



## Government Interests in Libraries

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THE FIRST TASKS of the early state libraries in America appear to have been of a custodial and reference nature. Collections of laws and reports were needed by the early legislators just as they are today, and it was necessary to provide some sort of storage facility after they were acquired. An officially designated repository was needed also to receive and store safely the official documents that were produced in the course of government business.<sup>1</sup> In 1745, for example, "The House of Representatives of the Province of Pennsylvania under date of December 5th, 'Ordered, that the clerk send to England for the best edition of the Statutes at Large, for the use of the House, and also for some large maps (one of North America) to be hung up in the Assembly room.'"<sup>2</sup> Apparently, this marked the colonial beginnings of the Pennsylvania State Library, which in two centuries has grown to its present book collection of over a half million volumes.

Most of the early state libraries did not exist as such until the early part of the 19th century, but many can trace their ancestry to such early colonial collections, both public and private.<sup>3</sup> From the standpoint of library chronology, it can be said that the state library came into being after the association libraries but before the first tax-supported municipal libraries. Those states which were formed from the great wilderness beyond the mountains followed the example of their older eastern neighbors. A Territorial Council Library was established in Michigan in 1828, nine years before the state's entry into the union.<sup>4</sup> The State Library of Wisconsin was established by an act of Congress in 1836 and is the oldest state institution in that state.<sup>5</sup> As the country grew, most of the new states carved out of the West soon established state libraries. One of the acts of the First California Legislature was to establish a state library in 1850.<sup>6</sup> Texas is unique in that its present state library was established under the Republic of Texas in 1839.<sup>7</sup>

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The functions of the present-day state library include much more than the custodial and reference functions of the early libraries. An analysis of the various services rendered by the state library agencies today reveals that the state libraries provide five distinct types. A survey made by the National Association of State Libraries in 1950 defined these five types of library service as: general library service, extension, historical and archival, legislative reference and law.<sup>8</sup> In the past two years, the Association has studied the functions and responsibilities of state libraries in an effort to develop the statement, *The Role of the State Library*, which describes the state library as a basic agency of state government.<sup>9</sup> The present statement (as revised at the annual meeting of the Association at Philadelphia in July, 1955) lists eight, instead of the original five major categories used in the 1950 survey. The additional services listed are state history, government publications, and special library services. These are not new services, of course; in the earlier survey, archives and state history were grouped together and government publications, while not specifically mentioned, were included in the general library services. The eighth category in the latest version of the statement, labeled special library services, might be called miscellaneous with equal validity. For the purposes of this paper the earlier breakdown is retained. The five basic functions then may be described as follows:

*General library services.* Gives direct library service to state officials and employees and the general public; operates an extensive interchange of books and other library materials with all types of libraries—public, school, college, and special; collects, compiles, and publishes significant statistics gathered from all the libraries of the state; keeps libraries informed of matters of general library interest by regular publications; disseminates information about legislation affecting libraries; serves as a principal connecting link between state and national organizations and agencies interested in library development including, at the national level, the American Library Association, the Library of Congress, the U.S. Office of Education, and the Council of State Governments; maintains a complete collection of the publications of its own state; when staff and budget permit, publishes a regular list of these publications; distributes these publications to other libraries, frequently under an exchange arrangement; maintains extensive collections of federal documents, as well as those of other states; collects and maintains the more important publications from counties and municipalities within the state.

*Library extension.* Establishes standards for library development;

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gives advisory and technical assistance to librarians, trustees, public officials, and interested citizens; distributes books and other library materials; takes an active role in promoting state-wide library planning and the development of all types of library service in cooperation with library associations and other groups; administers state aid funds to public libraries.

*Archives and state history.* Collects, preserves, and services the core collection of basic state records; may also conduct the records-management program of the state; gives advice to local municipalities on the proper care and management of their records; collects and preserves materials relating to the state, its people and its history.

*Law.* Maintains a complete collection of the laws of its own state, and as complete a collection of other state and federal laws as space and budget will permit; furnishes information on law to judicial and other state officials and employees and to interested citizens; exchanges legal materials with other state libraries; prepares bibliographies on subjects of current legal interest; provides advisory service to county and municipal law libraries; cooperates with statutory revision commissions.

*Legislative reference.* Furnishes reference and research service to individual legislators, legislative committees and councils, to other agencies of the government and to citizen groups; compiles bibliographies and booklists on subjects of governmental interest; maintains full files and histories of all bills; summarizes legislation of other states on specific subjects.<sup>10</sup>

The services enumerated above are provided in some form or degree in almost every state. There are a number of other library services that are offered by some of our state libraries such as the issuance of certificates for librarians, service to state institutions, service to the blind, and editing of state reports before publication.

It is clear that the kinds of library service performed by state library agencies display a high degree of uniformity. It is equally clear that there is no common or standard organizational pattern established for the administration of these services among the 48 states. A 1954 Alabama survey of state library agencies which was made at the request of that state's Legislative Council failed to "establish a definite organizational pattern for the administration of the general library service." After observing that the functions of state library agencies disclosed "a certain heterogeneity in regard to the basic purposes for which the agencies were established," the report questioned whether integration was the most desirable solution to the

problem of state library organization.<sup>11</sup> If an integrated state library is defined as one in which all the principal functions are administered under the general direction of one administrator, whether he is responsible to a separate board or is a division head within a department, then only four states—New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, and Oklahoma—have integrated systems. Three additional states—Maine, Nevada, and Wyoming—almost qualify under this definition. The first two have separate state historical agencies and Wyoming is integrated to the extent that its two library agencies are under one governing board. Only five additional states—Arizona, Connecticut, Kentucky, Rhode Island, and Texas—have only two agencies. Eighteen states—California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Montana, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin—have three agencies, and in fourteen states—Alabama, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Vermont—the state library functions are performed by four separate agencies. In four states—Arkansas, North Carolina, Ohio, and South Carolina—there are five agencies.

It appears that the state libraries have been running counter to the prevailing trend in state governmental reorganization for, although the state governments have been gradually consolidating formerly separate agencies and commissions so as to simplify and streamline the governmental structure, the total number of state library agencies has increased in recent years. As of 1954, there were more than 150 separate state library agencies (an average of 3 + agencies per state) as compared with the 143 cited by Arnold Miles and L. A. Martin in their 1941 study, *Public Administration and the Library*.<sup>12</sup> In the main, this recent increase is due to the creation in sixteen states of new legislative reference libraries attached to legislative councils or some other similar research organizations under legislative jurisdiction. In addition, Montana, which had an integrated system under one agency until 1949, created three separate agencies in that year. In similar fashion, Iowa in recent years removed the State Law Library and the State Medical Library from the jurisdiction of the State Library and placed them under separate agencies.

It must be emphasized that the present situation exists in spite of the attempts of various elements in the library profession to change it. The National Association of State Libraries, for example, has repeatedly discussed in its annual meetings the problems involved in

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administering library services through a number of separate agencies.

The situation in Canada is similarly confused. In the *Survey of Libraries, 1948-1950*,<sup>13</sup> compiled by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, the section on provincial libraries defines them as "Provincial Legislative Libraries, Provincial Archives and Museums, the Provincial Research Foundations of Ontario and Nova Scotia and various departmental libraries of Education, Health and Public Welfare, Agriculture and Mines." Quite obviously this definition is broader than the one for state libraries principally because the departmental libraries are included. Elizabeth Morton, the knowledgeable and efficient secretary of the Canadian Library Association, writes that the "usage of the term, provincial library varies from province to province. . . . For example there are libraries with the name "provincial library" in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia. In Manitoba, the provincial library is in reality a legislative reference library for the use of the provincial legislature. The encouragement of public library extension comes under a separate department of the government and is even accountable to a different minister. In Saskatchewan, the Provincial Library is a public library extension department, while the government reference library for the use of members of the legislature is called the Legislative Library. In British Columbia, the Provincial Library gives legislative library service to the provincial legislature and province-wide reference service to the citizens, while the encouragement of library extension is handled through the Public Library Commission. In the ten provinces of Canada, legislative reference service is given through a library of the provincial legislature but the name of the library changes from province to province, as do also its terms of reference. In eight of the ten provinces there is public library legislation, and in nine of the ten provinces there is a government official charged with the duty of encouraging extension of public library service. All ten provinces have government libraries in specialized subject areas which give reference service to their particular departments of government and some of them also give reference service to the citizens." This rapid review of the provincial library situation suggests that some basic exploratory research is needed in this area if for no other reason than to describe the situation more precisely as a basis for further constructive study.

The solution most often suggested by library groups as a remedy for this confused situation has been the integration of existing facilities. *The Role of the State Library*<sup>9</sup> statement, prepared by the National Association of State Libraries, is categorical in stating that "the most

effective library is one that encompasses all library services on its governmental plane." The statement further calls for the state library to be a separate department of government on the theory that an agency that serves all areas of its government and the public should have departmental status. Such calls for a strong, central library agency have been repeated in library literature many times. The American Library Association in its 1937 publication, *The State Library Agency*, applauded what it described as a trend away from many scattered library agencies toward one strong agency. "It is a trend to be welcomed," the statement continued, "provided the consolidation is wisely conceived. Operation of intimately related functions by several administrative agencies is contrary to the best governmental principles, and conflicts and overlapping are inevitable. One strong agency can in general, have higher standing and better financial support than a number of smaller ones." The report sounded a warning, however, against hasty and ill-conceived legislation providing for a consolidated organization. It urged librarians and friends of libraries to prepare long-term plans in order to be prepared to initiate legislation when conditions seem favorable.<sup>14</sup> In spite of these clear calls for strong, integrated state library systems, the organizational structure of the state libraries shows little significant change in the direction of integrated systems in the past 25 years.

On a more encouraging note, it can be reported that the past quarter century has witnessed a definite trend toward the professionalization of the position of state librarian. This is evident when one examines the statutory provisions for the position in 1954 as compared with 1930. In 1930, only three states—California, Indiana, and Texas—required professional training for their state librarians. By 1954, twenty additional states made this requirement. This should not be interpreted to mean that all the remaining states do not employ professional librarians. It indicates merely that only half of the states have made statutory provision for the professionalization of the position.

A survey of the state laws indicates a lack of uniformity in the manner of appointment of the state librarian. Twenty-seven state librarians are appointed by the governing board of the library,\* eight are appointed by the governor,† three are appointed by the Superintendent of Education,‡ and three are elected by the Assembly.§ In three, the secretary of state is the state librarian,|| and in two

\*Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina,

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—Nebraska and Utah—the clerk of the Supreme Court is state librarian. In Arizona, a 1953 law provides that the present librarian shall remain until otherwise provided for by law. In only one state, New Jersey, is the position of state librarian in the classified civil service of the state.

One reform which has been advocated by various individuals who have sought to improve the state library agency is the removal of the state library from political control.<sup>15</sup> It would be impossible to evaluate the political factors in each state merely through a study of the statutes, but the increasing number of states that have set up statutory requirements for professional librarians and the length of time many present state librarians have served, even though they have not had the protection of a tenure system, indicates that there has been some improvement in this respect. Only statutory tenure for the librarian will serve to remove the office completely from any future political control but it is clear that, increasingly, the states are making the post of state librarian a career rather than a patronage position.

At present, 39 states have library boards or commissions. In two of these states—Georgia and New Jersey—the board is an advisory one, while in the other 37 it is the governing body of the library. In general, there has been little significant change in board structure or duties in the last 25 years. Several changes, however, are worthy of note. Louisiana and Wyoming have added governing boards where none previously existed and Arizona reversed this operation by doing away with its existing board. New Jersey, which once had two boards with power—the Public Library Commission and the State Library Board—now has an advisory board only.

Just as there has been a tendency to retain a similar governing body for the state library in most states, there has been a tendency for the library to retain the same governmental branch alignment. In only four states—Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, and Wisconsin—is the

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North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

† California, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada. (In Kansas, the governor appoints an individual recommended by the Supreme Court.)

‡ Colorado, New York, Pennsylvania.

§ Maryland, Mississippi, South Carolina.

|| Arkansas, Illinois, Rhode Island. (Rhode Island provides that the secretary of state shall appoint a qualified person to act as state librarian. In effect, this same situation prevails in Illinois.)

state library under other than the executive branch. In Kansas, Oklahoma, and Utah, the libraries are under the executive department but are controlled by a board of the justices of the Supreme Court. In seven states—California, Colorado, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania—the library is in the department of education and in three others—Arkansas, Illinois, and Rhode Island—it is in the office of the secretary of state. In all the other states, the state library is a separate department or agency in the executive branch of government.

It is evident that an article of this length cannot do justice to the topic of state library organization and functions within the 48 states and the provinces of Canada. There is need for broad, definitive research in the field which can only be done through a substantial grant-in-aid which would provide the funds for an exhaustive study. Such a study would not only give a clearer picture of the status of the state and provincial libraries as now constituted but would also provide a basis of reorganization for those state library agencies and associations which look toward legislative implementation of their plans. It is possible also that a qualitative study conducted by a team of library and public administration specialists would show a brighter picture of state library development than is presented here. Funds for such a study have been sought in recent years by the American Library Association and the National Association of State Libraries and it is to be hoped that a grant for this purpose will soon be forthcoming. To be genuinely useful the study will have to suggest practical methods by which the present separate agencies in many states can be brought into logical and desirable working arrangements that will provide the strongest possible leadership to the states in the years ahead. Here one might ask whether the extension agencies are not the most logical agencies upon which to base future development. When one thinks of "strong" state libraries, for example, one thinks of states like New York, Illinois, and Louisiana, all of which have strong extension programs. Granted that the state library, per se, in most states preceded the extension agency, the more effective extension service, in many cases, has become the library activity that is best-known and respected by the state at large.

The history of the New Jersey State Library may serve to illustrate this general point. The beginnings of the library may be traced back to 1796 when the legislature ordered a book case and some books to be purchased for the use of its members. In 1813 the State Library was officially created by act of the legislature. In 1898, the State Li-

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brary made a brief excursion into the extension field by sending out "traveling libraries" at the suggestion of the State Federation of Women's Clubs. In 1900, the New Jersey Library Association succeeded in having a law passed creating the Public Library Commission and in 1904 the "traveling libraries" activity was transferred from the State Library to the Commission. After this brief flurry of outside activity, the State Library quickly reverted to its former role as a quiet, custodial-type library which was little more than a hand-maiden for the courts. This situation prevailed until 1945 when the reorganization of the state library agencies took place. In 1920, meanwhile, the Public Record Office of the state was created and remained as a separate agency until 1941 when it was combined with the State Library. In 1945, the State Library (including the former Public Record Office) and the Public Library Commission, were joined to form the present Division of the State Library, Archives and History of the State Department of Education.

It is interesting to note that the Public Record Office became part of the State Library almost immediately following the death of the former director who had served the agency since it was created in 1920. The Public Library Commission, which had been under the direction of a nationally-known librarian since 1905, was not united with the State Library during her lifetime, even though several governmental research commissions had recommended that this be done. It was only following the commission head's death in 1942 that the long-discussed merger of the library agencies in New Jersey was finally brought about.

Through the efforts of the New Jersey Library Association the law creating the new library division specified the qualifications for the director of the new agency (including graduation from an approved library school) and placed all positions, professional and clerical, in the classified civil service of the state. The new professional librarians that were added to the law and legislative reference section following the reorganization introduced a "service" concept to the legislative activity which brought about worthwhile results in a few years. Appropriations were increased and the suggestion that a separate legislative reference library be established as an arm of the legislative branch was not carried out because the legislators were satisfied with the service they were receiving from a rejuvenated state library, even though it was under the executive branch of the government.

There is good reason to believe that in many cases where the state library is weak and ineffective, it is because its "custodial" tradition left

a stamp that is almost indelible. In addition the position has all too frequently been regarded as a minor political plum and insecure. It is significant that two waves of library activity at state level, the library commission movement of a half-century ago and the recent development of legislative reference libraries as part of legislative councils, ignored existing state libraries in many of the states concerned. Granted that, in some instances, the state library lacked funds and staff to perform these services satisfactorily, and granted further, that some legislators wanted to have the reference service under their direct control, it is undoubtedly true that the widespread growth of the new agencies was due in large measure to the failure of many state libraries to seize their opportunities to perform needed and worthwhile services. As a result, a number of state libraries languished while new agencies flourished.

This proliferation of library agencies at the state level will make the task of building strong, unified or integrated state library agencies that much harder. Nevertheless, based on his personal experience, and on his observation of other state library programs, the author is convinced that the development of strong, state agencies is a worthwhile goal to be pursued. The cumulative effect of a strong staff performing distinct, but related, services and serving a varied clientele, including the state's official family and the general citizenry, is a tremendous asset in developing a strong "system" of libraries throughout the state. The Canadian Library Association, the American Library Association, the National Association of State Libraries and the state library associations in particular should make the development of stronger state and provincial agencies a primary objective in the next decade. It is apparent that to succeed, the task will need concentrated, continuing, and dedicated effort on the part of all concerned.

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