

LSA AND THE LIBRARY SERVICES BRANCH

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It is difficult to overestimate the effect of the Library Services Act in improving the status and support of the library services unit in the Office of Education. A brief look at the past will serve to support this point.

Up to 1938, there was no library unit in the Office at all. Whatever was done in the field of library studies and research was done on a short-term or part-time basis. It wasn't that the library profession wasn't interested in achieving a more specific assignment of responsibility for libraries in the Office. As far back as 1892, Melvil Dewey wrote in the Library Journal:

Our purpose should be to secure in this visit to Washington what we have so long wanted, a library officer in the Bureau of Education. When we went to Washington twelve years ago, Commissioner Eaton agreed to appoint such a person if he could find a satisfactory man to do the work and give his entire time to looking after general library interests. That is the proper place for it to be done. I, therefore, offer the following [resolution]¹

There followed a long series of resolutions by the American Library Association from then until 1934, when the ALA Council said flatly:

The federal government should assume responsibility for nationwide leadership in the library movement through a library agency associated with other agencies responsible for general educational, cultural, and recreational activities.²

Legislation to create a federal library agency was actually introduced in 1919, but the Library Service Division in the Office of Education, then a part of the Department of Interior, did

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not become a reality until 1937, when Congress appropriated funds for a Library Service Division in the Office of Education. The purpose of the new Division, as defined by Congress, was

For making surveys, studies, investigations, and reports regarding public, school, college, university, and other libraries; fostering coordination of public and school library service; coordinating library service on the national level with other forms of adult education; developing library participation in Federal projects; fostering Nation-wide coordination of research materials among the more scholarly libraries, inter-State library cooperating, and the development of public, school, and other library service throughout the country.³

This same language with only slight modifications still appears in the annual appropriations act for the Office.

Originally the Library Service Division was coordinate with all other divisions such as Higher Education, School Systems, and Comparative Education. In 1944, under reorganization it became the Service to Libraries Section of a new Division of Auxiliary Services, along with other sections such as Visual Education, Health, and Service to the Blind. In 1955, the Section was made subordinate to the Instruction and Materials Branch of the Division of State and Local School Systems.

The amount appropriated for the first year of operation in 1938 was \$25,000; by 1943, it had actually been decreased to \$20,830. Up to 1956, the annual appropriation for the unit never went much higher than \$40,000, and the staff never exceeded more than four professional and three statistical and clerical workers. The key position of public library specialist was unfilled during most of the period, first being frozen, and then completely dropped from the Section budget. The record shows that the library profession was dissatisfied with these developments and protested frequently. As early as 1948, the ALA Bulletin reported:

In discussions with the Office of Education officials, it has been agreed that the most effective method of strengthening the Service to Libraries Section will be through the initiating of a series of special projects of which the Library Demonstration Bill is a major example.⁴

These were most prophetic words. Following the passage of the Library Services Act in June 1956, Congress appropriated an additional \$140,000 for the administration of the Act. This permitted the addition to the staff of an assistant director, three library extension specialists, two research librarians, two project analysts, and supporting fiscal and clerical staff. The added funds also made possible the re-creation

and filling of the position of public library specialist and the strengthening of the basic research and statistical program staff. The total staff increased from six members to 23 within about four months. In addition, several short-term consultants were added to the staff to help get the program under way. The Service to Libraries Section was almost immediately moved out from under three administrative layers in the organization of the Office and made an independent branch reporting directly to the Deputy Commissioner of Education. This was the move that had been sought by the library profession and awaited for many years.

It was recognized at the time that this organizational placement of the Branch as a staff function parallel to the Publications Branch would not be permanent, but it was the best possible and most advantageous placement at the time. In early 1958, the Office created a new Division of Research under a new Assistant Commissioner for Research, and the Library Services Branch was made one of the four branches in this new division.*

It is an understatement to say that the Library Services Act program from the very beginning was the focus of considerable attention and interest within the Office of Education and the Department. In the first place, it had been quite a few years since a new grant program had been assigned to the Office. Moreover, this was grant legislation that was not a part of the Administration's program--a library services bill had been before the Congress in various forms for about 20 years, and nothing definite or decisive had happened. Lastly, passage of this grant program meant that the federal government was supporting a public library development program before a general school aid bill was passed. Public libraries were traditionally thought of as a local community responsibility. Only 20 states had any kind of state grant for libraries program and most of these were very small. On the other hand, almost all the states already had substantial state grant programs for schools. You can see why public library grant legislation caused considerable surprise among government officials.

Being part of a large department and a large agency, the Library Services Branch had to work through many other units

*As a part of a U. S. Office of Education reorganization of April 1, 1962, the Library Services Branch is now a unit of the Division of Continuing Education and Cultural Affairs, Bureau of Educational Research and Development.

of these agencies to get the program under way, and on a crash basis, since many states were anxious to know what had to be submitted to the Commissioner of Education in order to have their state plans approved, receive their payments, and begin operation. The Personnel Branch in the Office was involved in writing job descriptions and recruiting and hiring staff. Property Management and the General Services Administration were involved in getting office space for new staff. In the midst of one our busiest periods, the entire Branch had to move into another building because of added space requirements. The Statistics Branch of the Office assisted us in determining allocations to the states and matching state and/or local funds required; fiscal personnel were involved in arranging travel for staff and two representatives from each state library extension agency to attend a series of four regional conferences; administrative management personnel were involved in assisting us in conferences with the Department's legal staff in the Office of the General Counsel in the interpretation of the Act, the preparation, review, and approval of regulations necessary to administer the Act, and the preparation of proper fiscal forms and state plan forms. Interoffice communication and staff involvement, I can assure you, were intense.

It is interesting to note that much of our experience was utilized again in 1958 when Congress passed the National Defense Education Act which had several parts with features similar to LSA. The Library Services Branch was frequently called upon to give advice and counsel in getting these new programs started. We often felt like the "Voice of Experience."

All the preliminary work on the Act was completed by December 1956, and the payments to the states started going out in January 1957. It wasn't long before a high level of enthusiasm and commendation for the program began to develop in the Office. With such a late start in the fiscal year, it was extraordinary that 36 states and territories were actually able to qualify and receive their minimum grants of \$40,000 that first year.

The news on what was happening in the states as a result of the Library Services Act was encouraging from the very beginning. Two states created their first state library extension agencies; two others established their first state grant programs; four states passed special emergency appropriations to qualify for federal grants. The Branch used every possible means of transmitting this program information within the Office and the Department, frequently sending copies of reports, leaflets, brochures, pictures, etc., to administrative

heads. In a subsequent year we even had an LSA display in the lobby of the HEW building. Let me say again here that we can't overstress the importance in Washington of news from the field.

In addition to internal communication, we also wrote articles on the program or supplied information for articles in magazines such as Saturday Review, ALA Bulletin, Library Journal, Reader's Digest, The Clubwoman, and many others. The Wilson Library Bulletin devoted two complete issues to the LSA, one on the passage of the Act in 1956 and one on the different types of projects being carried out under state plans. The New York Times ran several articles and editorials. We also made sure that reprints of these items were well-distributed. One of our latest efforts was supplying information to Hawthorne Daniel for his book, Public Libraries for Everyone, recently published by Doubleday. When have you done enough disseminating? There are still many people who have never heard of the LSA or the LSB.

Very early in the program, an advisory committee of library leaders was appointed by the Commissioner of Education. The committee was first designated to advise on the Library Services Act, but it was soon obvious that its responsibility should be broadened to encompass the total program of the Library Services Branch. This committee first met at six-month, and more recently at twelve-month, intervals with the staff and the Commissioner, and has, after each meeting, developed recommendations to the Commissioner for improved program and support. These have provided an effective basis for budget requests of the Branch to the Office and the Office requests to the Department. At the same time, the meetings provided an excellent opportunity to build rapport between the profession and the Office. Germaine Krettek, Director of the ALA Washington Office, or her predecessor, Julia Bennett Armistead, has always attended these meetings.

There were many administrative problems at the beginning of the program, as many state agency heads remember. The Office of the General Counsel took considerable time in interpreting some of the language of the Act. Since the bill had not been expected to pass and it was not an Administration-sponsored bill, practically no preliminary analysis had been done on it. The matching provisions and the 1956 "floor" provisions were particularly difficult to interpret. The major decision was made only after the regional conferences with the state library agencies were held and much additional discussion in the Office. This decision was that the state and local matching funds did not have to be additional money above the funds

appropriated for fiscal 1956. Without this decision, the program would probably never have got off the ground in most states in the first year, and there would have been continuing difficulties in subsequent years.

Originally, the Office of the General Counsel also reviewed and approved all state plans submitted in order to make sure they met the legal and fiscal requirements. This was also a timeconsuming but educational process for all staff members concerned. Communication with the states by long distance telephone and at meetings was carried on at a rapid pace, and almost all of it was helpful. Many administrative memoranda had to be prepared and sent to the states in the early months and years to continue to clarify and explain what was possible and not possible under the program and what kind of reporting and record-keeping was required. We realize that many of these details were bothersome, especially when limited state staffs were naturally more concerned with putting their programs into operation than in legal and fiscal minutiae. Most of these problems have been resolved, and we are glad to note that the rate of preparing new administrative memos has dropped sharply. On the other hand, program and fiscal reports, audit reviews and audit exception schedules have continued to be timeconsuming and troublesome aspects of the program. Many of the states do not have technical staff to handle these matters, and in most cases professional staff have had to be involved. The same is true of our staff. We all should probably plan for and work toward the day when more of this aspect of the program can be handled by fiscal and clerical staff rather than by professional staff. We had a fiscal specialist assigned to us temporarily for the first year of the program, and we have missed his services ever since.

The staff of the Library Services Branch has used its best efforts to keep in communication with the state library agencies on all matters pertaining to the administration of state plans and professional problems concerning rural public library development. We originally hoped that we might visit each state at least once a year, but we know we have fallen short of this. We have called a meeting with representatives of state library extension agencies at practically every ALA annual and midwinter conference since January 1957. Some of these have had considerable professional substance; others have been on technical problems. We have participated in almost every regional conference and many state library association conferences since 1956. At most of these there were either general session meetings or smaller group meetings on the Library

Services Act. In addition, we have encouraged, helped plan, and participated in library meetings at regional and state levels devoted solely to the LSA program. For example, we have met with representatives of the Midwest state library agencies for five successive years and with representatives of the Western states twice; we also regularly take part in the annual meetings of the New England extension librarians. This meeting is the first nationwide broadscale meeting on evaluation of the program, and we are very pleased to be co-sponsoring it with the University of Illinois. It is an opportunity for all of us to establish directions and guidelines for the future.

In the publications program of the Library Services Branch, our principal publications on LSA have been the three annual summaries of state plans and programs.⁵ A series of publications giving state by state detail of a grant program was unusual for the Office of Education to undertake, but these publications have been useful to us in informing government officials, members of Congress, and others about the results of the Act. There was no annual publication for the fourth year but rather a long summary article in the ALA Bulletin for June 1961, which was also reprinted separately.⁶ For the fifth year, we are planning a five-year summary which will probably emphasize program evaluation.

Another LSA-related publication was the benchmark survey of state library extension services for 1955-56, which analyzed the resources and services of state library extension agencies in the year prior to the Library Services Act.⁷ Since it was apparent from the survey that we were asking for information which was not available from all state agencies, the follow-up questionnaire for the year 1960-61 has been simplified and shortened considerably. The resulting data and publication, we believe, will give us a valuable picture of what has happened to state library extension service in the first five years of the LSA.

There have been more articles than there have been separate publications on the Library Services Act. Several specialized articles have been written by our staff, who have also supplied information for many articles written by others. Evelyn Day Mullen, for example, has done some pioneer analysis of centralized processing systems, and Helen Luce has outlined and described many of the new scholarship programs under LSA.

In addition, we have disseminated quite a bit of information to the state agencies and other library leaders throughout LSA administrative memoranda. We have been interested in

seeing some of these items picked up from time to time and used to good advantage in state publications. One publication which will appear as a series of attachments to issues in the LSA Memorandum series is "Patterns of Public Library Systems." A first draft was done by L. Marion Moshier. It consists of about eight case studies of different types of library systems, how they were organized, how they are being administered, and what services they are giving.

All of us, of course, work and produce within limitations of time, money, and staff available. We must point out, too, that despite the impact of the Library Services Act on the Office, the Department, and the Congress, no more positions have been added to the Library Services Branch since the Act was passed in 1956 until the past session of Congress, when \$20,000 for three added library positions was appropriated by Congress as part of the Office budget. These positions, however, were designated for survey and research work on other types of libraries.

Some of the discussion at the House appropriations hearings in the last Session is pertinent to this paper and quite revealing:

[The Executive Officer of the Office] said: I think the best evidence of the importance of the [Library Services Act] program is the fact that the American Library Association, which is the national organization in this field, is highly complimentary of the manner in which the Office has administered the rural library services program and, in general, has been very helpful in their support.

[The Chairman of the Committee] responded: They think, and I agree with them, that you ought to be doing something in the research area, and surveying the actual need of libraries in all areas.

[And the Executive Officer] concluded: Yes, I think one of the unfortunate things is that the program of aid to rural libraries systems has somewhat taken attention away from library needs in other areas, such as in our colleges and schools and public libraries in our urban centers.⁸

In short, the Library Services Act as it now stands is doing a good job. The maximum appropriation has been achieved for the past two years, and the program is showing impressive results.

Again, the Commissioner of Education and the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee summed up the attitude

toward the program during the last session of the hearing when the Commissioner concluded his statement by saying, "This program has received widespread acceptance and acclaim for its contribution to the improvement of cultural and educational advantages for rural people." And the Committee Chairman responded, "I think it is one of the finest programs in the Federal Government. This would be a good example for the chamber of commerce, because it took Federal leadership to make the gains you have just talked about."⁹

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