THE IMPACT OF FEDERAL LEGISLATION FOR LIBRARY EDUCATION

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Almost all discussion of federal legislation for libraries ends, if indeed it does not begin, with the problem of support versus control. If support is desirable, is control inevitable? Library education has long taken for granted the control which state legislation requiring certification of librarians may impose on the curriculum. As a matter of fact, library educators have frequently been the proposers of such legislation, thus achieving control on their own terms. When professional vision outruns the legislators' insight—and is persuasive—then the profession is able to prescribe the control which society exercises over the individual librarian.

In the academic world of library education, the yang and yin relationship of support and control exists within the context of the scholar's leadership, with the faculty exercising its judgment to use available support to the best advantage of the students, within the limits—hopefully, the quite broad limits—established by the institution and by society.

Ideally, legislation for library education should enable the exercise of the best faculty judgment within the context of society's need and the legislative intent. But faculty judgment varies in competence. Legislation, then, must attempt to embody support for, and control within, the best available faculty judgment. State legislation specifically for library education has tended to limit itself to identification of the curriculum required for proficiency in librarianship; it generally involves setting minimums, and therefore has not been able to embody necessarily the best faculty judgments on the optimum program of library education. On the other hand, federal legislation, which has only begun to be directed toward library education, has tended to look toward optimums; the National Defense Education Act, for example, looks toward the best possible education for school librarians but allows faculty judgment to be determinative as to means.

There may be some inevitability about this distinction between state and federal legislation. States have the basic responsibility for controlling educational functions, for setting standards of library service, and, therefore, indirectly if not directly, determining the

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nature of library education. Standards, minimums, and practical compromises tend to derive support from, but often to dilute, the best professional judgment. Federal legislation has been more freely used to set desirable direction, to support the sound innovation, and to release the energies of best faculty judgment.

Whether inevitable or not, there is evidence of some persistent distinction between the state and federal levels of legislation for library education. Almost uniformly, deans and directors of accredited library school programs, in responding to a recent inquiry which was made in preparation for this paper, indicated a limited role for state legislation, confining it almost universally to financing scholarships or grants-in-aid, sometimes rejecting a state role completely. On the other hand, almost universally the same group saw a wide role for federal legislation, some commenting that federal support should come for “all aspects” of library education. Of course, there could be, in these replies, the implicit expectation that federal legislation means support while state legislation means control.

Let us reverse the picture, then, and inquire what kind of control is exercised by federal legislation for library education? Federal legislation for library education has imposed no requirement upon library education programs. Rather it offers opportunities within the context of public need. No library school is required to conduct NDEA institutes for school librarians; it is not mandatory that every library school provide advanced study for experienced school librarians under the Higher Education Act of 1965. These programs are enabled, however, by the legislation; and library schools vie for the funds to conduct these greatly needed programs.

Sound professional judgment of librarians and schoolmen guided the drafting of the legislation; the practitioners have identified the problems, and the educators have suggested methods for their solution. The legislative framework permits a variety of activity.

Hearings conducted regionally on the Higher Education Act of 1965 explored the limits of the legislation and reflect the homage paid to professional judgment. Title II-B covers fellowships for library education and research and demonstration funds. At the Chicago hearing on the Act, a goodly number of representatives of technical institutes inquired about their eligibility for funds to train library technicians. The law simply says that funds are available for training “persons in librarianship.” The U. S. Office of Education representative at this meeting answered that, “(1) We don’t have the guidelines yet and so decisions on this are not available, and (2) We don’t know what the ALA will say.” It was eminently clear that although the text of the law did not exclude support for library technician programs, the best professional opinion would be determinative in the guideline interpretation of the law.
We have had some discussion at this conference of how professional opinion initiates legislation. Library education as a field has been poorly organized to be effective in such initiation. For five years the American Library Association has lacked an Executive Secretary for the Library Education Division—a lack now happily met with the appointment of Dr. Lester Asheim as Director of the new Office for Library Education. The American Association of Library Schools has been struggling to become an effective action organization as spokesman for the accredited library schools, but has not yet made its voice heard. The work of the library education specialist in the Library Services Branch of the U. S. Office of Education has been limited to the implementation role of the executive branch, and has not been available in working toward proposed legislation.

Under the stimulation of the Library Services Branch, the Library Education Division of ALA requested its Legislation Committee to develop a statement on legislative implications of the USOE summary of 1963-64 data on library schools. The LED Legislation Committee presented a draft report in the LED Newsletter for September, 1966. This report recommends the full appropriation of the authorized $15,000,000 for Title II-B support of library education as an essential immediate step. The $1,000,000 appropriated for fiscal 1966 and the $3,500,000 for 1967 are pitifully inadequate. The priority on preparation of library school faculty was seen in the Report as an unquestioned part of the guidelines. Nevertheless, the Report concludes that before making any creative proposals for additional legislation, library educators must frankly analyze the problems of library education and come to agreement on a plan for library education.

The failure thus far of the ALA Commission on a National Plan for Library Education to come up with a proposal has proven unfortunate. As a pivotal aspect of the profession, library education is unprepared to provide the leadership needed at a crucial moment. The blame lies less at the door of the Commission than in the long years of neglect of library education and failure of the profession as a whole to develop a sound theoretical structure, a well-researched body of knowledge, and a mutual respect between practitioner and educator for the role each plays in the evolution of the new professional librarian.

This is not a task to be accomplished in a night. Yet the crucial decisions being made by (or for!) library education during these next few years must be made with awareness of these lacks. To some extent the available federal legislation directly attacks some serious symptoms: (1) lack of fellowship funds to enable library science to compete in recruiting top flight students; (2) lack of well-educated faculty members with a comprehensive knowledge of librarianship and the ability to expand this body of knowledge through research; and (3) lack of specialized education for the practitioner that will
strengthen the texture of library service in the many aspects of an increasingly specialized field.

The foresight of state librarians in instituting scholarships for library education ten years ago under the Library Services Act has proved valuable, and we hope this program will not be lost by new administrative regulations. Hope, to use our current metaphor, rained on the arid field of library education with as great a welcome as in any other field in 1956, but the drought is not yet relieved. Fellowships under the Higher Education Act have brought another small, promising shower that, repeated and expanded, may save the crop throughout the United States.

Library education has also made extensive use of Economic Opportunity Act work-study funds, and now of Higher Education Act student assistance funds. These funds enable students to earn while they learn and enable faculty to have useful assistance from capable students. These work-study programs usefully supplement the scholarship programs.

The availability of research funds from the Cooperative Research Program, the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and a multitude of federal agencies has fed the resourceful library schools with funds for faculty and doctoral student research. The body of research knowledge is becoming more firm and is filling out. There have been pleas at this conference for a unified federal library program but I, for one, wish to press the case for maintaining the diversity of sources of funds for library research. Libraries are key tools in each of the major areas of human enterprise. To require all support of library research to emanate from a single source will not only limit these funds in the long run but will separate the users of library resources from a close responsible relationship to understanding library needs. The Higher Education Act of 1965 brings a welcome designation of research funds for libraries, but it must not be assumed as adequate, in and of itself.

It is in the various specializations in library service that federal legislation has so far provided the greatest scope for library education. No broad planning body determined these specialties, but the urgent pressure of groups of special librarians and dissatisfied users has made the selection.

The titles of the National Defense Education Act which enable institutes for school librarians and instructional materials specialists have had the strongest impact. The skill of school librarians in securing acceptance within Title V of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (both in "experienced teacher" and "prospective teacher" categories) has already begun to show notable effect in raising the vision of school librarians on the level of professional education needed for the task. Recruitment of that "new breed of school librarian" is easier with scholarships, status, and expanded program.
The Medical Library Assistance Act is enabling more library schools to offer special programs in medical librarianship; the Library Services and Construction Act Title IV may aid institution libraries by training librarians for correctional institutions, a sadly neglected and vitally important area of librarianship.

The inherent limitations of a practice of developing funded programs under pressures from special groups may be met by a general fund for specialized and advanced education such as an expanded Higher Education Act might allow. It is well within the appropriate function of Congress, however, to assess special public needs and to designate funds to meet those needs. It is up to the library educator to be aware of the opportunities, to weigh the priorities, and to choose his focus.

The success thus far of the very broad terms of the Higher Education Act of 1965 may be measured by the near unanimity of deans and directors of accredited library schools that a long-term federal legislation program should follow present lines. On replies to the letter of inquiry sent in preparation for this paper, almost all comments urged "full appropriation" and "more money for fellowships"—one saying (wistfully) "fellowships for one-third of the student body," and another "all aspects of library education need support." Mr. David Berninghausen of the University of Minnesota pointed eloquently to the "tragic imbalance" in appropriation of "only $1,000,000 for library education but $610,000,000 for books and buildings."

Other important recommendations by deans and directors of accredited library schools follow. Some asked that faculty positions be supported on a matching fund basis, others requested that funds be made available for state planning for library education. There were numerous requests that programs should be funded for several years to eliminate the time that annual proposals require. Support for development of new curriculum was asked. Larger institutional allotments for support of the fellowship program were universally requested, since the $2,000 per fellowship falls below the NDEA precedent of $2,500 per fellowship in institutional support.

These requests for expansion and change in Higher Education Act support for library education reflect the problems encountered in administering the first year of the program. Haste in selection of candidates was the chief difficulty; the second most serious was lack of time to study the Act and take advantage of its opportunities.

Directors and deans of accredited library schools identified the significant contributions of Title II-B of the Higher Education Act:

1. Favorable publicity on campus
2. Better competitive position for gifted students
3. Recruitment to librarianship through scholarships
4. Program development
5. Expansion of library science collections
Dominantly the impact in the first phase of the funds from the Higher Education Act is through enhanced stature for library education.

There has been little time thus far to judge the true importance of legislation directly in support of library education. The major program of the Higher Education Act is just under way. One million dollars of support has been distributed among approximately thirty library schools but this is just a beginning.

But the very existence of the Act, the availability of many other sources of federal funds, and the consultations that involve library educators in developing the guidelines, have been a stimulus to library education comparable to that first allotment of funds to public libraries through the Library Services Act ten years ago. Panic, delight, confusion, creativity in a moment.

The growth in library education in the last several years cannot be attributed solely to federal support. Sarah Reed's current survey of the growth of accredited library schools from fall 1964 to fall 1966, a period when little such aid was available, is nevertheless impressive. Salary budgets from 1964 to 1966 doubled in eight accredited library schools. In 1964, only nine accredited library schools had salary budgets of $100,000 or more; by 1966, twenty-one schools met that level. In 1964 only five accredited schools had a total annual budget of over $200,000; 16 schools in that year had a total annual budget below $100,000. For 1966, 14 accredited schools report a total budget of over $200,000 a year, while only four are still below $100,000.

What accounts for such growth? All the factors forcing change in the profession are working to enhance library education—strong recruitment programs, improved faculties, higher salaries for librarians, and so on and on. One finally resolves the query to the ultimate question: is it the knowledge explosion that did it, or was it National Library Week? Probably both! The involved and intertwined causes cannot be singly measured. A multitude of matters must be attended to, however, if the gains are to be sustained. Among these are better standards for library education, better use of graduates for truly professional tasks, and increased attention to research in librarianship.

One final note. Two library school deans commented, in response to the inquiry in October, 1966, that federal support should go to the ALA to assist in revising the standards used by the Committee on Accreditation. Without opening that Pandora's box, let me, as Chairman of that Committee, confirm the COA's own intention of conducting precisely this kind of review. The changes in the library profession, the separation of semi-professional routines from true professional functions, the increasing complexity of the problems to be solved by librarians, and the steady trend towards specialization, support the demand for "a new breed of librarians" and perhaps a "breed" of library technicians to support them. The standards for
professional education must be used increasingly for constructive guidance of newly developing programs, and must be applied broadly to allow professional competence the freedom to explore new educational patterns. This is not a time to lower standards to meet demand, but to sustain and perfect standards to support the task of professional education.

Federal legislation for library education must turn to professional judgment for guidance. The standards of accreditation must embody the best professional judgment as a guide to implementing public purpose through public support of professional education. Library education has a task of major proportions at hand.