To know where our state libraries are going, it is important first to know where they have been and where they are now. Without going into this exhaustively, let me develop with you for a few moments some of the things that have happened to us in the five years since the Library Services Act became the law of the land. I think we are all aware of the fact that the improvement in our state library agencies is one of the principal accomplishments of the Library Services Act. The publication, State Plans under the Library Services Act, Supplement 2, makes this quite clear. State after state reported strengthened state library agencies in all parts of the country. Idaho, for example, employed its first trained administrator and three more professional librarians in the state agency. Kansas and Mississippi added professional librarians and clerical assistants. It was not just the small state agencies that did this, however; even the New York State Library built on its existing strength by adding specialists in Young Adult, Reference, and Children's Services. In all, more than 115 field workers or consultants were added to state agency staffs, an increase of more than 100 per cent over the total field staffs in existence in 1956. In addition, 285 other professional librarians were added.

It is significant that 15 states, in addition to adding staff and other resources to their central agencies, established or strengthened regional branches or extension offices. Equally noteworthy is the fact that more than 30 processing centers were established under the stimulus of the Library Services Act and are now serving more than 500 libraries in the several states. Granted that it is largely the smaller libraries that are being serviced in this manner, it is still true that this figure represents just about one-fourteenth of the total number of public libraries in the United States today. State agencies have played a key part in this development, which represents an important and significant step forward toward our announced goals of larger library systems for the United States.²

Roger H. McDonough is Director of the New Jersey State Library.
Let us turn our attention now to some of the factors that will operate to increase the size and importance of state library agencies in the next five to ten years. In the first place, the Library Services Act in some form or other will continue for an indefinite period of time. The tremendous support received in both houses of the Congress for the extension of the Act appears to justify this categorical statement. I believe that, like the Smith-Hughes program in vocational education and the George-Barden program in agriculture, there will be a continuing partnership of federal and state agencies in the library field for some time to come. Other important federal measures, such as the Depository Library Bill and the proposed revision of the National Defense Education Act, to name only two, also have implications for state library agencies. Clearly, these agencies must be equipped to handle the administrative and leadership responsibilities that will result from the American Library Association's increasingly important legislative program.

A second important factor that must be considered is the vastly increased population we shall have to contend with. In the next decade, the nation is going to have to provide for millions of additional people, more of whom will have been formally educated than ever before. Thus, we can expect to have more people, more of them will have attained higher levels of education, and they are going to read more books. Inevitably, this will result in increased pressures upon the state agencies to give leadership in helping municipalities and counties solve the increasingly perplexing problems that will confront them. In this connection, it may be noted that the population explosion will accentuate the already complex political structures within our various state boundaries. In hundreds of instances, library districts now bear almost no relationship to the marketing and shopping habits of the areas involved. The need to cut across these artificial political boundaries is an obvious one, but it requires a high degree of statesmanship to overcome the inherent parochialism of the population of the communities and counties involved. The accomplishments that have already been recorded under the stimulus of the Library Services Act in developing larger units of service indicate that this is a fruitful field which should be pursued actively in the years ahead.

Still another reason for increased state participation in library affairs is the change in sources of financial support. A decade ago, for example, only a very small amount of the tax money spent for public library service throughout the United
States came from state grants. In the next five years, that had increased substantially, as shown in the following table:

**Public Library Income**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Local Public Funds</th>
<th>State Grants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>$102,935,905</td>
<td>$1,957,172a</td>
<td>$104,893,077*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955/56</td>
<td>162,696,621b</td>
<td>4,977,176b</td>
<td>167,673,797**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico
**Includes Alaska and Hawaii

As recently as 1958, however, the total amount of state monies appropriated for public libraries amounted to less than the total federal monies appropriated that year under the Library Services Act. To show how swiftly things can change, the current New York State grants-in-aid program alone exceeds $8 million, more than the total for all the states authorized under the Library Services Act. Two years ago, New Jersey embarked upon a state aid program with an initial appropriation of $400,000. Pennsylvania has just made an initial appropriation of $500,000 for a similar grant program, and Massachusetts has embarked upon a $1 million-plus program for public library development in that state. As the sources of additional local tax revenues dry up, sheer necessity will force us to turn increasingly to state and federal support for library purposes. The implications of this for our state agencies are too obvious to require further comment.

I have referred to the fact that the increasing complexity of our society presents us with certain kinds of problems in providing for effective service outlets of various kinds at local and county level. A related aspect of this problem is observed at state level. I refer to the increasing need for research into all kinds of activities in which the state now finds itself engaged, or will in the future. The problems of labor relations, highway
safety, water supply, airport control, and the continuing broad problems of health, education, and welfare, for example, all require increasing analysis in depth. Legislative research agencies have increased in number and size in the past decade, and although we have little information about research units that have been established in the executive branches of state government—such as departments of education and welfare, I am certain that most of us can cite specific instances of such agencies in our own states. Obviously, the development of these research programs places additional burdens upon the state libraries, which must build strong collections to satisfy the many-faceted research demands that will be made upon them. Many of the agencies represented here today are participating in the cooperative exchange program for legislative research materials initiated under the aegis of the National Legislative Conference of the Council of State Governments. However, we need more comprehensive documents exchange programs that will cover the publications of executive departments of state government, as well as special commission and legislative reports. Few state libraries are now in a position to offer well-rounded documents exchange programs, and we need to take active steps in the near future to take care of the obvious needs confronting us in this area.

One piece of unfinished extension business touches one of the principal weaknesses of the American library system: our failure to provide adequate reference facilities at local level. In the majority of small American communities, the ordinary citizen cannot expect to obtain adequate information in response to questions of only average difficulty. The reason, of course, is that too many small libraries lack the needed materials, the trained staff to service them, or both. The systems of libraries toward which we are striving will eventually help to correct the situation, but, meanwhile, an information network, in which the state library agencies would logically be the principal coordinating agents, would help plug the gap. There are all sorts of interesting possibilities here, including the use of short-wave radio and UHF equipment, as well as high-speed telephon-ic facsimile reproduction units, to tie the various libraries in the state together in an intelligence network. There is a growing interest in this subject, and I hope that within a very few years we shall see some truly significant experiments being made in this direction.

If these intelligence networks are to operate successfully, there must be strong reference and research collections in strategically located centers to back up the local units. Ob-
viously, it is sensible and economical to build upon existing strengths wherever possible, but, where there is a complete absence of any large library in a given geographical area, it may be necessary to create libraries out of whole cloth. As I have already indicated, 15 states have initiated or strengthened existing branches under the Library Services Act. I suspect that where new branches have been created, it is because there was a clear need to supply a strong unit in an area then lacking one. In considering how we can best utilize the monies that are made available to us in the form of federal and state grants-in-aid, it is possible that a fair share of these funds might well be employed in developing strong strategic centers instead of turning over all the money to the municipalities and counties to improve and expand local services. A strong state branch supplementing the collections and services of local libraries and providing leadership and guidance would be of inestimable help in raising library standards in a given region.

Mention should also be made of the necessity to strengthen services to the various departments and agencies of state government by aiding in the development of departmental collections. Washington State is now working in this direction, and the New Jersey State Library is cooperating with such departments as Labor and Industry, Health, Agriculture, and our own Department of Education in developing library facilities in the new buildings which are now under construction for these agencies. As I see it, state libraries will gradually come to serve as core libraries serving departmental libraries much in the manner that a university library serves its satellite facilities. Another related area which as yet has been little developed is service to the penal and correctional institutions. Only one or two states—as, for example, New York and Maryland—now have institutional library supervisors, but undoubtedly this pattern will be followed by other states in the future. Whether such positions are placed under the state libraries or in the particular agencies involved, it seems certain that our state libraries will bear some share of the responsibilities for providing these needed services.

Still another field with which state library agencies must concern themselves is that of collecting, interpreting, and distributing statistical information. Although the Library Services Branch has made tremendous strides in this area, it is unable to do the entire job, and there is a clear need to obtain precise, accurate, and up-to-date data at state level. John Eastlick, in his report The Sixties and After, emphasized this very strongly
by pointing out that at the time he was writing his report, it was simply not possible to obtain comparable and accurate data on all the 50 states. I am certain that Phillip Monypenny and his survey team are experiencing similar problems along this line.

It is also possible that our state agencies may be called upon to serve as central storage facilities for other libraries in their state. There is no reason, for example, why small or medium-sized public libraries should maintain outdated books or long runs of 19th-century periodicals when microfilm copies of the originals may be obtained quickly from a central source. Many local libraries would gladly weed their collections drastically if they were certain that the materials would be on call at their state library. The New Jersey State Library, under a law passed in 1948, has been operating a de-

As you see, I have ticked off, in fairly rapid order, a number of reasons to support my feeling that the state library agency is destined to grow and flourish in the United States. I find it significant that one of the chief conclusions reached by John Eastlick in his above-mentioned report relates to the future place of state library agencies:

The growth of the state library agency in the past five years is the outstanding phenomenon in recent library history. State library agencies, however, are not developing uniformly and are not assuming the same responsibilities of leadership in all states. State library agencies in general have no responsibility to, or authority over, institutions of higher education, have only general advisory responsibility to public libraries, may or may not have advisory responsibility to school libraries, and frequently operate by persuasion rather than authority.4

Mr. Eastlick went on to recommend:

It should be the program of the American Library Associa-
tion to encourage state library agencies to expand their supervisory functions. These institutions should also be-
come major sources of information about the libraries of their state.5

All of this at once excites and frightens me. I see a tremen-
dous challenge in the vistas that lie ahead, and I would face them unflinchingly if only I could tell you where we are to find the trained, qualified people who are needed to take on these
added responsibilities. After five years of the Library Services Act and four years of National Library Week, librarians, who have been working tremendously hard to improve library services at local and state levels, now stand poised on the threshold of a real breakthrough into new and exciting library frontiers, but we don't have the trained people to do the job. Somehow, we must find solutions to the problems of staffing that plague us all, in order that we can push forward in a coordinated program based on federal, state, and local cooperative efforts.

The role of the state library in this total picture is a peculiar one, perhaps because we are, in most instances, advisory agencies rather than supervisory ones. This calls for a special kind of leadership. If we get too far out in front of the librarians and trustees in our respective jurisdictions, we may be accused of being dictators, self-seekers, or worse. If we hang back a little on the theory that library development must be approached democratically (frequently this means at the level of the slowest paced), we may be accused of failing to meet our responsibilities. Ours, then, is the task of leading, without seeming to lead (avoiding either paternalism or maternalism in the process), and of serving as an inspirational, cohesive, and coordinating agency for all the library elements in the state. It is an exasperating, exciting, exhaustive, rewarding, and frequently amusing, task. And--since I am saying this in the family--I think we do it rather well.

References


Additional References


