Plans For Using Federal Aid

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The closer approach of federal assistance for libraries, the conceptual development during twenty years of efforts to secure it, and the historic provision for administering any such funds through state library agencies makes it timely that a review be conducted of the readiness of states to use federal monies. The high importance assigned the state agency in the over-all picture calls for an analysis of plans which the states have ready. Such a study has not yet been done nor has there been a recent detailed report on state plans for implementing the Library Services Bill. The following is not intended to be the answer to this need; it is merely an informal report from which to determine the prevailing conditions in state agencies pertaining to this one of its obligations.

The proposal of some sort of federal support for public libraries is now over twenty years old. Librarians concern with the slow extension of local service to the areas without it, the inadequacy of the move toward larger units of service, and the low quality of service rendered in the many libraries having limited income led to consideration of supplementary support from the federal government. This was a natural development of the concept that the local library is an indispensable part of an educational program that should be available to all citizens, and therefore a rightful concern of the national government. An accelerated drive to secure federal aid for schools in the 1930's provided additional stimulation for this move and offered an opportunity to couple the library request with that for schools.

When the early proposals for federal support were submitted in the 1930's the national government was engaged in many programs of stimulating local improvement to speed the nation's recovery from the Depression. Therefore, it was natural that the first proposals were financially ambitious ones with several purposes. Federal support was dreamed of being just the right kind of recovery needed by libraries to pull them off the dead center on which the economic depression had

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stalled them, and put them again back on the road to growth and improvement.

While all seemed agreed that federal aid would be advantageous to libraries there was no evident agreement upon the purposes which it should serve. Early proposals sought to pump federal funds directly down to the local level where it was hoped they would be converted into new and better services. Primary concern was directed toward equalizing service, particularly for the rural population of the nation. Active leaders sponsored early proposals for aid in the name of equalization, the provision of a minimum standard of service for the nation at large. Sub-standard local libraries would have shared in this nation-wide financial assistance, and new libraries with the same standards were to be established in the uncovered areas. This proposal for equalizing library service, and including an implication for stimulation of new library growth, is the formula recommended in the Post War Standards for Public Libraries. The rate of financial support for this national minimum standard was fixed at $1.00 per capita in 1943.

Early in the move to secure federal funds a different purpose was argued by Arnold Miles and L. A. Martin. They contended that stimulation as contrasted with equalization, was the purpose in which the federal government manifested most frequent interest in its other programs of aid to the several states. State or federal aid could have several purposes but it clearly appeared essential that definite purposes should be deliberately chosen for the different levels of government so that expected results could be evaluated in that light.

Equalization was again the main theme in federal aid as proposed in A National Plan for Public Library Service in 1948. The federal government was accorded the position as a serious, contributing partner in the efforts of all states to promote and provide an adequate education system that included good libraries for every citizen. The Plan also carries a request for continuing support of public library service over the nation. Lastly, the Plan proposed federal funds for stimulation, to promote new service in areas where none exists.

The Public Library Inquiry staff later took a critical look at the need for federal aid for public libraries. Oliver Garceau, in his report, admits that federal aid would give direction to the movement toward more and better library service since the individual states seem incapable of providing such stimulation. He considers the stimulation purpose in using federal funds at the state agency level as holding out the most promise for effective good. His recommendations emphasize strengthening state library agencies which, in his view, are the
keys to opportunity in the state's ability to help themselves. R. D. Leigh, in his summary volume for the Inquiry, echoed Garceau on the statement that states and localities have the ability to make a better effort in library support than they are now doing, and this is the reason for recommending that the several states should undertake the equalization support formerly wanted with federal funds. The Inquiry staff study of the financial support of the public library led them to support the stimulation purposes contained in the Library Services Bill previous to the present one.

Both Miles and Martin and the Inquiry staff raise doubts about the leadership ability of many state agencies to manage federal funds. These sources hold out hope for strong improvement and increased strength of state agencies as one of the important benefits to be derived from the whole plan.

The present Library Services Bill is primarily a stimulation, terminal-grant proposal, for a fixed amount, and consigned to be applied specifically in the rural unserved areas of the United States. Some measure of equalization is provided in the bill as funds may be used to assist in strengthening existing but inadequate rural service. This clearly defined proposition for federal aid challenges the state agency for planning, leadership, and administration.

An inquiry to the American Library Association Washington Office as to the state plans on file there reveals that twenty-six states have submitted documents that deal with extension program plans. While the titles of many of these documents may obscure their true purpose only six states had plans on file in the fall of 1955 that are specific schedules for the use of federal funds. It would be an error, of course, to assume that all existing plans are presently on file, or, that the latest edition of every plan is in the Washington Office. Plans cannot be officially filed until after the Bill is passed.

Of the other documents in Washington covering state extension and development plans some opinion as to their efficacy can be obtained by examining their age. About one-half of them are from five to ten years old; while slightly more than one-half are five years old or less. The reader is referred to the chapter by Carma R. Zimmerman and Ralph Blasingame, elsewhere in this issue, for remarks on the currency of state planning.

It was also learned from the Washington Office that all but three states (Delaware, Utah, and Wyoming) have passed the necessary legislation enabling them to accept federal funds for library purposes. These authorizations range in date from as early as 1936 to as late as
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1953. The great majority secured this authority during the 1940's. Ohio is something of an exception in this matter, as its laws will require biennial implementation authority written into the agency's appropriation.

In the spring of 1955 the writer circulated a questionnaire among all the states and provinces asking for reports on the various policies and practices in use and plans for stimulating permanent service growth in rural areas if and only when federal aid funds are available. The purpose was to discover similarity in planning, peculiarity of plans for the differing regions of the nation, distinctiveness, practices used in Canada, the discrepancy between announced policies and accepted practices, and the difference between present practices with native funds and the proposals calling for federal funds. Opportunity was provided in the questionnaire to list promotion practices other than those suggested. A second part of the inquiry provided a chance to record the reasons why specific practices were not currently in effect.

Forty-five states and ten provinces returned marked questionnaires. Three states replied by letter giving reasons why the information requested could not be supplied. Six states did not commit themselves as to what uses federal aid would be put; the majority of these states are located in the mountain states.

The table on page 426 is a selective list of practices which the states designated they would use with federal funds to plant permanent service in rural areas. The list is ranked by frequency of intended use. Every state indicated that more than one method would be used.

Very few states in answering the questionnaire used the opportunity provided to list policies or practices they would use with federal funds other than those suggested. Those few reported were merely slight variations on those suggested in the form.

State agency familiarity with the double-barreled uses to which federal aid could be put, as provided by the current Library Services Bill, undoubtedly colored the way in which some agencies marked the questionnaire. This factor clouds the report on proposed uses, although the questionnaire limited the subject to the single problem of establishing permanent library service in unserved rural areas.

Selection of the suggested methods and those that could be written in as additional ones, involved consideration of several important factors involved in the whole matter of planning extension of service. These gain importance in light of the survey of public library service in general by the Public Library Inquiry. Some of these factors would
### TABLE I
Ranked List of Proposed Uses of Federal Aid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods Proposed to Implant Permanent Service in Unserved Rural Areas</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Library Demonstrations of Library Service to Multi-County and Regional Areas</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion of City Libraries into County Size</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Library Demonstrations of Library Service to Rural Areas in Cooperation with City Libraries</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving State Monetary Assistance to Multi-County and Regional Libraries to Support Extension of Service to Neighboring Rural Areas</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program of In-Service Training for Local Non-Professional Librarians Conducted by Official Agency or Institution</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Service Assistance (i.e. centralized book ordering, cataloging, professional personnel, etc.) to Multi-County and Regional Libraries to Support Extension of Service to Neighboring Rural Areas</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion of City Libraries into Multi-County and Regional Size</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish Branches of State Library to Give Wholesale Service to Local Libraries</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize Federations of Libraries to Extend Service to Rural Areas</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create Multi-County and Regional Libraries Around a Trade Center</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish Branches of State Library to Give Direct Mail Order Type Service to Individuals</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidize Scholarships for Native Library School Students</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create County Libraries including City Libraries Therein</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Library Demonstrations of Library Service to a Single County</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Service Assistance (i.e. centralized book ordering, cataloging, professional personnel, etc.) to City Libraries to Support Extending Service to Neighboring Rural Areas</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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be: size of service area established, importance of a trading center as the hub of the service area, the relationship of existing libraries within a new service area, the origin of supporting funds for a service area after a demonstration is completed, the quality standard of service as measured by rate of support and number of people served, the relationship between service units in formation of “systems of service,” and, the relationship of the state agency to the local service unit.

It can be seen from the ranked list above that heaviest effort by state agencies would be devoted to demonstrations of service to rural residents in large areas in the expectation that following the demonstration the service and its support would be assumed by local inhabitants. This is a practical and proven method of planting new service as proved in the experience of such states as Louisiana where this method has been used successfully for over two decades.

While large area demonstrations may be a successful extension method the problem of local adoption for support of the service may be, and frequently is, complicated by the laws which govern what portions of the larger area can establish themselves as separate and self-supporting. States realize the need to cure the weakness of service given by small isolated libraries and this is supported in the high frequency of states planning to effect expansion of existing city libraries into larger, and presumably better supported, units.

It is assumed from replies to this questionnaire, since local conditions and limitations could not be described by respondents, that this same thinking applies in the high frequency of proposals to give monetary and service assistance to multi-county and regional libraries in return for extending their services to surrounding rural areas. This implies that some existing multi-county and regional libraries do not measure up to some standard of size, support, or service and that this situation warrants outside assistance.

High on the list above is the plan to provide an in-service training program for local non-professional librarians. The need for better qualified personnel serving on the lowest local level is a serious necessity in every state and this corrective would certainly be desirable for that part of the Library Services Bill which provides aid to inadequate service. Nevertheless, it is doubtful if the effects of this particular provision would do much to establish new service where none exists.

The plan which envisages the organization of a number of libraries into a federation to use their combined resources to serve the rural
population living between them is a creditable plan provided certain conditions are present. It is presumed that this plan would include expectation of some new income from the covered rural areas and the eventual application of a common rate of support over the entire area. Under certain circumstances this type of new growth would be quite adaptable in those states where a cluster of unjoined suburbs, each having its own small library, surround a large city.

To expect establishment of permanent service to result from adding mail order type service direct to individuals from a branch of the state agency is open to question although eleven states selected this practice. It would appear that the extent of such service in a given area would have to be near a natural saturation point, coupled with a hard-driving promotion campaign, in order to be successful. It would be questionable to place entire reliance on voluntary use of such service to secure the necessary number of interested citizens who would make a drive for permanent service.

Equally high on the priority list of proposed uses of federal funds was the intention to subsidize scholarships for local students to attend library schools. The evident purpose is to increase the supply of trained personnel that presumably would be available for an extended program of service, expecting that natives to the state would be after professional training, most interested in staying with the local program. This practice would certainly contribute to improving inadequate service which is one of the two purposes of the present Bill. Its high rating as a method may also imply that states which selected it might have indicated by other choices their intention to use other methods to create new service areas where additional professionals would be needed.

Other methods than those appearing in the list above are worth mention. One of the proposed uses of federal aid which received a number of votes just short of that required for inclusion in the ranked list above, was the intention to provide permanent service to rural residents by giving bookmobile service directly from the state library agency. While the existing library service situation in some states and the low density of population per square mile in others may be good justification for this method the majority of states choosing this method probably think of state library bookmobile service as one part of a local demonstration plan. It is not likely, where there is a good spread of permanent and locally-supported service that a resident of such an area would consider it fair, tax-wise, for his neighbor living in an
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adjoining political subdivision to receive bookmobile service paid for by the state.

Two other methods chosen by several states require fuller explanation before they can be evaluated for their effectiveness. The first consisted of instituting personal service by mail directly to individuals from the state agency. The only difference between this case and the one discussed above which concerned individual service from the state agency is the point of origin, hence making the remarks made previously applicable here. The second of the two is the plan to offer a quantity “package” service to unserved rural centers. The danger here is that, even for demonstration purposes using it without a carefully planned accompanying promotion effort may furnish voluntary users with a satisfactory service for their immediate needs, thus lessening the possibility of converting it to a permanent type of service.

The question of rates of financial support for new service in rural areas was also raised in the questionnaire. The out-of-date Post-War Standards for Public Libraries rates of $1.00, $1.50, and $2.00 per capita were suggested as possibilities. The majority of replies to this question selected the $1.00 and $1.50 per capita rates with twice as many selecting the second figure as selected the first. Four states selected the third rate of $2.00. One southern state reported it would offer demonstration services with federal funds at all three rates. No state indicated it would demonstrate at a higher rate than $2.00 per capita although one reported it would choose an area for demonstration which would have an annual income from local sources, following the demonstration, of $50,000. It may very well be that replies to this question conceal a more important official interest in a total figure for minimum support than in the misleading single standard of per capita rate.

Of those marking the question as to origin of primary source of financial support for new local service, almost twice as many chose state and/or federal support as the number choosing local support. The heavy incidence of expecting state and/or federal support as a primary source must surely reflect a pre-occupation with the origin of funds during the demonstration period rather than consideration of continuing funds after federal aid for stimulation purposes is stopped.

Once again, it must have been conscious attention to the population definition of a rural community which the Library Services Bill fixes at 10,000 that conditioned responses to the population size of an area in which the state would afford a service demonstration. While most
replies fell on the population range of 25-50 thousand the total choices of two smaller ranges (5-10 thousand, and, 10-25 thousand) was greater than for the higher range. Less than a fourth of those marking this particular question indicated they would provide demonstrations to populations of 50-100 thousand.

The questionnaire used did not offer respondents an opportunity to explain the reasons why practices proposed for use with federal funds differ from the practices state agencies are currently using. But the significant ones, judged by frequency of choice, can be reported here for their interest value. The instances of proposed uses of federal aid funds

— is lower than present policy or practice to expand existing municipal libraries into larger sized service units,
— is higher than present practices of creating multi-county libraries,
— is lower than the present policy of creating regional libraries,
— is lower than the present policy of establishing regional branches of the state agency to give wholesale type services,
— is higher than present policy or practice to give state financial assistance to larger area service units,
— is higher than present policy or practice of offering library service demonstrations at a certain per capita rate,
— is higher for demonstrations to a larger number of people than present policy or practice, and,
— is lower for an organized program of in-service training for non-professional local librarians than in practice at present.

Those cases of a lower number of proposed practices involving federal funds as compared with a higher incidence of present practice must reflect the intention of those states not having tried the practice before. States currently using the procedure would not necessarily consider it as a new one to initiate with federal funds. On the other hand, those practices now in force and dealing exclusively with extension of new service into uncovered areas should be accelerated by the introduction of federal aid since that is one of the primary purposes of the Library Services Bill. The higher frequency of proposed practices over present procedures are quite likely attributable to the financing required and which is expected from the federal government.

Additional insight into the discrepancies between present practices and proposals for using federal aid is furnished in the reasons state agencies gave for not using the practices suggested in the questionnaire. These reasons are also useful in explaining many of the limiting
difficulties that state agencies continually face in all effort to extend service. As would be expected, the reason with highest frequency of applicability was that of limited funds with which to execute service demonstrations and to provide service assistance to local libraries. Next in rank was the shortage of trained personnel needed in new service areas that would be created, and on the state agency staff where additional personnel would be needed to conduct the field work connected with expansion of existing service and the establishment of new. Next in importance and frequency follows the inadequacy of present laws permitting state financial assistance to local libraries and the offering of locally-conducted demonstrations. Finally, the objection of rural residents to additional taxes to support new services was the reason listed by eleven states. The remaining reasons were cited so few times as to warrant considering them as individual state exceptions.

To compare a possible trend in expected growth, as indicated in these replies, with some official guidelines the list of stimulation projects to use with federal aid was matched against those recommended in *A National Plan for Public Library Service*. Provided the suggested uses defined in the questionnaire indicate the true intention of the states there would appear to be in their choices some omissions of recommended procedures and a few commissions of divergence. The vast majority of proposed practices would lead to the type of library growth recommended as best for the states in the various regions of the nation. The lack of common understanding of what a multi-county or regional library service would consist of may account for a New England state's intention to demonstrate or establish that kind of service. The interest of southern, mountain, and Pacific states in organizing federated library groups must apply only to certain exceptional areas in the states of those regions.

This review of state plans for using federal aid to extend new service into the unserved rural areas and the strengthening of that which is considered inadequate has revealed a wide variety of proposals that may need further study and explanation. That there are peculiar circumstances conditioning the use of each cannot be denied. Also undeniable, if the number and age of plans for promotion, on file in Washington, reflects their true status, is the need for additional and fresh planning to successfully carry out the intention of the Library Services Bill. Unless some prior testing for effectiveness is conducted some state plans may be vetoed in the Office of Education, if the Bill becomes a law. Those states that wait until after the Bill becomes law
before conducting the necessary surveying and planning for state-wide coverage and development may run the chance of losing thousands of federal aid dollars because of unpreparedness.

There appears to be an absence of common understanding between states on what certain procedures produce in the way of results. A given procedure will sometimes mean two different things to two different states. And the most damaging situation for the cause of extension appears to consist of a lack of communication between state agencies on what are successful and unsuccessful methods. Valuable effort and time could be saved in reaching the same goal if each only knew the results of the others methods and techniques.

References