer of standards.

The state library agency's role as a supplier of books has traditionally, in many states, encompassed children's as well as adult books: "The provision of library materials, printed and in other forms, through a planned program of interlibrary loans from a state agency to local libraries can be of great importance to supplement the local resources, to provide limited service where there is no local library, or to demonstrate the value of library services."⁸ It is interesting to note that in 1962, 36 of 44 state agencies report children's books as a part of their collections and the loan of them to public libraries while eight states do not loan children's books to public libraries. The same eight states and 11 others do not make loans to schools. There are several limitations indicated when state agencies are making loans to schools, such as "rural schools," "when school librarian requests," "one-room schools," "schools in cities and towns under 15,000 population where public library is not adequate enough to offer such public library service to schools," or, as noted by one state agency in a department of education, "loans to schools by state agency only through public library, large group loans are made and then reloaned to schools." Signs of the changing times are also noted in comments on the loans to public libraries, such as "through systems headquarters," "sent on indefinite loan to demonstration libraries," and "the state library collection has been weeded and placed in demonstration project areas."

To the further question as to whether or not the state library agency gives direct book service to children, 18 states answered negatively. Several of these states point out that, during state-directed

Relationship of State Library Agency to Public Library Service

demonstrations, direct book service to children is given. Among the 26 who serve children directly, only 18 states loan from the state library agency, with four of these noting that direct service is given only to those who do not have it locally. Eighteen are serving children directly through bookmobiles, eleven through regional branches, and ten through regional centers. The type of book loan reported is also indicative of state library agencies' book service policies. Thirty-four in loaning to public libraries and 23 in loaning to schools use author-title requests, 33 send collections to public libraries and 21 to schools, and developmental loans are used by 20 states in serving public libraries, by nine in serving schools.

Doerschuk and Palmer reported in 1960 that the number of state and provincial library agencies lending films had increased 42 per cent, from 19 to 33 in the years since 1956.⁹ They noted that fewer of these agencies restrict such films to the subject of librarianship. Widem's 1956 figures show nine out of 36 states reporting films and filmstrips for children, and eight out of 35 reporting recordings for children.¹⁰ Twelve states in 1962 report the loan of children's films to public libraries, four to schools; 12 and nine respectively loan filmstrips and slides to public libraries and schools; and 10 loan children's recordings to public libraries and six to schools. Five additional states commented that films and/or filmstrips are provided by other bureaus or agencies or by contract with a public library.

It is evident that state library agencies, generally speaking, continue to be strongly related to public libraries as active suppliers of children's books, much less often directly to schools. There are, perhaps, indications of a shift in this role in the foreseeable future. One-fifth of the states in the sample do not presently supply children's books. Because children's books are among the books most heavily in demand in the local community, the state library is less likely to be the resource for children's books as library systems develop. There is an apparent trend that, with increasing statewide public library coverage in many states, direct service to children is not being given as frequently from the state library. It is also evident that the rate of increase of state library agencies supplying children's films, filmstrips, slides, and recordings to public libraries or schools is small.

One of the basic ways by which state agencies work with local libraries to guide and reinforce the children's service program is through advice and consultation. According to one children's specialist's field service reports, subjects for consultation range from such

guidance activities as storytelling, book talks, discussion groups, and summer vacation reading programs, through exhibits and radio and television programs. Planning for community book fairs, Book Week, and National Library Week programs are subjects for consultation. Advice is often requested on binding and editions, selection aids and indexes for children's materials, cataloging and classifying children's books, or the evaluation and weeding of children's book collections. Public library service to schools, recruiting for children's vacancies, and building or remodeling children's facilities are also frequent subjects for consultation.

An attempt was made to learn something about the relative use of the various methods for giving advisory service, by a series of questions on how consultation on public library service to children is accomplished.

Forty-one of the 44 state agencies responding make field visits by library consultants, and 40 consult by correspondence. Next in prevalence are the 37 agencies that provide in-service training, workshops, institutes, etc. Thirty-six respondents give advisory service to those who come to the state library agency for consultation. In view of the increasing development of library systems, the question was asked as to the state agencies' work with children's consultants of systems. Thirteen agencies answered this affirmatively.

A traditional advisory service of many state library agencies is guidance on the acquisition and selection of children's library materials, particularly books. This service was provided historically to aid small libraries, through the compilation and publishing of book lists, and has been developed to provide assistance to the children's librarians in the state as well. This service now often includes the opportunity to examine new trade juvenile books, as well as the many professional aids for selecting children's materials and for in-service training activities, sponsored or cosponsored by the state library agency.

A series of questions was developed to examine the present practices in the area of book selection aids. All 44 of the states in the sample responded to these questions. Thirty-one state agencies prepare and/or purchase children's book lists and distribute them to public libraries. Eighteen list selected children's books in their newsletters or journals. Thirty-eight agencies provide exhibits of books, for book fairs, at meetings of related organizations, and for staff selection. One state reports that it has discontinued the service of

Relationship of State Library Agency to Public Library Service

providing exhibits because of the lack of demand. Another state comments that a book exhibit is sent to county boards of education, and, frequently, sponsored exhibits are with the public library.

More than 30 states participate in the State Traveling Exhibits of children's books, provided by the individual publishers and administered by a joint committee of the American Library Association and the Children's Book Council.¹¹ New York's experience in using the traveling exhibit indicates that, as Broderick writes, "More librarians in New York State bought more books this year from seeing them than ever before. . . . We'll see the day when the majority of books bought in the State will have been seen, not just read about."¹² Other types of special collections useful for book selection, evaluation, and enrichment are listed by 16 states. These include, among others, foreign children's books, Newbery and Caldecott awards, Lewis Carroll awards, and editions and bindings.

Twenty-eight of the respondents answer affirmatively the question as to whether or not there had been in-service training programs, workshops, institutes, or conferences on children's materials selection in the state during the past three years which the state agency had sponsored or been a participant in. Twenty-nine check "yes" to the in-service training question regarding children's services programs on such subjects as storytelling, summer vacation reading, and services to adults working with children, with the indication that a few of the training activities listed included programs on both materials and services for children. An additional state agency indicates that such in-service training activity was being provided before staff changes and vacancies. Another one reports that statewide workshops on materials and services were in preparation for the spring of 1963.

Subjects for training include planning for work with children and young people, standards for public library work with children, public library and school relationships, services and materials for children and young people, services to adults working with children, storytelling, summer vacation reading programs, book selection, family reading, encouraging children to read, aids to use of books, book talks, reference, and cataloging.

The length of time scheduled for children's workshops, institutes, and conferences ranges from Alabama's six-week study grant program on book selection and services at the University to a great number of one-day or morning, afternoon, or evening workshops and meetings. For example, Montana reports during the three-year period twelve

area workshops on children's literature, in cooperation with the State Department of Public Instruction; ten area workshops on book selection and storytelling conducted by Richard Darling; regular in-service training periods with three federations of libraries; and twelve workshops on storytelling conducted by the State Library, some of which were held in the federations. In South Carolina, there was a 12-day Family Reading Institute, and the Mississippi state agency offered a 12-hour session on selection tools and services in one of a series of eight workshops.

Some examples of other types of training activities identified in the listing are (1) New York's community librarian training courses, one of which includes four class sessions on children's services, materials, and programming, (2) Missouri's institutes for librarians of small public libraries and staff of regional libraries, and for graduate librarians on strengthening children's resources and services in Missouri libraries, and (3) Wisconsin's Eighth Public Library Management Institute on "Public Library-Public School Relationships." The in-service training consultant in Tennessee prepared an in-service training lesson on stimulating children to read and conducted it herself in five of the regional centers. In Washington, the Columbia River Regional Library Demonstration conducted an in-service training workshop, entitled "Reaching Readers: A Workshop on Children's and Young People's Services." These examples are only a selection from many others listed. It seems evident that the state library agency is taking seriously its responsibility as a resource for training.

A responsibility of the state library agency in its leadership role of planning, co-ordination, and development is to develop contacts and working relationships with other institutions, state departments and agencies, and statewide organizations which have a concern for children.

This type of program interrelates strongly to the growth of the public library's service to children. The state level promotion of the active role of the public library in community life and of the coordination of public library and school library service extends the effectiveness of such action on the part of the public library in its local community. Groups concerned with the development of educational, cultural, and recreational resources in the state for boys and girls need to understand the public library's service—present and potential.

Because of the importance of coordination of library services between school and public libraries throughout the nation, the first

Relationship of State Library Agency to Public Library Service

question in this series was "Has a state policy on public library-school relationships been adopted?" Ten states answer affirmatively, without qualification. Two state agencies in departments of education report that the two services are closely integrated or that policy is not written but is well understood by librarians. One state answers that it has a policy, not formalized in writing, another that it has a partial policy, and one that there is a state policy in its demonstration areas. Two report that such a policy is being developed, and one reports that it is needed. Twenty-seven states do not have a state policy on public library-school library relationships. In 1956, Barbara Widem reported four states as having written statements of policy and 12 states as indicating some cooperation between state departments of education and state library agencies.¹³ A comprehensive and evaluative study of such policies on a state and local level might be useful in working on the problem of coordination of services.

State library agencies were queried as to their work with other institutions, state departments, and agencies, such as Co-operative Extension, Department of Public Welfare—training schools, and college or university library science departments. Thirty-four states indicate that they work with this category, the highest incidence being with college or university library science departments. A very few states indicate work with institutions for the physically handicapped, delinquent, or emotionally disturbed children.

A different group of 34 states reports that they work with statewide organizations, such as the state PTA or state education associations. Work with these two far outweighs that with any other single organization except for state library and trustees associations. Federated women's clubs, agricultural home extension women, state committees on children and youth, and state and district sections of the American Camping Association are other organizations mentioned.

In its leadership role of library development, the state library agency has another vital relationship with the public library's program for children, in the setting of standards for children's service. Twenty-nine state agencies report that they are involved in developing and implementing specific state standards for public libraries, including children's services. An additional state will be working on such standards soon, while one state points out that it has adopted *Public Library Service* standards as goals in its library development program. It is also evident in the area of standards' development and implementa-

tion that state agencies and library and trustees associations are working as teams on national and specific state standards.

"How has the Library Services Act contributed to strengthening of public library service to children in your state?" was the final query in the area of library development. Table I ranks the responses by the 44 state agencies according to frequency. It is interesting to note that the enrichment of library collections—community, then state agency, and finally "systems" collections—leads all others. High on the list are the development of new systems, the stimulation of contracts with stronger libraries to extend services to neighboring libraries, and the carrying out of short-term demonstrations, all ways of developing stronger libraries to serve rural residents. Thirty-one agencies have added staff, and 25 report additional staff on library systems in their states. Eighteen states list the establishment of scholarships for students of librarianship. Strengthening and developing direct service through state regional centers or branches are listed by 14 and 12 states, respectively. Equally high on the list are fourteen states that have developed direct service through state-operated book-

TABLE I

*Ranked List of LSA Contributions
to Strengthening of Public Library
Service to Children by 44 State
Library Agencies*

<i>Contribution</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Enrichment of community library collections	36
Enrichment of state library agency collections	34
Enrichment of "systems" library collections	33
Development of new "systems"	32
Additional staff in state agency	31
Stimulation of contracts with stronger libraries to extend services to neighboring libraries	30
Carrying out short-term demonstrations	27
Additional staff in "systems"	25
Establishment of scholarships for students of librarianship	18
Strengthening of direct service through state regional centers or branches	14
Development of direct service through state-operated bookmobiles	14
Development of direct service through state regional centers or branches	12
Strengthening of direct service through state-operated bookmobiles	9
Regional State Library Bibliographical Center	1
Co-operative Children's Book Center	1

Relationship of State Library Agency to Public Library Service

mobiles and nine states that have strengthened this same service. Missouri reports a regional state library bibliographical center that speeds up books and reference materials in 20 counties in southwest Missouri; Wisconsin reports the planning for a Co-operative Children's Book Center, sponsored by the Commission, the State Department of Public Instruction, and the University of Wisconsin's School of Education and Library School.

There were forty-four responses to the questions, "Is there a consultant for service to children on the state library agency staff?" and "Is full or part of the consultant's time devoted to public library service to children?" A consultant for service to children is reported by 11 states, six checking full-time devoted to public library service for children, five checking part-time. In addition, one state reports a vacancy for a children's consultant and one that the children's and young people's section of the state library association is planning to support a request for a children's specialist on the consultant staff of the state library. Four states indicate that consultants on their staffs, although not designated as children's consultants, are in three instances experienced children's librarians and in the other an experienced school library supervisor who is regularly used on matters regarding children's and young people's services. One state reports that, although it has no field consultant specialized in children's work, there is on its Reader Service Division staff a specialist in children's reading who selects children's books, supervises reference work to children, and makes children's book lists. One state that established the position of Consultant for Youth and Children in 1959¹⁴ reports no children's consultant in 1962.

To complete the picture of state agency children's consultants, one should add that in two of the states not answering the questionnaire there are children's consultant positions. The Maine State Library has on its staff a specialist in children's work;¹⁵ in 1957, the Illinois State Library established the position of Juvenile Consultant with full responsibility for all problems associated with service to children throughout the state.¹⁶

Table II brings the foregoing information into tabular form.

Data were also gathered about other personnel who consult on children's services when there is not a consultant for service to children. Of 33 state agencies, consultation is given by public library consultants in almost two-thirds and by field librarians and agency heads in almost a third. Supervisors, consultants, or staff in library

ELIZABETH BURR

TABLE II

*State Agency Consultants on Public
Library Service to Children*

<i>State</i>	<i>Title of Position</i>	<i>Full-Time</i>	<i>Part-Time</i>
Arkansas ¹	Public Library Consultant, School Library Consultant		x
California	Planning for Children's Specialist		
Colorado ¹	Public Library Consultant		x
Connecticut ²	Consultant		x
Illinois ³	Juvenile Consultant	x	
Iowa ¹	Children's and Young People's Specialist	x	
Maine	Children's Specialist	x	
Massachusetts ¹	Public Library Specialist in Work with Children and Young People	x	
Michigan ¹	Consultant, Children's Work	x	
Nebraska ²	Public Library Consultant		x
New Mexico ¹	Head, Service to Children and Young People	x	
New York ¹	Children's Specialist	x	
North Carolina ⁴	Children's Specialist	x	
North Dakota ¹	Consultant, School and Public Library		x
Oregon	Reader's Services Division—Children's Specialist		x
Rhode Island ¹	Assistant Supervisor		x
South Carolina ³	Library Consultant for Youth and Children	x	
Utah ²	Extension Library		x
Virginia ¹	Children's and Young People's Specialist		x
Washington ²	Public Library Consultant		x
Wisconsin ¹	Consultant, Children's and Young People's Services	x	

¹ States that report a Consultant for Service to Children on agency staff.

² Experienced children's or school librarians.

³ Position not reported nor filled in 1962.

⁴ Position not presently filled.

service centers and in regional and area libraries, public services librarians, school library supervisors, special summer staff, extension librarians, and other extension division personnel are also listed.

In answer to Widem's 1956 questionnaire sent to state library extension agencies, "Seventeen of thirty-eight respondents indicated that the responsibility for planning, directing and carrying on chil-

Relationship of State Library Agency to Public Library Service

children's services was delegated to . . . one state library agency staff member."¹⁷

Of the five positions (Michigan, New Mexico, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin) designated in 1956 as those of children's specialists, three states (Michigan, New Mexico, and Wisconsin) report full-time children's specialists in 1962; Vermont reports consultation by regional librarians and assistants rather than a statewide position; and Virginia reports a children's specialist who devotes part-time to public library service to children. Seven states (Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, and South Carolina) have, in the period between 1956 and 1962, established full-time positions on the state level that may be designated as specialists in the field of public library service to children, even though the job titles differ. Thus, in 1962 there were 10 out of 50 state library agencies where full-time positions in the field of public library services to children have been established. It is interesting to note that six states which lacked state school library consultant positions established them during 1961-62, bringing the total number of states with such positions, as of June 1962, to 35.¹⁸

That progress has been slow in the creation of children's specialist positions on the state level is apparent. On the other hand, there is continuing concern with consultation on public library service to children in almost every agency. Written into *Public Library Service* is the standard, "The state agency should have personnel with specialized competence in service to children."¹⁹ Expanded field service with specialization (for example, specialists in work with children, young people, or schools) of consultant personnel was among the services most frequently desired by state agencies in 1956.²⁰ The decision to establish such a position varies, of course, with the priorities in the program of the agency and is influenced by recruitment difficulties and the number of staff that can be budgeted by any one agency.

The director of one library extension division which maintains special positions in work with children, with young adults, and with adults, writes, "In spite of all the current emphasis on specialization, it will in our thinking be a long time before we abandon completely the concept of the general consultant. It may even be that in the age of the specialist the role of the generalist who can see the larger picture will become more important rather than less so; although one suspects that even the generalist has always been something of a part-

time specialist.”²¹ This statement of principle underlies, rightly in this author’s opinion, the priority for the generalist on state library agency staffs. However, an important factor to be considered in the potential role of the state library agency in the development of public library service to children is the addition of children’s specialists—and quite as important to total development, specialists in young adult and adult services.

Several states comment upon the budgeting or planning for children’s specialists in library service centers and in library systems. As systems develop, the work of the state children’s consultant will shift to counseling with consultants of systems in this field of specialization and to greater emphasis upon the broader functions of training and planning, of the coordination of library services to children, of promotion of the active role of the public library, and of pinpointing research needed and finding the right agency to do the research.

Of great significance to all state library agencies and to others interested in quality library service for children and young adults is the creation of the new position, public library specialist in children’s and young adult work, in the Library Services Branch, U.S. Office of Education. It augurs well for an acceleration of children’s service during the next decades. A decisive factor on how public library service to children develops in the future is the interrelationship of the state library agency and the libraries it serves. Of great import are planning for the strengthening of existing services that are useful, eliminating outdated ones, and experimenting to meet changing needs.

The future effectiveness of public library service to children is dependent, to a great extent, upon the leadership of a strong state library agency which is concerned with children’s service as a part of total public library development and understands the need for specialized planning and services in this field.

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