

THE ROLE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION IN FEDERAL LEGISLATION FOR LIBRARIES

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We who administer, implement, or are affected by the federal legislation for libraries enacted in the last ten years are inclined to assume that the federal government's relation to libraries began in 1956 with the passage of the first Library Services Act. Certainly, the impact of federal legislation on libraries has been more strongly felt in the last ten years than in any previous period. Yet a summary of the effects of the federal government through laws and services affecting libraries would have to go back much farther. True, the Constitution of the United States still has nothing whatever to say about libraries, and until 1956 there was nothing in federal statutes expressing concern with the need for adequate library services throughout the states or the intent of assisting the states to provide such services.

Yet it must fairly be said that there have long been federal laws affecting library interests that were concerned with such matters as the free importation of books, the distribution of various kinds of government publications, free transportation of books and talking book machines for the blind, and reduced postal rates for books loaned by libraries. In addition to federal laws that provide for these, several federal government functions have long been of direct or indirect benefit to libraries, for example, a wide variety of bibliographic services, a system of interlibrary loans, supplying government publications in large amounts free or at low cost, a system of printed catalog card distribution, and the periodic collection of library statistics.

Examination of library literature shows that library leaders were thinking of federal financial aid to libraries in the 1920's. The depression of the 1930's brought a number of emergency programs that demonstrated and extended public library service, such as some of the Works Progress Administration, The Public Works Administration, military training, and other projects. WPA staff assistants in libraries were provided in large numbers between 1932 and 1942.

In the decade of the 1930's there was considerable discussion within the American Library Association not merely of whether there

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should be federal aid to libraries but of the forms it should take, how far it should, would, or could go in requiring that certain standards of service must be maintained, conditions of eligibility, the federal agency that should administer federal aid, and the formulas that should or might be used. In these early discussions, particularly in the writings of Dr. Carleton B. Joeckel, we find the genesis of much that is now in the federal laws and regulations which make federal financial assistance available to public, school, and higher education libraries.

In 1935, the Committee on Federal Relations of the ALA prepared a statement entitled A Federal Library Agency and Federal Library Aid. The second ALA report on the same subject was prepared in 1936 by the Special Committee on Federal Aid to Libraries, of which Louis R. Wilson was chairman. In May 1936, when the ALA met for its annual conference in Richmond, Virginia, a resolution was adopted by the ALA Council by a large majority vote. It authorized the Executive Board of the Association to proceed with a formal request for a permanent system of federal aid to libraries. This decision was soon endorsed by nearly all the state library associations, and several citizens' organizations. Very soon after the 1936 ALA Council action which made the securing of federal aid to libraries the ALA official policy, thirteen state legislatures enacted laws authorizing the acceptance of federal aid if granted by the national government, and designating the state library agency to receive and administer such aid. Since that time, of course, all state legislatures have done so.

In 1937, a report on library federal relations by Carleton B. Joeckel was submitted to the federal Advisory Committee on Education and later published by the committee as one of its series of staff studies.¹

Beginning with the 1936 ALA official policy decision, the ALA sponsored a series of definite proposals for federal grants of funds to the states to be used for local library purposes. The first proposals were attached to bills for federal school aid in large amounts to be granted to state school systems. These amendments to the general federal aid to education bill proposed by the ALA were accepted by the bill's chief sponsor, the National Education Association, and were included in what became the Harrison-Thomas-Fletcher Bill, introduced in April 1938. Librarians campaigned vigorously in support of this legislation during 1938 and 1939. Forrest Spaulding, then Des Moines, Iowa, city librarian, represented ALA in Washington during those campaigns. There was close cooperation between the ALA, the NEA, and state library associations. The legislation failed to pass, but some public support was gained, and a pattern for future efforts was established.

In 1939, Wilhelm Munthe, in his American Librarianship from a European Angle,² wrote that nowhere in the world had the task of library extension been taken up with such determination and zeal as in the United States. "But," he said, "when we look more closely we discover that the credit for all this belongs neither to the federal nor the state governments. . . . Until recent years the federal government considered all library work outside the District of Columbia as none of its concern." It comes as a shock to us now in November 1966, that this could be said only twenty-seven years ago!

From 1940 through 1945 no federal library legislation was introduced by ALA for federal aid, due primarily to World War II. The literature shows, however, and some still-active librarians will recall that the subject was not dead, although it may have seemed so to many.

Dr. Carleton B. Joeckel continued to speak with a most reasonable, consistent, and persuasive voice for federal library aid and a national plan for library service. In 1944, even before the end of the war, while he was still Dean of the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago, he called together a Library Institute on "Library Extension: Problems and Solutions."³ The papers show the progressive program of topics. The first group of papers was concerned with the problem of organization of library service at the level of local government; the next moves on to the role of the state, and the last group to a consideration of state and federal aid to libraries. Participants in the Institute agreed that a thoroughly satisfactory system of library service cannot be established by the efforts of local government alone and that adequate state and federal aid will be necessary to attain a high minimum level of library service throughout the nation. Dr. Joeckel translated the group's conclusions into a simplified national library plan containing the following essential elements:

1. A system of perhaps not more than one thousand strong local public library units, embracing the entire territorial area of the United States.
2. Forty-eight [B.A.H.—before Alaska and Hawaii] effective state library agencies, with sufficient state aid within each state to insure a basic library program.
3. A nation-wide minimum level of library service sustained by grants-in-aid by the federal government.

This foreshadowed his amplified National Plan for Public Library Service published in 1948.

The first Library Demonstration Bill was introduced in 1946 by Congresswoman Emily Taft Douglas of Illinois. The record shows that from 1946 to 1956, when the first federal library aid bill reached final passage, ALA had committed itself to proposals separate from

general aid to education, for smaller sums to be granted state libraries for demonstration projects in one or more state areas over a period of four or five years, at each of the sessions of Congress. Thus, demonstration for limited periods, rather than permanent grants for equalization, became the current program for federal aid to public libraries.

Some of the reasons for this change are seen in the talk given by Carl H. Milam, then Executive Secretary of the ALA, before Dr. Joeckel's 1944 Chicago Library Institute, in which he urged the ALA to narrow its request. He suggested it would be good strategy for the Association to select and concentrate on that aspect of library service which most needs federal aid, and he suggested as that aspect complete public library coverage. He urged also that ALA frame its detailed proposals in cooperation with stronger political-action groups than librarians, such as farm organizations. This may have influenced the fact that the first federal aid was for rural area library service, as well as the fact that library service was weakest in rural areas. He urged also that the national plan for public libraries be completed, which was done, with Dr. Joeckel as principal author, in 1948. Mr. Milam stressed, too, that another important phase of the federal aid program was the continued strengthening of state library extension agencies, considering it inconceivable that federal aid to public libraries, when it came, would fail to lay a heavy burden of responsibility on these agencies. He urged all librarians of all types to be concerned about this, and to help the state library agencies improve their capacity to serve as primary agents when federal aid did come. He saw a special need for more detailed state programs which could be put into the hands of congressmen and others. Such state programs and plans now exist in all states, even if only in the form required to be submitted to the Commissioner of Education for LSCA grants, but they were nearly non-existent in 1944. Mr. Milam urged unity and drive, funds, and cooperation in presenting proposals to the public and to Congress.

On October 14, 1944, Althea H. Warren, Los Angeles City Librarian, moved and the ALA Council voted unanimously to authorize a campaign to enable the ALA to maintain a representative in Washington and to set up a committee including representatives of the Executive Board, the Library Extension Board, the Library Extension Division, the Federal Relations Committee, and the Trustees Division, to lead the campaign and carry it through.

The Chairman of the Federal Relations Committee was Paul Howard, then head of the Gary, Indiana, Public Library. From the regular reports in the ALA Bulletin of those years, he also spent a good deal of time in going to Washington on a part-time basis to represent ALA and library interests. He and his committee worked on surplus property for libraries, rural library extension,

strengthening the Library Services Division of the U. S. Office of Education, and the campaign that had been voted to obtain funds for adequate representation in Washington on a full-time basis.

The financial campaign for what was called the Library Development Fund went into high gear in November 1944. A goal of \$105,000 was set with which to maintain the Washington office for a four-year period, each state library association accepted responsibility to raise a fair portion of the total, and personal contributions were sought. The state of Washington was the first to achieve and exceed its quota.

In the summer of 1945 Paul Howard was appointed to head the Washington office on a full-time basis, but, long before that, he had been supplying regular information to libraries throughout the country on action they could take to benefit libraries through the legislative process.

In November 1945, Muriel E. Perry, Library Development Fund Executive Assistant, stated that the inauguration of the Washington office had made a new epoch in professional history. That was one of the understatements of the time, considering the office's tremendous impact now felt by all types of libraries and library users in this country. Libraries and librarians have been and are most fortunate in the leadership and effectiveness of all of ALA's Washington office directors: Paul Howard; Margie Malmberg; Julia Bennett; and Germaine Krettek, and their staffs. In his report to ALA Council last July (1966) Emerson Greenaway said that if it were not for Germaine Krettek, libraries would be wandering around Washington with a tin cup, "minus their authorizations." Few librarians who have not worked closely with the ALA Washington Office can realize how complex and demanding are the problems they handle and work on for libraries. Most of us are really aware only of the legislation that affects our own type of library directly.

In the early years of the operations of ALA's Washington Office and the Federal Relations Committee of the Governmental Relations Section of the Library Administration Division of ALA, our legislative work was carried on under a charter for the ALA Washington Office, and authorized by various Council actions upon specific matters proposed by the Federal Relations Committee.

It was inevitable and essential that a federal legislation policy be developed for the Association, within which the ALA Washington Office could take action as promptly as possible in the name of the American Library Association. Julia Bennett, then director of the Washington Office, had begun to pull together all of the various authorizations by the Association into a tentative, unified federal legislative policy and to match these with the increasingly varied number of federal programs manifestly of importance to libraries, before she left the office in 1957.

Miss Bennett was followed by Germaine Krettek in that year, and a Special Committee of Five, with Frederick H. Wagman as Chairman, developed a document called Goals for Action of the American Library Association; at the same time the Federal Relations Committee, working with Miss Krettek, developed the first formal Federal Legislative Policy of the American Library Association. Both the Goals for Action and the Federal Legislative Policy were adopted January 29, 1959, by the ALA Council. Emerson Greenaway was President of ALA at that time. He wrote in the ALA Bulletin of April 1959:

Two important and far-reaching reports, stating ALA's goals for action and its federal legislative policy, were adopted at the Association's Midwinter Meeting held in Chicago. These two statements give each member of the Association sights to set for himself and official documents that can be used to inform lay people of ALA's goals and the legislation needed to achieve them.

Goals for Action emphasizes the requirements of the individual which a library can meet, the needs of the library itself, and the continuing defense of freedom of the press and freedom to read. The importance of a vigorous public relations program is also accented. This is a platform that can be used locally, statewide, or nationally to acquaint people with the needs and standards of modern library service.

The Federal Legislative Policy Statement presents ALA's present federal legislative program, points out where further legislation is needed, and proposes new legislation. Although some of these proposals relate only indirectly to libraries, all are vital to libraries and librarians. Position statements on policies and activities of the federal government affecting its libraries and on intellectual freedom are included.⁴

It was six years before the first revision to that Federal Legislative Policy was formally adopted by the ALA Council. This occurred on January 26, 1965, after the Committee on Legislation, which by this time had become a committee of the Association itself, rather than a committee of a section of a division, had sought and obtained the opinions of the divisions and committees of ALA on the matters in the Policy most directly affecting them.

By 1965 it was realized that the rapidity of legislative developments in Washington would probably call for revisions and updating of the Association's Federal Legislative Policy every year or two, at least for a period. I can report that [because I happen to be chairman of a Committee on Legislation subcommittee to prepare the second revision] a second revision is now nearly complete, and will go to the ALA Executive Board and Council at the January 1967 Midwinter in New Orleans.

The Federal Legislative Policy, kept up to date and reflecting the major concerns, attitudes, and positions of the ALA Divisions as well as the Association as a whole, is very important to the success libraries and librarians have been having in federal legislative programs these past several years. The ALA Washington staff has in the Policy clear authorization and directives from our more than 30,000 membership, across the whole broad spectrum of federal government action, to work constantly and according to Association's Policy in all matters that affect or could affect libraries of all kinds. The responsibility for revision as needed rests with the Committee on Legislation, but the policy comes from the divisions and Association committees as to the position our representatives are to take on a wide range of subjects subsumed under "Direct Services to Libraries," "Indirect Services to Libraries," "International Programs," and "Intellectual Freedom," and the many specific legislative actions and proposals under each that affect all kinds of libraries and the educational world of which libraries are part.

The Washington Office can act swiftly as needed in any situation and with confidence that the Association backs up its position with action and support, with the Policy as its guide.

The ALA Washington Office sometimes works on educational matters only indirectly of concern to libraries. This makes it possible to multiply the strengths of librarians, and this is needed because, numerically speaking, we librarians altogether are a small group as contrasted to many other national organizations seeking legislation. It is necessary continually to secure the support of other groups and organizations whose interests are also in the public interest and which we can or do serve, and whose interests serve ours. For example, I have noted, both in Washington hearings in which I have participated and those I have only read, that the American Council on Education, American Association of Junior Colleges, American Association of University Women, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, and others, have also testified and worked for our library legislation. I know, too, that Germaine Krettek meets and works regularly with the representatives in Washington of organizations that work in the public interest field, so that she and her staff and those of us who work with her can be closely informed about programs for which those others are working, and they about library programs. When their programs move, ALA moves with them to see what libraries can do to help. Some of the other organizations with which she works are the Association of Land Grant Colleges, Association of American Colleges, and the American Association for the Advancement of Education.

Another strength of our federal library legislative programs is in the appointment of ALA Division legislative liaison people, either committees or individuals in the divisions, who are the specialists in

each field of library service. They advise and assist the Committee on Legislation, which is responsible for the total legislative program of the Association. It is to the tremendous credit of our members and divisions that we have maintained unity and professionwide support of all library legislation, even though we cannot, each of us, help being more knowledgeable and concerned about measures affecting our own types of libraries individually. The overall Committee on Legislation, particularly as our program grows more complex and diversified, establishes priorities, evaluates all proposals, and all bills that are introduced, in their relation to ALA Federal Legislative Policy.

Our Washington staff must and does concentrate its efforts on what seems most essential at a particular time, taking all elements into consideration, such as the White House, the temper and composition of Congress, and the national economy, to name some.

This means working together as a total profession, evaluating the realities, whatever they are in a given year, recognizing when to compromise, when to wait, and when to fight. This is part and parcel of successful legislative programs. I am sure librarians can continue to play a significant part in federal library legislation (and provide an example for carrying on state library legislative work) if we continue to recognize the realities as they are at a given time, act, and fight hard if it is the time to fight; wait if that is the necessity, even if it means waiting on our own direct interests. We have all seen fine examples of this, for example, the position taken by school librarians as soon as the Library Services Act was passed that it should not be diluted by attempts to make it cover school library service. Soon their turn came in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and we all worked for that, including, recently, its extension for another two years. The same is true of librarians in higher education, college and university libraries.

A word more about the ALA Division legislative liaison committees. Our legislative work requires quick and reliable access to facts. These liaison people have or can gather the variety of facts that enable the Committee on Legislation, the ALA Washington Office, and those who go to Washington to testify on bills, to speak with confidence and authority, and not to be shaken or uncertain when asked a complex or antagonistic, or loaded question. These facts also, basically, help to build the basis on which priorities are established, on which proposals are evaluated, and, ultimately, they shape the Association's Federal Legislative Policy.

Looking back, we see that ALA first voted formally to seek federal aid for libraries in 1936; in 1944 it voted to establish a Washington Office, and in 1946 the first Library Demonstration Bill was introduced in Congress but not passed until 1956, as the first Library Services Act. Then came further library legislation almost

like the breakup of a logjam or ice pack, the National Defense Education Act and Elementary and Secondary Education Act benefiting school libraries, the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963, and the Higher Education Act of 1965, and their most recent extensions with increased appropriations immediately and authorizations for the future. There are other library-related laws, too, now on the books, but these are the major new ones affecting all types of libraries.

What is ahead? Have we gained everything that libraries should and must have? Obviously not; we have really just accomplished the basic legislation, the legal authorizations upon which to build a great and complete national system of libraries. Our authorizations are also for such sums of money that, if appropriated on the ascending scales authorized for the years immediately ahead, can do much toward accomplishing our goals. Authorizations, however, are not appropriations. Appropriations have to be worked for every year, authorizations only as expiration dates approach.

The basic major library legislation is now probably fixed into the federal government. It will take many years, no doubt, for all these major programs to settle down. Our major task in the next year or two is to relate these new programs to one another and make them work effectively for enriching human life.

Some of the authorizations are not for as long as we would like, so librarians will have to fight to extend them when the time comes, as well as for continuing adequate appropriations. Different committees of Congress authorize legislation than those that appropriate the funds for implementation of authorized programs. The authorizing committees—such as House Education and Labor, and Senate Labor and Public Welfare—do not like to give unlimited authorizations, thus turning the whole thing over to the appropriating committees. We shall continue to have to report back and justify what we have done to the authorizing committees, toward the expiration dates of each of the acts, and then to work for their implementing funds, before the “money” committees and the total membership of Congress.

We shall surely have to work to refine the basic legislation in the light of changing times ahead. I mentioned earlier that we work for legislation and establish priorities according to the realities as they may exist at a given time. I know of no major library legislation that may be introduced in 1967. It appears that the next Congressional session will not be one of innovation where libraries are concerned. The question is: will it be one that constructively legislates to improve and refine the broad new programs which now require assessment and adjustment? We must, of course, be alert to see that nothing is done to dismantle or make unworkable the new programs which are just getting started.

We can take some satisfaction in the kind of thing Commissioner Howe said to the Committee on Legislation in September 1966:

"Libraries are popular in Congress as libraries are back home where the people are." Again, we are working in the public interest, and this is our great strength. Here, mention should be made of the caliber of people who come to our ALA Committee on Legislation meetings: the Commissioner of Education, Assistant Secretaries of HEW, division and bureau chiefs and staffs, postal officials, copyright officials. This is one measure of the respect in which our library legislative work is held.

In the national administration there seems to be some concern about how all the library authorizations and appropriations fit together. The appointment of and charge to the new National Commission on Libraries is one strong indication. It is practically certain there will be no major new library programs until the Commission reports, in a year. All the library appropriations and authorizations together equal a great deal of money with which to reach for first-rate library services to everyone spread equitably all around the land.

No one can see all that is ahead, or what the realities will be a year or two from now. There are two sets of variables: the fiscal question including the degree of inflation, whether there will be a tax increase, and the scale of the Vietnam war; and the "complexion" of the 90th Congress as decided by the elections held today, November 8.

Assuming that refinement and adjustment of the new social programs can continue, there are a host of possibilities for adjusting the present educational-library legislation. We have heard talk of a nationwide study to assess all professional manpower needs in the country, instead of just a few professions and occupations at a time. This would be a very broad assessment of what kinds of training are needed to do what kinds of jobs, seeking to lay the basis for every job having people trained to do it, and every person trained to do a job that needs doing. We understand there will be a rather large vocational education bill in 1967, seeking to man the industries and technical jobs that our society depends on.

Thirty years have passed since ALA voted to seek federal aid for library service. More progress than could have been foreseen has been made. The money involved, and the governmental relationships involved, both call for more thought about the question, what is the federal role in education? The federal government now puts up about 6 percent of the total spent each year in education, so it cannot do everything either for education as a whole or for libraries as part of education, therefore, priorities must be set. Is the federal role to: (a) help to provide equal educational opportunity? or (b) raise the quality of education? if so, its role is demonstration and innovation; or (c) to strengthen the quality of state and local education? If the latter is its role, then the federal government should provide leverage to states and localities to insure improvement.

These are questions we as citizens as well as librarians should be concerned about. We shall certainly have to work for appropriations for our basic legislation, but we can as the American Library Association also do the very useful thing of thinking through the kinds of changes that may be needed in existing law to make it work better. For example, amending Title II of ESEA to provide staff services—is this a needed and advisable project to undertake? In Title II of the Higher Education Act, I believe there are provisions both for special grants to develop major centers of excellence, and also for supplemental grants for this purpose. Could these be consolidated or simplified?

Why, in Higher Education Act Title VI, have college librarians go through their state departments of education for audiovisual material, and also in HEA Title II require them to go direct to the U. S. Office of Education for the same purpose? Dr. Samuel Halperin, who is Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs for the entire Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, raised these and other questions with the ALA Committee on Legislation in September. He said there are three different state plans to provide audiovisual materials, and that we as leaders should look at the effects of these programs and seek to simplify and refine them. Do we really need separate state plans for all four titles of the Library Services and Construction Act? Would administration be simplified if state plans were abandoned? Congress seems to like the state plan idea. In the Manpower Development and Training Act, the states come in with a certification of how they meet the law and how they will use the funds.

We have seen the culmination not only of ten years of intensive effort to get library legislation passed, but actually of about thirty years altogether, of building up to this point, as the history shows. We have surprised ourselves and others with the legislative accomplishments, aided, of course, by countless circumstances, such as favorable administrations and Congressional leadership. Now comes the real test of implementation and administration at is at least as important as the law. We must make the legislation we have work. We should, of course, present new needs as we see them, uninhibited by attitudes of the administration, and we must keep the Congress informed continually of what we have done, are doing, and will do with the laws and the money they have given us. It is very important to get Congressmen in to visit the libraries and new services the Congress has made possible. They must see the results, better with their own eyes than only through letters.

Dr. Halperin told us that the next two years are not wholly propitious for new programs. He suggested that we examine laws already on the books that do not even mention the word "libraries," and see what they can do for libraries. He believes that real leaders can develop programs out of numerous federal titles, so far untapped.

Not only the major library legislation that has been enacted, but the mammoth programs of social legislation in other fields that have come into being—been unleashed is maybe the word—in these same recent years all call for a mammoth money outlay. No federal administration is going to have all the resources needed to solve all the problems that have been brought to general public view. This sharpens the competition and at the same time requires broad cooperation with those of like interests. Whatever political party is in power, and no matter how much it may or may not approve our aims and objectives, our experience will increasingly be like this year's, when we had to work with the Congress to obtain more money for the Library Services and Construction Act than the White House asked either be authorized or appropriated. The Bureau of the Budget and the White House requested \$57.5 million be authorized and also appropriated for the current year. They held to their lower figure right down to the closing hours. We worked and obtained authorization for \$88 million; then we worked and obtained—not \$88 million or \$57.5 million but—\$76 million. This is an example of the way ALA will have to continue to identify library needs and fight for them, not relying only on what may be offered. We shall increasingly have to fight for funds among a host of competing interests.

To sum up, the American Library Association does not work in a vacuum legislatively, but from a long-range legislative policy which is now annually, or nearly annually, modified by changing conditions. The policy is approved by Council but it comes up from the ALA Divisions. If one program seems to be moving ahead at any given time, and others standing still, it is only temporary, awaiting the propitious political climate, or temper of Congress, or economic conditions. The Divisions are not competitive with one another, but all work together for all library interests; our Washington Office represents the whole Association, and it works with both parties, members of Congress on both sides of the aisle.

Following this role and working in this framework, I believe librarians can meet the tests of implementation of legislation already achieved, refine and improve it, obtain the essential fair share of funds and reach for first-rate library services to everyone, accessible to everyone, and spread equitably all around the land.

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