

## LSA, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, AND THE PROFESSION

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Preparing this paper has been a delightful task but also a frustrating experience. In reading background material on federal aid for libraries, in talking to Ralph Dunbar and Paul Howard, who were deeply involved in all stages of the events leading up to the LSA, I've unearthed so much fascinating material that I could write a book. This is the pleasant part.

I'm sorry I couldn't talk to Marjorie Malmberg and Julia Bennett Armistead also since they, too, played important roles and deserve much of the credit for the success that finally came. But it is impossible to mention all who shared in this achievement. Hundreds helped in their own particular way. Many who helped are here.

The difficulty confronting me is that I have only a few minutes in which to cover the development of federal legislation, the work of the Washington Office, and the outlook for the future. However, many of you here took an active part in the early struggles and are familiar with much of the history leading up to the LSA. Furthermore someone has already written a book and I hope all of you have read it--Hawthorne Daniel's Public Libraries for Everyone.<sup>1</sup> But even so, some of the early history of library legislation needs to be told here in order to place developments in proper perspective. My task then will be to consider the development of legislation which eventually became the Library Services Act and to try to assess the factors which brought success in 1956 and again in 1960 when the Act was extended, as well as the implications of such factors for future library legislation.

For almost 30 years recommendations have been made<sup>7</sup> for federal assistance to public libraries. One of the earliest

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proposals came from outside the library profession. Representative Ross Collins of Mississippi introduced a bill in the 1930's to set up regional branches of the Library of Congress, saying that for the cost of one destroyer branches could be established in several regions of the United States.

In 1936 the American Library Association's Special Committee on Federal Aid recommended "a system of permanent annual grants-in-aid to libraries," with emphasis on state programs and development of facilities for rural library service.<sup>2</sup>

In 1938 President Roosevelt's Advisory Committee on Education recommended federal grants-in-aid to the states for the extension of library service to rural areas. It proposed appropriations of \$2 million in 1940, \$4 million in 1941, and \$6 million annually thereafter, to be allocated among the states in proportion to their rural populations.<sup>3</sup> A study made for the Committee by Carleton B. Joeckel presented basic arguments for federal aid to libraries with recommendations for a permanent system of grants-in-aid.<sup>4</sup>

The arguments advanced for federal participation have consistently stressed the significance of the public library as an essential part of our educational system, have pointed out the lacks and inadequacies in library service and the inability or unwillingness of the states and local communities to provide the necessary financing, and have concluded that a program national in scope is necessary to achieve the goal of good library service for all citizens.

Based on findings from the studies made by the U. S. Advisory Committee on Education, federal-aid-to-education bills including a separate title to provide grants for libraries in rural areas were introduced in 1939 and 1940. No action was taken by the Congress, however, and then national defense and later war activities caused a postponement of any consideration of such measures.

During the war years ALA's Federal Relations Committee tried to carry forward its objective of permanent federal aid for library development, and at the same time to take advantage of opportunities to secure emergency funds to provide for library service in training for defense industries or in civic education. The U. S. Office of Education, after a conference with leading librarians on this problem of extending public library service through state and local library agencies to defense areas, prepared and documented a budget of some \$14 million. This was approved by the Federal Security Administration but was not allowed by the Bureau of the Budget on the grounds the WPA was already engaged in rendering library service to these areas!

In 1944 a bill was prepared by the ALA to provide for the transfer of surplus army books, materials, and equipment to the states. Included in this bill were many of the same provisions later incorporated in the Library Demonstration Bill and the LSA. Carl Milam, then Executive Secretary of ALA, tried without success to interest Senator Elbert D. Thomas of Utah and Representative Graham Barden of North Carolina in sponsoring the bill. This failure was due largely to the fact there was no one from ALA in Washington to follow through, although Ralph M. Dunbar, then head of the Library Service Division of the USOE, was a participant in all these activities insofar as government regulations permitted. It also reflected the pressure of war activities which made it difficult to get the full interest of the congressmen on the bill.

In 1945 ALA established its Washington Office, with Paul Howard, who had been serving as Chairman of the Federal Relations Committee, as the first director. With the assistance of a secretary and a public relations assistant, it was his job to organize the country, gain support of other national organizations, get state legislative committees set up, and inaugurate liaison with members of Congress. In those early days it was hard for ALA's representative to get past the reception desk of a congressman's office. So far as the representatives and senators were concerned, librarians and libraries were not important: librarians had no political influence, no appeal of consequence; libraries were for old people and children and of no significance nationally. In addition there was latent opposition in Congress and among many groups to federal aid in any form, plus a feeling that libraries were a concern of state and local governments and not a federal responsibility. The congressmen who supported the library bill when it was first introduced did so out of the goodness of their hearts--their support was pure philanthropy. Now these same senators and representatives who are still in Congress can take personal satisfaction in their action, which accomplished far more than they ever envisioned. A tremendous reservoir of good will has been built up in this influential group.

The library profession can be proud that grants for library service were included in the early general education bills, but more important is the fact that the American Library Association had the courage to try for separate library legislation when it became apparent that an omnibus education bill was going to face tremendous difficulties. Time has borne out the wisdom of that decision; the Library Services Act was not only passed but was extended for another five years, while a general education

bill has yet to be enacted by Congress. Both of these accomplishments have astonished and mystified many people, including some librarians and government officials, who can't understand how a library bill was passed while other educational measures failed.

One of the helpful factors in these accomplishments was the establishment of the ALA Washington Office.<sup>5</sup> In the beginning the Washington Office was supported through the Library Development Fund, consisting of gifts from individuals, state library associations, and ALA divisions, plus some money from general ALA funds. It was not until 1952 that the Office became a part of the regular ALA budget, and since then it has not had to solicit funds for its support. Contributions are still made by state library associations, however, and these funds enable the Office to do many things which would not be possible otherwise. From 1952 until early this year, when an assistant director was secured, the staff consisted of only two people--a director and a secretary.

The original Office was in downtown Washington at 1701 M Street, but was later located over Sidney Kramer's bookstore on H Street. In 1950 it was moved to Capitol Hill to a suite in the Hotel Congressional. After Congress bought that hotel in 1958, the Office was transferred two blocks east to the Coronet Apartment where it now occupies a three-room suite. The location of the Office is an important factor in lobbying. It is only a few blocks from the U. S. Capitol; the two House of Representatives office buildings are only a block away, and the two Senate buildings about five blocks. This is helpful because many congressmen must be visited and committee staff consulted every day while Congress is in session. Each of these buildings is one block square and has from four to seven floors, and all of these corridors are walked regularly.

Since the establishment of the Office, in every Congress from the 79th in 1945-46 through the 84th in 1955-56--the session in which the Library Services Act was passed--legislation providing grants for libraries in rural areas was introduced and promoted with varying degrees of success. The first in a long procession of bills to be introduced was a library demonstration measure sponsored by Congresswoman Emily Taft Douglas in the 79th Congress. I suppose it was largely because ALA was located in Chicago that Carl Milam suggested Illinois Congresswoman Douglas as a sponsor for the first bill. Simultaneously, Senator Lister Hill introduced in the Senate a similar bill at the request of Lois Green, who was then State Librarian of Alabama. By the time of adjournment, the House bill had

been reported favorably by the Education Subcommittee but not by the full Committee. The Senate bill was reported out by the full Committee on Labor and Public Welfare but did not reach the Senate floor.

After this fairly auspicious beginning, the vicissitudes were many. Representative Thomas Jenkins' bill in the next Congress received only favorable subcommittee action, but Senators Hill and George D. Aiken brought their bill through to Senate passage under the Unanimous Consent Calendar. Republican Senator Aiken became a sponsor because of what the bookmobile was doing in rural Vermont. Though the bill came to naught in this 80th Congress, by a series of curious incidents it did win one ardent advocate that it didn't have before. At the time he introduced the measure, Congressman Jenkins of Ohio was somewhat less than wildly enthusiastic about the program. Indeed, he had never heard of the American Library Association and had sponsored the measure only at the request of his law partner, a trustee in an Ohio public library. He was rather interested to know that there was such an association and a need for such legislation. But what really galvanized him into wholehearted support was an incident at the hearing on the bill. Appearing in support of the legislation with Ohio State Library's Walter Brahm at his side to testify, he was astonished and angered to hear committee member Ralph Gwinn of New York remark that "no responsible state official would support a bill of this nature." Piqued by his fellow-congressman's statement, Representative Jenkins became a firm backer of federal aid for library extension.

The 81st Congress saw four bills introduced in the House, a favorable report by the Education and Labor Committee, and then after five full hours of debate--defeat on the floor by a heartbreaking vote of 161-164. The Senate again reported the Library Demonstration Bill, co-sponsored now by three senators, but this time it was passed over on the Consent Calendar.

In the 82nd Congress, as a result of the debate in the preceding Congress, a number of changes were made in the legislation before introduction. The states were given greater freedom of action in carrying out the objectives of the bill; they were not restricted to the demonstration method. The bill became the Library Services Bill and included, among other things, a definite statement as to the possible maximum cost. It had a variable matching formula not in the earlier bills which took into consideration (1) the ratio of the rural population in each state to the total rural population of the United States and (2) the ability to pay in the respective states. In the House eight

members introduced identical bills, and Senators Hill, Aiken, and Douglas introduced the legislation in the Senate. Although favorably reported on by the full committee in the Senate and by the subcommittee in the House, the great pressure of other legislation prevented action.

Although no floor action occurred in the 82nd Congress, the bill was gathering that momentum which was to bring it success two Congresses later. Thirteen representatives and nine senators sponsored the measure in the 83rd Congress. Unfortunately this was to no avail, as the Senate and House committees this time held up all legislation which dealt with federal grants-in-aid to education. Their reason for doing this was anticipation of a report on the role of the federal government in education. This document, the so-called Kestnbaum Report,<sup>6</sup> prepared for the U. S. Commission on Intergovernmental Relations and issued in June 1955, considered libraries in this context and found that public libraries were an important part of our education system, that their work and expansion should be encouraged, but that their support was a state and local responsibility and that there was not such a compelling national interest involved as to justify action by the federal government.

Nevertheless, the successful climax came in the 84th Congress. With 28 similar bills introduced in the House, H. R. 2840 was favorably reported on July 29, 1955, and passed by the House on May 8, 1956. In the Senate, Senator Lister Hill introduced a similar bill for himself and 17 other senators. The Senate subcommittee acted on H. R. 2840, which, as passed by the House, was similar to the Senate bill, and reported it favorably on May 29, 1956. It passed the Senate on June 6, 1956, and was signed into law by the President on June 19, 1956, to become Public Law 84-597. A resolution of thanks was adopted at the Miami Conference of ALA and transmitted to President Eisenhower and the Congress.

The accomplishments of the Library Services Act have been spectacular. They are now a matter of printed record<sup>7</sup> to which you may refer, although many of you through actual experience know the record by heart. The House Appropriations Committee in recommending the full authorization for the Library Services Act for fiscal 1962 made this statement:

For the small amount of Federal funds involved this has been not only one of the most popular, but one of the most worthwhile programs of the Federal Government. Since this program was instituted, over 100 rural counties and an equal number of New England towns formerly without

any public libraries are now receiving library service. More than 6,000,000 books and other informational materials have been added to the resources of rural communities. This has not been done just with the Federal funds. This program is a fine demonstration of Federal leadership, and the local interest and contributions that can result from such leadership. Since this program started State funds for the development of rural public library service have increased 75% and local appropriations for rural libraries have increased 50%.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps the greatest testimony to the success with which the grants have been managed was the extension of the Act by the 86th Congress in 1960, a year before its termination date necessitated such action. Not that its progress toward this end was without setbacks! Introduced auspiciously in January 1960 with 52 individual bills in the House and 55 co-sponsors in the Senate and reported unanimously by the House Committee on Education and Labor--an astonishing achievement--the House bill struck a snag when the Rules Committee refused to grant a rule. Meanwhile the Senate had passed the bill without a dissenting vote. With this tremendous show of support in both houses, after a moment or two of discouragement, it seemed worthwhile to seek ways to skirt the Rules Committee. To bypass the powerful Rules Committee is not easy. Speaking of the Rules Committee and its long-time Chairman, Howard Smith of Virginia, Paul Howard tells me that he is the only congressman who refused to see or talk to him about the library bill. This unfortunate attitude is somewhat offset, however, by the fact that the State Librarian of Mississippi is a personal friend of the second ranking majority member of the Rules Committee (referred to in the press as "H. Smith's spear carrier"), and she can sometimes get this important member to vote for library legislation.

But to get back to the summer of 1960. First, we had to find out what happened in the closed meeting of the Rules Committee at which the LSA amendment was considered. We learned the vote was a tie--6 to 6--and we also learned that the dissenting votes were cast by the four Republicans and the two above-mentioned ranking Democrats. After exhausting every means of getting a reconsideration of the bill by the Rules Committee, we decided to try to get a favorable vote under Suspension of the Rules--another difficult procedure.

It was fortunate for us that Congress recessed on July 2 instead of adjourning as had been expected. Representative John Fogarty of Rhode Island, Chairman of the Health, Educa-

tion, and Welfare Appropriations Subcommittee, stayed up all night on July 2 when it was uncertain whether the House would adjourn sine die or recess temporarily. At 5:30 a.m. he obtained the consent of Speaker Rayburn to call up the library extension bill under Suspension of the Rules on August 22.

The recess gave us time to marshal our forces, and we learned that librarians have powerful influence, friends in high places, and are willing to work day and night to accomplish something they believe in. Also helpful was the fact that ALA testified at the 1960 platform hearings of both national political parties, which led to the statements of support for libraries subsequently appearing in both party platforms. This in itself is a notable accomplishment--few organizations are given the opportunity to present their views at these platform hearings.

When the list of bills was made up by the Speaker for consideration on August 22, the Library Services Act was third on the list. This was lucky since only six bills were considered that day, and this was the only time the Suspension Calendar was called up before final adjournment. The Senate-passed bill, S. 2830, was called up by Subcommittee Chairman Elliott since the House bill was still tied up in the Rules Committee. Frank Bow, Representative of Ohio, immediately opposed consideration and the debate was on.

I wish all of you could have been in the gallery that August afternoon--not so much to hear what was said as how it was said; to witness the timing of statements by Republicans and Democrats, the stature of the men who spoke, the inflection in their voices, and the reception of their remarks by the House members.

At the end of 40 exciting, thrilling, nerve-wracking minutes, Speaker Rayburn banged his gavel; the vote was taken. Mr. Bow demanded a division; 190 representatives stood up in favor of the bill, 29 opposed it. And so the Library Services Act was extended until June 30, 1966, as Public Law 86-679.

Over the past three decades the changes in attitudes of librarians, congressmen, government officials, and the general public have been truly amazing. As you well know, there has been divided opinion in the American Library Association on the question of federal aid to libraries, and much has been written on the subject. One of the biggest battles took place at the Denver Conference in 1935. In the beginning many library leaders were opposed to the idea; some actively fought it; many believed a bill would never pass. The interests of many librarians did not extend beyond their own libraries. Some librarians, however, supported such legislation because

they felt that the profession should stick together, even if they were not sold personally on the objectives of the legislation. It took years to build up grass roots support, but it was effective in the long run. The lengthy educational process and the success of the legislation, plus the solid achievements under the Library Services Act, have done more than anything else to make the library profession a national group that now speaks with considerable authority throughout the country as well as in the nation's capital. The success of the legislation has also brought prestige to the ALA in the eyes of other national organizations.

In the Office of Education there was a noticeable lack of enthusiasm for the library bill during the early years, with the exception of a small core of officials who were deeply interested in the cause of libraries. But most officials were convinced that the library bill would get no place, that it wasn't worth wasting time on--and then were always amazed each time the bill got a hearing and a favorable report. None of the Commissioners actively opposed the bill, with the exception of Commissioner Brownell in 1956, but most did not give it serious attention either. It was never a priority matter. Generally, though, the Commissioners testified in support of the objectives of the bill in spite of lack of approval from the Bureau of the Budget. (The Library Services Act has never been on the approved list of the powerful Bureau of the Budget, often referred to as the "fourth arm of government," although the Bureau gave approval to the LSA extension, based on a tapering off of funds over the five years.)

The position of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was reflected in a letter from Secretary Folsom to Senator Hill as late as in May 1956, in which he stated that the "Department of Health, Education and Welfare is in accord with the broad objectives of the measure . . . but in regard to budgetary limitations, and in view of other more urgent needs for Federal funds in the fields of education, health, and welfare we would not regard this as a priority measure."

At the White House level, President Roosevelt supported the general education bill, including grants for rural library service. President Truman favored the Library Services Bill without giving it any actual personal support, but at that time this was an advantage since the Congress opposed anything he supported. President Eisenhower was totally uninterested.

And yet library legislation was passed, not once but twice, within the last five years.

Both of the candidates for President in the 1960 election

had originally opposed the library bill when they were members of the House of Representatives. In 1950, Mr. Kennedy spoke against the bill, and Mr. Nixon voted against it. In 1956, however, Senator Kennedy appeared as speaker at a National Book Awards affair in New York and made a point of telling ALA President John Richards he supported the Library Services Bill wholeheartedly. In 1960, both Senator Kennedy and Vice President Nixon wrote strong letters of support which were used during the House floor debate on the extension of the Library Services Act.

In 1960, HEW Secretary Arthur Flemming and USOE Commissioner Lawrence Derthick actively supported the LSA extension, although it was not recommended in President Eisenhower's Message to the Congress.

How do we account for this dramatic change in attitude towards the Library Services Act over the years? In brief these are the steps that have been taken which I believe have brought this about:

1. Establishment of good relations with senators, representatives, and key members of their staffs and staffs of Congressional committees handling educational legislation. (Work with committee staff is as important as working with a congressman--if you can perform a service for the staff of a committee you have won a battle. Introductory letters from constituents to congressmen for ALA representatives, while not absolutely necessary, can often be of help. A dossier on each member of Congress regarding his position on a bill is useful; effort should not be spent on those who are vocally opposed to all types of federal grants.)

2. Personal visits to explain briefly the importance of library service and to set forth the current inadequacies of such service, especially in the state or district of a particular senator or representative:

- (a) By Washington Office representatives and by constituents who come to or happen to be in Washington.

- (b) By constituents when the senators or representatives are at home. (Evident support of a bill at the local level is what really interests a congressman. It is valuable to involve prominent state and local leaders--important persons who speak with influence--as well as librarians.)

3. Assembling facts and statistics in support of library legislation--from ALA, Office of Education, state library agencies, and elsewhere--and arranging for witnesses to testify at hearings.

4. Personal letters and telegrams (as informal as pos-

sible) from constituents to senators and representatives--along with any library items of interest to them, preferably from the congressman's home town.

5. Establishment of a network of state coordinators for action on federal legislation.

6. Obtaining cooperation and support of nonlibrary organizations.

7. Sending out newsletters, releases, telegrams, etc., giving the latest information on the federal legislative program and requesting appropriate action when necessary. (The Washington Newsletter has been published regularly since January 1949. Its mailing list was 457 in early 1952; we now send out about 900 copies of each issue. Many states reprint from the Newsletter.)

8. Developing a program of constant publicity on the legislation through professional journals, state library bulletins, educational bulletins, newspapers, periodicals, and other media of communication. (At several hearings, motion pictures were shown. And at one hearing when Nancy Gray of North Carolina brought a bookmobile to Washington, Chairman Barden had his picture taken beside it and it appeared in his home town newspaper. Moreover, the Education Committee took a recess during the hearing and everyone went out to see the bookmobile.)

9. Expressing thanks to congressmen in letters and telegrams for their actions at various stages of the bill--a step which cannot be overemphasized.

10. Honoring at meetings and banquets the members of Congress who have worked on library legislation and letting them know that the public appreciated their activity on its behalf.

11. Continuous visits to policy-forming officials at HEW and other executive agencies regarding the purposes and contents of the bill.

12. Use of all opportunities to show HEW and OE that ALA is behind the educational program of the Department and the Office and is supporting it effectively. (Secretary Marion Folsom was the first Secretary of HEW to receive an ALA delegation in 1957 to discuss library legislation.)

13. National Library Week publicity and projects.

One important factor which indicates the current attitude of Congress, impresses government officials, and has helped get increased appropriations for the Library Services Act in spite of opposition to these increases from the Administration is that ALA's representative is permitted to appear in person

before the House Appropriations Committee. Very few organizations are granted this privilege. Testimony is largely restricted to departmental witnesses and these officials can speak only in terms of the President's Budget. It was through this avenue that we were able to get added staff for the Library Services Branch this year. This is the first time personnel to support the basic program of the Branch has been authorized since it was established in 1938. That Congress put in money for staff which had been cut by the Bureau of the Budget has given added prestige to the Library Services Branch.

Not only is ALA allowed to present testimony but an increasing number of congressmen of both political parties have appeared in support of both the LSA appropriations and the LSA amendment. Even so, it was five years before the full authorization of \$7.5 million was recommended in the President's Budget and passed by both houses (87th Congress, 1st Session).

Contacts made in relation to the Library Services Act have also helped in promoting other legislation. Congressmen and government officials who have helped with the LSA are inclined also to support other library bills. They are responsive to the accomplishments of the Act and the wholehearted support given the legislation by librarians and friends of libraries from all over the country, who are, after all, their constituents.

Looking backward is interesting, but looking forward is challenging. We can take pride in what has been accomplished, but much still remains to be done. It took ten years of concentrated work to get a bill passed, and it wasn't easy extending that same bill last year. It will be even more difficult to get enacted into law the kind of omnibus legislation that will assist all types of libraries and help bring good library service to all citizens. Congress is still rurally oriented, as are the state legislatures which must provide the matching funds which will undoubtedly be required in any future legislation we may propose. However, labor has powerful influence in Congress, and big cities and metropolitan areas are demanding more equitable representation. Nevertheless, the forces of conservatism and tradition are still strong. We have come a long way; we can go a good deal further if the same enthusiasm, unceasing effort, spirit of cooperation, and record of solid achievement are maintained. The Library Services Act has been a powerful catalyst. Its success can help us attain even higher goals.

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