GETTING PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS TO COOPERATE IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

My task is to discuss briefly intergovernmental relations as they relate to libraries in Illinois. My job assignment is in the Illinois Office of Intergovernmental Cooperation. This agency is a relatively new venture for the state of Illinois and was originally established by Governor Kerner in 1965 and subsequently strengthened by Governor Shapiro.

Several other states have similar offices dealing with problems relating to intergovernmental relations; among them New Jersey, which has had an office of local government under varying titles since 1917; New York where the Office for Local Government was authorized by legislative act in 1959 as a staff function of the governor's office, and Rhode Island which in 1961 created the Division of Local and Metropolitan Government as a part of the state's Department of Administration. According to a recent report, forty-seven of the fifty states of the Union have established agencies for local or urban affairs. These states, along with some of the major cities of the country, are wading around in what is a rather swampy area, but until recent months most of the states had not even entered the swamp.

These new enterprises in the government field have come into being because of the growing complexity of government, and also in part by the emergence of direct dealings between the federal government and local governments, with the states being by-passed. Efforts at all levels to simplify and streamline the structure of federal, state, and local relations are the current vogue in government circles. The problems we face are dramatically demonstrated by the statistics of these relations: more than 400 authorities exist for federal grant programs, and at least 160 federal programs have been added since 1960.
More than 1,000 new federal development districts, areas and regions have been funded. Here in Illinois, with our relatively dense population and high production capacity, we live and work with about 160 separate federal grant programs administered by about twenty-one separate federal departments and agencies. These programs involve more than $700 million and represent the potential for thousands of projects in our counties and cities. They are related to the different levels of citizens' needs existing in our society.

The problems encountered in the proliferation of these programs are not entirely related to their content, value, or impact. The difficulty has been that they came too suddenly and in such numbers that it is virtually impossible merely to keep track of them.

A recent listing of informational sources on federal and state aid\(^1\) included thirteen catalogs put out by the federal agencies, four published by organizations of public officials, nineteen compiled by states, and six issued by other groups or special service units. The federal catalogs total 1,127 pages, the state sources 973 pages, and all others 567 pages, for a grand (or should I say, grant) total of 2,767 pages. For 1967 the Maryland State Planning Department published a Manual of Federal Aid Programs\(^2\) containing 332 pages with details on 223 individual grant and loan programs. This catalog was hardly out before a supplement of 176 pages had to be issued to outline information on eighty-three more programs passed by Congress.\(^2\)

There is a great deal of duplication in these catalogs and handbooks, of course, and finding a program in a catalog is just a prelude of things to come. The next step is keeping track of the guidelines established for eligibility in connection with a given program or project. Anyone who has filled out an application for a federal project knows what I am talking about.

Illinois has recently gotten into the catalog business. We have not duplicated the information available on federal programs. Ours, which was produced by the Department of Business and Economic Development, is rather modest—it is only 442 pages long—and is designed to provide information on state programs to help individuals and communities meet their own goals for economic and social development.

It would be a hopeless task to try to summarize all of these state and federal programs, but we have two suggestions to make. The first is that someone on a library staff or library board be designated as coordinator for federal and state programs. A few libraries have already done this.

The second suggestion is that the coordinator become familiar with three of the catalogs mentioned. One is published by the Office of Economic Opportunity and is entitled Catalog of Federal Assistance Programs.\(^3\) The second is a relatively new catalog published by the University of Illinois and called A Guide to Federal Programs for Illinois Communities.\(^4\) The third one is the catalog of state programs published by the Illinois Department of Business and Economic Development: Illinois Catalog of Programs for Individual and Community Development.\(^5\) If it is not possible for you to have a coordinator for federal and state programs, then these three catalogs should be on the desk of the library's designated coordinator for federal and state programs.
Intergovernmental relationships in Illinois are complicated by the number of governmental bodies in our state. All of us are familiar with the long-standing complaints about the overlapping of taxing bodies in Illinois—cities, counties, school districts, sanitary districts, library districts, mosquito abatement districts—6,453 in all; Illinois has more units of government than any other state. Intergovernmental cooperation, therefore, holds special significance for us here in Illinois. Illinois, with 1,256, has more municipalities than any other state. With a total of 2,313, it has more special districts than any other state. Cook County, the second most populous county in the nation has 466 units of government—more than any other county in the United States. The Chicago Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) with 1,113, embraces more units of government than any other SMSA in the United States. Is it any wonder, then, that we in Illinois government are determined to make this cumbersome machine of government work more effectively and efficiently?

Since federal funds account for more than 25 percent of Illinois revenue, and because officials of state agencies receiving federal grants tend to deal directly with their federal counterparts, the Governor and his staff run the risk of being by-passed and of losing effective control of large sectors of state administration. With such a situation, the principle of executive budgeting may be impaired unless provisions are made for coordination by the Governor's office. His office is the only spot in state government where the over-all impact of federal aid on the structure and functioning of state and local government can be assessed and directed into proper channels.

The principal objective of the Office of which I am a part is to improve intergovernmental relations at all levels in Illinois. This includes federal, state, and local operations. Miracles are not in the making, because our office is only a three-man operation within the Governor’s office. Thus far the operation of our office has followed general guidelines offered by the Governor and a pattern of programs resulting from our own creation.

There are several other organizations in Illinois which also deal with intergovernmental relations. The Illinois Municipal League is, of course, one of the most active in this field. The counties and townships also have their own state-wide organizations. Our office cooperates with these groups and does not try to replace them or compete with them.

There are also several legislative commissions working in this area. These include the County Problems Commission, the Municipal Problems Commission, and the Commission on Intergovernmental Cooperation. These commissions carry on research and make recommendations for legislative and other actions designed to improve government performance.

Too often, I think, we assume that more dollars will solve all problems. There are many ways a state government can improve local governments and these are not confined to broadening the authority for local governments to raise the revenue necessary to meet the problems of growth. Please let me make it clear that our office does not exist to duplicate services already adequately performed by existing agencies.

At this point in the development of our office, I can offer the following categories as being descriptive of our operations:
First, we try to keep the Governor informed of the feelings and thinking of local governmental officials. We do this by attending meetings of various organizations at the regional, state and national levels. We advise the Governor on proposed legislation which may emerge from these meetings and consultations.

Second, we have a dual role as an advocate of the state in formal and informal meetings with local governmental officials and as an advocate of local governments in dealing with state officials. We sit in on cabinet meetings in Springfield, and this means essentially that local government has a spokesman at the highest level in state government.

Third, we serve as a liaison with colleges and universities throughout the state which have units or individuals studying intergovernmental relations and the problems of local government.

Fourth, we serve as a clearinghouse of information concerning common problems of local government. This function includes making available information concerning both state and federal programs and projects.

Fifth, we can try to mediate disputes between local government and a state department or agency.

Sixth—and most important from the standpoint of librarians—we assist local governments in their relationships with state and federal departments and agencies.

From this brief outline it should be clear that our office at present is basically a service operation. As time allows, we engage in other activities which would be more extensive if we had additional staff.

One such project is the collection of pertinent information about local governments. One of our staff members recently conducted a survey of communities of 5,000 or less. He asked the mayors of these communities to describe their problems. He plans to use this material in a series of "think" conferences designed to produce recommendations for improving small towns. We are also hoping to develop a program for training local government officials.

Now, we come to the question, what does all of this have to do with libraries and librarians? A great deal because if we are to bring Illinois libraries farther along the road of progress, then intergovernmental relations become a matter of critical importance. Significantly enough, a report issued earlier this year by the Division of Local and Regional Planning of the Department of Business and Economic Development was entitled *Public Library Development: An Overlooked Aspect of Community Development*. This report pointedly mentions that although public libraries "represent an important asset to any community...they are often overlooked in community planning and development programs or given only cursory attention."

Under the Illinois Constitution, the independent officers in the elected branch are relatively free of the Governor's control in many respects, particularly in relation to the state's central system of budgeting and accounting. Federal funds for education, for example, are channeled through an independent elected office, that of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Federal grants for libraries are routed through the Secretary of State's office. And, of course, the Secretary of State wields the primary responsibility at the state level
for our libraries. This division of labor and responsibility, however, neither belies the need nor the opportunity for intergovernmental cooperation. Indeed, without it progress will probably be out of the question.

What form will the intergovernmental relations take in the library field? We all know the excellent start made in connection with the cooperation between Secretary of State Paul Powell and library associations, special study groups, and individual libraries.

We have come a long way in recent years from the statement made by the Chairman of the Illinois Library Development Committee in 1965 when he said, "Illinois is one of the most backward states in the union in public library development."? This is far from true today because of what has already been accomplished, and Powell has demonstrated his concern and support for continued improvement.

Beyond this cooperation at the highest level, however, I would like to make these suggestions as a minimum approach in this field:

1) Not the least important is continued good relations with the Illinois General Assembly. I assume that the hard work of the Joint Legislative Committee of the Illinois Library Association and the Illinois State Library will continue to be an important factor in further improving what are already excellent relations with the legislature. Personal visits by librarians, library trustees, and library staff to their local senator and state representatives could prove to be of great value. By taking advantage of the months when the legislature is adjourned those associated with the library can call them up, go to see them, or invite them over for a brief tour of their library.

2) Do not overlook your local congressman and the state's two senators. Federal funds for libraries in Illinois amounted to $8,197,694 in fiscal 1966, and we should encourage our legislators in Washington to continue to do all they can toward increasing federal assistance for our libraries. I particularly like Ruth Polson's admonition in the January 1967 issue of Illinois Libraries8 to "think big" in connection with finances. There is no better place to think big in regard to money than in Washington, because the federal income tax is the best means yet devised for garnering tax dollars.

Thus far, federal projects for libraries have been quite modest in relation to national needs. It is relatively easy to obtain agreement that library services and facilities are essential for the educational, scientific, cultural, and even economic growth and well-being of our people, yet glaring deficiencies exist in this most important and vital resource.

In fiscal 1966, about $530 million was spent nation-wide for public library services and construction. But even the most conservative estimates conclude that about $1 billion in additional funds is needed for books, records, personnel, and other services just to meet minimum standards. Assistance is needed for state library institutional services. It has been pointed out repeatedly that library services for the handicapped falls short of any standard measure. Interlibrary cooperation cries out for financial help if we are to make the best use of our library capabilities. The United States Office of Education estimates provided to the National Advisory Commission on Libraries (NACL) indicated that $4.7 billion for a variety of library resources would begin to catch up the backlog of needs.
These needs have led to federal activity. First came the Library Services Act of 1956 to extend and develop library services in rural areas. The statute was broadened in 1964 to include all parts of the country, and a provision covering construction was added. Library components (Titles III and XI) also crept into the National Defense Education Act.

Since 1965, Congress has expressed a willingness to expand considerably the federal contribution to libraries under terms of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and the Higher Education Act of 1965. Congress has added support for interlibrary cooperation for the handicapped, specialized state library services, and library services in general. Refinements in the legislation were contained in the Library Services and Construction Act Amendments of 1967. These latest amendments corrected several inconsistencies in the statute: extended 100 percent federal funding through fiscal 1968 of the provision for interlibrary cooperation and specialized state library services and added authorization for acquisition as well as construction of library facilities. The Higher Education Amendments of 1968 will continue federal assistance for another three years toward library resources, training and research in librarianship, and cooperative cataloging by the Library of Congress. In the closing days of the 90th Congress, Congressman Fred Rooney of Pennsylvania introduced a bill to amend the Library Services and Construction Act to extend the benefits of the state institutional library services program to the staffs of state institutions.

All of this means, of course, that an increasing number of congressmen and senators are interested in libraries and that more and more federal involvement in financial support of libraries is likely, although not at a pace comparable to federal participation in other fields. It is sad to contemplate that we are probably spending about three times as many federal dollars on oceanography as we are on our libraries. Whose fault is this but ours? We can start to rectify this inequity by urging our congressmen and senators to support libraries by legislation. The National Advisory Commission on Libraries has, after all, recommended “that it be declared National Policy, enunciated by the President and enacted into law by the Congress, that the American people should be provided with library and informational services adequate to their needs, and that the federal government, in collaboration with state and local governments and private agencies, should exercise leadership in assuring the provision of such services.” This leadership will not very likely be forthcoming, however, without leadership being exerted at the local level.

3) Libraries must compete effectively with other local taxing bodies for sufficient money to do an outstanding job. This means librarians must go beyond preparing careful budgets and making skillful presentations to appropriating bodies. They must go beyond what is usually thought of as eliciting local support for library services. They must cultivate the other taxing bodies in their areas. If this is done correctly and well, librarians may end up with some of these taxing bodies quietly lobbying on behalf of libraries even though they are in competition with them for the taxpayer’s dollar.

Librarians and others responsible to the library must talk to the chairman of the board of supervisors, the mayor or city manager, the chairman of the sanitary district, or even the chairman and members of the mosquito abatement
district. They must be aware that libraries are aware of their problems—that librarians are sympathetic to their problems and they must become familiar with the libraries’ needs, hopes, dreams, and plans.

4) You may well learn from these other taxing bodies ways and means of “making your pitch” successful in approaching taxing units. There are no real secrets in this matter of wheedling tax money. It is simply that there may be approaches you have not thought of.

5) Money alone, however, is not the only approach to intergovernmental cooperation. Innovative ideas can go a long way toward making up for lack of money. I saw a brochure published recently by the National League of Cities with the title 101 Winning Ways to Better Municipal Public Relations. The ideas relate basically to municipal affairs, but they make interesting and worthwhile reading in terms of alternate approaches to problems. One practical problem facing central librarians, I should think, is how to expand reasonably and continuously the services necessary to meet the needs of suburbia. Perhaps it is time for someone to compile “101 Winning Ways to Better Libraries Though Cooperation in the Local Community.”

I would like to suggest that there is a great need for getting people and institutions to cooperate in the local community. Cooperation is essential. It has not failed; it has not really been tried. I can predict that a plan for public library development in Illinois will find rough going unless such cooperation is forthcoming.

A glaring example came to my attention recently. There should be, it seems to me, a line of communication between the local library and such organizations as the Illinois Agricultural Association (better known as the Farm Bureau). The IAA recently issued a study committee report on local government that makes no significant recommendations regarding libraries. If the library is to assume its proper place not only in the community, but also in the thinking of the residents of a community, then such oversights must be recognized and rectified. Every report issued that neglects or overlooks the importance of our library system in the scheme of things is a step backward.

Illinois is slowly arriving at a recognition that the time has come for the library to assume its proper place as an important educational and cultural center for the community. But the leaders in this field must accept the responsibility for moving libraries up the scale of priorities in our system of public services and needs.

Libraries and librarians have an excellent image. It is an image of service, of learning, of dedication. But it is not an image of activism. Action and movement, it seems to me, are necessary if libraries are to be improved. This will mean the addition of a new dimension to the traditional view of the librarian, particularly in smaller communities. It means, in the words of the NACL, that “our libraries can strive to become a vital positive force in the social and intellectual reconstruction of a broadening and changing society.”

The NACL has made several salient observations, not the least of which is that “libraries badly need support in establishing new means of intercommunication and cooperation.” As they move toward improvement, public, school, and academic libraries will, according to the NACL, “all be
obligated to change many of their methods of work, their interrelationships, and some of their roles and objectives in the years ahead.\textsuperscript{10}

In his Executive Order creating the NACL, President Johnson requested an appraisal of "the policies, programs, and practices of public agencies and private institutions and organizations, together with other factors, which have a bearing on the role and effective utilization of libraries."\textsuperscript{11} The NACL responded by commenting that "many different kinds of information systems and working relationships among a variety of institutions [will be necessary] if we are to provide effective access to relevant information for our society."\textsuperscript{12}

How, then, can we achieve the degree of cooperation required to assure a high level of library development in Illinois? I have the following suggestions:

1) The Illinois Library Association, in conjunction with the appropriate state officials and other interested agencies, should explore the possibility of establishing a Committee on Intergovernmental Cooperation at the state level. This committee could explore all avenues of inter-governmental relations in connection with libraries and make appropriate recommendations. If this is done, the ILA will be in the forefront among statewide organizations taking this step.

2) Too often community institutions and governmental units work separately, through separate channels. This independent action sometimes complicates matters for everybody.

In non-metropolitan areas, problems resulting from the multitudinous existence of many organizations arise because of the difficulty of linking community agencies together. The lack of capacity in small communities is an additional complicating factor.

There is no ready answer to any of these problems because it is difficult to design machinery suitable for all types of organizations. Different things will work in different areas. But it is not impossible to establish a loosely-knit mechanism which can attempt to cope with some of the difficulties. I would like to recommend the creation of a Community Executive Board. This would follow the pattern developing since 1962 at a much higher and more sophisticated level through the creation by President Kennedy of Federal Executive Boards in most of the major cities of our country.

The Boards composed of federal executives in the major cities, were initially charged with the responsibilities for, 1) considering management problems and interdepartmental cooperation and, 2) seeking closer working relationships with state and local government officials with the objective of strengthening coordination on programs of mutual interest. The Boards have proven very successful in their own local metropolitan areas, and they hold great promise for the future. A summary of their operations is contained in a report published earlier this year by the U.S. Civil Service Commission under the title \textit{Federal Executive Board: An Instrument of Progress.}\textsuperscript{13}

My idea is that the community executive board should be established at the local level, either on a county or regional basis, with the membership made up of elected and appointed governmental officials, \textit{including} librarians, who would meet regularly—preferably monthly—to discuss matters of common concern. As the group begins to generate a course of direction, members could
also be recruited from important organizations in the county or region if they have a bearing upon the achievement of successful cooperation in the local community.

If I may paraphrase the mission of the federal government’s Executive Board, the assignment for the community executive board should include the following: 1) to link local officials to new priorities of public policy (especially libraries); 2) to coordinate related programs at the local level; 3) to facilitate intergovernmental and community cooperation on programs of mutual interest; 4) to improve communications between local and state government and local and federal government, and among local governments. It seems to me that librarians and libraries should not shrink from being represented on any community executive board. Indeed, perhaps they should take the initiative in organizing such a group as an initial step at the local level toward creating support for a state plan for library services.

3) In major metropolitan areas or in locations where several different types of libraries are represented (university or institutional, as well as public and private), it might be worth while to explore the creation of a library executive board. This group should have a membership consisting of representatives from all school, public, private, institutional, university, and specialized libraries in a given city or region.

The principal objective of a library executive board should be coordination. Very practical problems would probably emerge as the item of initial concern. In areas, for example, where public libraries have been overburdened through demands placed upon them by high school, junior college, and college or university students, there is a crying need for coordination among public librarians, teachers, schools, principals, and college administrators—not to mention parents of students. Overloading will obviously continue unless coordination and joint problem-solving are forthcoming in the near future, whether through a library executive board or some other mechanism.

The same sort of approach to coordination would be helpful in alleviating the demands upon public libraries in metropolitan areas that do not correspond strictly to the jurisdictional area supposedly served by the library. Exceedingly complex are the complications arising in metropolitan areas which extend across state lines. I can foresee that once practical problems are considered and prove surmountable, then library executive boards would be tempted to branch out into other fields of concern, notably in the realm of library improvement.

4) A more specialized approach at the local level might employ the technique of creating a permanent task force on libraries. This undertaking should embrace all local organizations, individuals, and governmental officials who conceivably have any bearing at all on the well-being and future development of libraries. The task force would soon discover more than enough to do in connection with implementing a program for library improvement and innovation.

5) Citizen support is usually considered to be a key element in the success of any public undertaking. A series of “citizen conferences” might hold promise for promoting citizen support of local libraries on a broader base than that provided by the governing board. In Minnesota, the city of Austin and Mower County have recently engaged in a joint project of promoting citizen involve-
ment by holding meetings including citizens in discussions of three coordinated planning programs, as well as planning proposals for all of the villages in the county. The conferences are designed around ten discussion groups which are assigned the task of formulating proposals for making communities better places for living, working, and enjoying leisure. This citizens’ approach has been described by the Minnesota Office of Local and Urban Affairs as “a unique effort to obtain citizen involvement in problem solving and goal development” and as “a new method to solve the local problem at the local level.”

John W. Macy, Jr., chairman of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, adequately summed up the magnitude of future involvement of local governments, institutions, and citizens in intergovernmental relationships. He also suggested an approach to problem solving. “We have little more than glimpsed the beginnings of the revolution in intergovernmental relationships that is ahead of us,” he said. “Although grant-in-aid and other forms of intergovernmental dependency have become well established, . . . new programs . . . call even more for direct participation in national programs by local governments, and in some cases by local nongovernmental organizations. An equally, if not more striking difference is one of focus: the problem is the target, and all agencies that have something material to contribute to its solution must converge upon it.”

John W. Gardner, former Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, earlier this year underscored our nation’s deep-felt need for cooperation and leadership. Our government, “with all its wealth and strength,” he said, “cannot be fully effective without the help of vital local leadership, in and out of government.” The organization which he heads was created in response to these needs.

“I would emphasize the importance of the Coalition principle,” Gardner said. “Some people think of the Coalition as just another organization tackling the tough urban problems of the day. But it isn’t ‘just another organization.’ It is unique, and its uniqueness lies in the way it goes about tackling the problems. Our distinction is that we bring together leadership elements that do not normally collaborate in the solution of public problems—in fact, we bring together segments of American life that have often been utterly out of touch with one another—and, in many cities, are still out of touch.”

Gardner emphasized that “no one leadership segment can solve the problem alone. City Hall can’t go it alone. The Business Community can’t solve the city’s problems singlehandedly. There must be collaboration among all significant elements that hold power or veto power within the community.” Gardner has summed up the magnitude of our problems at any level of cooperation by pointing out that “new forms of collaboration need to be devised even as existing relationships are re-examined.” He has also made abundantly clear the necessity for involvement by all of us in seeking solutions. “Our society has become so complex, change so swift, and the social forces impinging on us so tumultuous that it’s pretty close to being more than we can manage,” he said. “If we are to retain any command at all over our own future, the ablest people we have in every field must give thought to the largest problems of the nation. . . . They don’t have to be in government to do so. But they do have to come out of the trenches of their own specialty and look at the whole battle-field.”
If there is a hypothesis to my own suggestions here, it is that cooperation between people and institutions can contribute much toward creating a community awareness that libraries are essential, rather than marginal, to our way of life. Once this recognition is accomplished, the library will take its rightful place in the ranks of other community institutions. And the corollary to my hypothesis is that a policy of "creative librarianship" at all levels will point the way toward accomplishment of this long sought and long overdue objective.

We have a motto in our office which describes both our role and our function. We start on the assumption that "We do not want to know why something cannot be done because, but rather how it can be done if." Our emphasis is on what can be accomplished if we follow the right procedures and work with the right people. We feel this is really what government is all about. And we feel this approach will assure success in the development of a state plan for library services in Illinois.

References


