



# The Administration of Grants-In-Aid

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THIS ARTICLE IS TO COVER money grants provided by states to local libraries, but not aid given by state library agencies in services, books or other materials, nor through demonstrations. It is not possible to follow these limitations completely since the total aid given is often a combination of money grants and aid "in kind." Demonstration plans also vary; in some states all costs are included in the budget of the state library, in others some money is turned over to a local library but library materials, bookmobiles, etc., are purchased by the state for the demonstration area.

Recognition that the state has a responsibility for libraries came early. According to Julia W. Merrill, the first movement is variously reported as beginning in 1838 in New York and in 1890 in Massachusetts. The New York act provided for aid to the school district libraries, which were meant to be public libraries. Revised in 1892, it has remained essentially the same up to the present time.

"As early a date as 1875 is given by Koopman for Rhode Island, but this seems not to have been known to librarians in other states. Action by Massachusetts in 1890, however, had a wide influence, according to Gratia Countryman. . . ." By 1896 state aid had spread through the New England and Middle Atlantic states. In Canada, Ontario's provincial aid dates from 1882; action in British Columbia and Saskatchewan came considerably later.<sup>1</sup>

This early aid furnished establishment grants up to \$100 for approved books, and was made contingent upon local appropriations. Grants for approved books were also made to small libraries which met specific standards. In Connecticut from 1893 to 1947 the books were purchased by the state library agency and given to the local libraries; this aid now consists of grants turned over to the local libraries. Under the Massachusetts plan, the fund was frequently used to pay expenses of small-town librarians to institutes.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the years, New York developed more comprehensive requirements for

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these grants than other states. In 1921 the Territory of Hawaii began to provide the operating expenses of its county libraries, a policy that has been followed continuously to the present.

In the thirties, a second movement for state-aid to libraries began, growing out of the financial difficulties of the depression era, the shifting of revenues from local governments to the states and the use of federal funds for libraries through the W.P.A. Encouragement of large-unit libraries was stressed in line with recommendations made by the American Library Association Library Extension Committee in 1929 and by state and national library planning groups.

From 1930 to 1940, annual grants-in-aid for public libraries became a reality in Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Ohio, and Michigan. After a first appropriation in 1938-39, Michigan had a biennium without grants. Since 1941 an appropriation has been made annually. Tennessee's annual grants for school libraries began in 1935-36. Illinois succeeded in getting an emergency appropriation of \$600,000 for the 1935-37 biennium. This was to buy books and periodicals for permanently established libraries and to extend library service to unserved areas. Money grants were not continued although the state has financed demonstrations and supplementary book services through regional centers operated by the state library since 1945-46. It was also during the mid-thirties that the demonstration program began in Louisiana and regional services from the state library agencies in Vermont and New Hampshire were started.

The Arkansas, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania pattern of grants all encouraged larger unit libraries. Ohio and Pennsylvania earmarked the funds for county libraries, while the Arkansas and Michigan plans included both county and regional libraries. In Arkansas and Ohio, appropriations are distributed under regulations set by the state library agency. The laws passed by Pennsylvania and Michigan included the formulas for distribution.

In Pennsylvania funds were and still are distributed to "free public, non-sectarian county libraries" on a sliding scale favoring the less populated counties and omitting those with more than 800,000 people, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. This formula parallels that for schools. The aid is "measured by the amount appropriated annually by the county commissioners for maintenance." "The only control required is a certified annual report of expenditures of the subsidy." No standards for service, personnel or support are set. The maximum grant is \$2,500. The plan has continued to operate in this way since 1935, resulting in nineteen county libraries in sixty-seven counties.

In Ohio, the State Library began to distribute funds to counties, taking into consideration the local needs, local interest as evidenced by appropriations, the population to be served, the area and such other facts as may affect the state program for library service. The major proportion of the funds have been allotted to local libraries to extend their services throughout counties.

The grants-in-aid law passed in Michigan in 1937 inaugurated a plan with three types of grants to carry out three objectives. Seventy-three per cent of the appropriation was aimed at improving the existing public libraries and increasing their service areas. This general library fund was distributed on a per capita basis to those public libraries which maintained local tax support at previous levels. Twenty-five per cent of the appropriation went into an equalization fund and was divided equally for establishment grants for new county or regional libraries and for libraries in taxing districts with low assessed valuation. To receive grants, libraries must meet the certification requirements set by the State Board for Libraries. Up to two per cent of the appropriation was allowed for administration. During the next decade many of the provisions in this law were adopted by Missouri, Virginia, and Washington.

During the forties, continued efforts in many states to get legislation and appropriations began to bear fruit. By 1945, Alabama, Georgia, Maryland, Missouri, New Mexico, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and Washington had been added to the list. Mississippi gained its first appropriation in 1948. In general, the grants were for large unit service to new areas, for general state-wide development, and for demonstrations. Only Missouri, Virginia, and Washington set up per capita grants to libraries serving areas smaller than counties. The formulas for distribution were becoming more complex, with equalization an objective and relative need and relative ability to support libraries as primary considerations.

By 1949, New York had achieved a new plan of state aid, the most comprehensive and the best supported in the country. Its formula for distribution and the requirements to be met were and are the most complex. Aimed at encouraging county and regional organization are establishment grants, annual grants, funds for library materials based on county or regional book expenditures, and funds for centralized processing. Annual grants are \$10,000 per year for counties forming regional libraries, as compared with \$5,000 for separate county libraries.

Kentucky made dramatic gains in 1952, when legislation for aiding

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public library service, particularly in rural areas, was passed and a first appropriation of \$110,000 for the biennium provided. This was followed by a well-organized citizens' drive that raised \$300,000 in gifts for 101 bookmobiles, raised the appropriation for the Library Extension Division, and sparked a drive for gift books. By November 1953, two-thirds of the counties had signed contracts to pay for librarian-drivers and for the operation of bookmobile service.

Now for the fiscal year 1954-55, twenty states, the Territory of Hawaii and four provinces have appropriations for state aid. Washington regained funds for 1955-57. Thirteen of these states have grants of the "newer type." Seven states offer small grants to local libraries, usually for books. New York has both types of grants. The total annual amounts for the early type of grants now vary from \$5,000 to \$20,000; for the more comprehensive plans, from \$18,000 in New Mexico to \$2,300,000 in New York. The Georgia and North Carolina appropriations are \$415,000 a year; Michigan has \$400,000 for 1955-56.

State grants to libraries are based on the principle that the state has a responsibility for the education of all its citizens and that the library is an educational institution. Fully carried out, this would mean provision of a basic service from state funds with local government financing services above this minimum. By direct grants, this has only occurred for county libraries in Hawaii and Missouri, for school libraries in Minnesota and North Carolina, and for school and public libraries in Georgia. The meager levels of the appropriations tend to nullify this principle.

The early type of aid available to all local libraries has been continued by Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island. In 1954, Maine grants not to exceed \$200 per library were made proportionate to local spending, and service to adjoining municipalities was encouraged. The present Delaware grants for books are based on half the amount raised locally "by taxation, subscription, gift or otherwise." They are limited to \$1,000 for first or second class school districts operating libraries, to \$500 for a third class school district and to \$300 for a fourth class school district. Minimum local support is required, varying with the type of school district. New Hampshire aid granted to five libraries in 1954-55 depended on local plans for improvement and was largely for books. Vermont's law permitting this type of aid has not been used since the 1930's, when the appropriation for regional service from the Free Public Library Commission began.

Grants to municipal libraries are provided by Michigan, Missouri,

New Mexico, Ohio, and Virginia, but these are also small. They are meant to supplement local funds and not to relieve the local unit of its responsibilities. In Michigan and Missouri grants from what is called the General Library Fund are now about five cents per capita. Ohio allows fifty dollars for libraries with budgets over \$1,000 and proportionately less for libraries with budgets under \$1,000. In Virginia, local funds are matched up to a maxima of \$100 for a municipal library serving under 5,000, and \$500 for a municipal library serving more than 5,000, with \$1,000 for a county library and \$5,000 for a regional library. Grants are given only if minimum standards are met by the locality.

The Washington plan, in operation from 1945 to 1951, distributed half of the General Library Fund on a population basis and half computed on a two mills and per capita basis with the payment decreasing in proportion to the local millage for library support. After four years without an appropriation, Washington has \$50,000 for the 1955-57 biennium. Called a Library Development Fund, this is intended for establishment grants to new rural and regional library districts, to begin services and provide capital costs. Some of the funds will continue Integration Grants for the legal merging of a county or inter-county library with the largest existing municipal library. A regional library in this state may be within one county.

A national pattern is to give annual continuation grants (as well as funds for establishment and for demonstrations) to county and multi-county libraries. This is happening in twelve states, Arkansas, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania and South Carolina. Where the county and regional pattern is prevalent, states are providing some support for most of their public libraries. The pattern of continuing grants to local libraries, whatever their size, which began in 1838, has persisted. Once started, it seems to be very difficult to discontinue since so many localities are involved. In 117 years, only Vermont and Washington have dropped this pattern.

For the past twenty years, the aim of most state aid plans has been to establish and encourage larger units of service. At the beginning of this period county libraries were stressed; now wider areas, covering two or more counties, are being emphasized. Larger or added funds are allowed for regional libraries in Georgia, Michigan, South Carolina, Virginia, and New York. In Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina grants are only for county or regional libraries. Demonstrations in Arkansas are for regions only. Pennsylvania grants go to

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county libraries only. The Maryland plan allows grants for books to county libraries and to the city of Baltimore.

The major portion of Ohio aid goes to a library in each county to extend services. No new library may serve less than a county. In New Mexico, grants of from \$200 to \$500 go to smaller libraries if they give free service to any county resident and to larger libraries if some county extension service is given. The most frequent purposes of state grants are:

1. To reach people without libraries.
2. To improve and increase existing library service. This leads to setting requirements for grants, which become in essence minimum standards.
3. To equalize library services throughout each state.
4. To coordinate library units.
5. To demonstrate good library services.
6. For experimentation.

The various kinds of grants carrying out these purposes are annual grants for public libraries meeting minimum standards, establishment grants for county or regional libraries, achievement or incentive grants, demonstration grants, salary grants, and grants for the education of librarians. Incentive grants for establishing service to negroes are used in the southern states. North Carolina has made a notable record in that every county library now serves the negro population. Arkansas, New York, and Washington give funds for the consolidation of city and county libraries. Added grants for the creation of regional, as contrasted to county libraries are frequent.

While several types of grants are used to equalize library services, Missouri earmarks extra funds for county or regions where a one mill tax does not yield \$1.00 per capita. Larger allotments per capita are allowed for the less populous counties by Maryland and Pennsylvania. Michigan and Washington have dropped the early equalization grants allowed for any library area of low assessed valuation. In Michigan these carried no other requirement; they were going to small libraries or to libraries in areas which were not willing to make local appropriations.

A new plan for library development in Michigan, which began in 1953, is financed from funds for aid to libraries. The first two projects are demonstrations of regional library service, with money grants turned over to a local library for the operation of services to a county or counties. The capital costs covering added books, bookmobiles, fur-

niture, and equipment are purchased by the State Library and loaned to the area, to become a permanent loan when a regional library is established. This is in essence a new form of the earlier establishment grants, with the costs running higher than in earlier years.

In about half of the states, final decision as to how a grant-in-aid shall be spent is delegated to the local library board and the librarian, although it is common to have a proviso that the state aid funds may not be spent for land, buildings or for reduction of debts. In the other half, several funds have been set up for special purposes and the trend is toward more specific requirements for each type of grant. These conditions are characteristic of the states with the largest funds. The regulations are usually concerned with the certification of librarians, local support, and standards of service.

Money is earmarked for the salaries of county and regional librarians by Georgia, Michigan, South Carolina, and Virginia. Michigan refunds the actual salary paid to a qualified county or regional librarian up to \$300 per month. Georgia and South Carolina provide supplementary sums for salaries, with Georgia allowing \$900 for the director and \$600 for the assistant director. Virginia gives aid to the amount of 25 per cent of the grant, if salaries are not decreased. South Carolina does not allow a grant to be used for the salaries of non-professional staff members.

Certification requirements are common in state aid programs, although five states do not have them. Sixteen states certify all public librarians, six states certify only county and regional librarians. Michigan has minimum qualifications for the head librarians of all libraries receiving state aid and requires workshop training for those from the smaller libraries. Ohio libraries which do not have a certified librarian may forfeit state aid, which can be prorated by month.

The regulations on finances are aimed either at preventing a decrease in local appropriations, requiring local support at a certain level or encouraging higher local appropriations.

Libraries must register in New York State. To be registered, the library must have an annual income of \$1.00 per capita; to qualify for an absolute charter, requires \$1.50. Each plan for a county or multi-county system must provide for an expenditure of fifteen cents per capita and not less than \$8,000 for books, periodicals, and binding. Maryland requires a local tax of two mills. Missouri fixed its requirement in 1955 at one mill or \$1.00 per capita. The Michigan law in 1937 required that there be no decrease in funds from local taxes. This was changed in 1941 to a three-year average for the period preceding the

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year in which grants were being distributed. In 1949 the financial requirement became an amount from local sources equal to three-tenths of a mill of the county assessed valuation. A recent Supreme Court decision that taxes on real estate must be assessed on the state equalized valuation increases the local appropriations needed to qualify for grants.

Matching provisions are in the Arkansas and New Mexico regulations. A frequent provision is that the grant cannot exceed local support. Ohio requires that the library receive the full amount of the intangibles tax or have its grant reduced proportionately. In Virginia any library serving more than 5,000 people must provide twenty cents per capita or \$5,000, whichever is the greater.

Grants-in-aid are more frequently used for "books" (meaning any library materials) than for other purposes, a pattern established in the pioneer plans. Maryland's aid may be used only for books. New Mexico requires that 75 per cent of the grant go for book purchases. Many states provide books as aid "in kind," either to help demonstrate, establish or continue libraries. The bulk of Georgia's aid to both public and school libraries consists of books purchased by the Library Extension Division and hence does not fall within the scope of this article. New Mexico, New York, South Carolina, and Virginia require approval of the state agency for book orders. Virginia says that the library should maintain a basic reference collection.

There is evidence in most states, certainly in those states which set standards for grants-in-aid, that state funds have had many beneficial results. In the earliest period, small grants encouraged the establishment of small libraries. In the last 20 years, establishment grants, grants for demonstrations, and continuing state funds have resulted in the creation of many more county and regional libraries. Grants have had to be increased throughout this period in order to continue to be effective. In some instances the new libraries thus created were in units too small to provide good service. This occurred where there were no minimum requirements or where the standards were too low.

Incentives have been necessary in the formation of regional libraries, particularly in areas with many libraries operating on a local basis. A librarian without local ties and with an understanding of the advantages of regionalization is needed to stimulate such movements. In fact, a strong state agency is essential if regional libraries and a state-wide plan for library service are to be carried out. Larger grants for regionals are also an incentive. In only one state have regional

libraries been established or maintained without state aid or some form of subvention.

In thirty-eight years before 1939, only 300 county libraries were established. By 1944, there were 651. Arkansas with no county or regional libraries before state aid, now reaches the people in fifty out of seventy-five counties with area services. In South Carolina all but seven counties now give county-wide service. Missouri has established forty-eight county libraries within the last decade, twenty of which are now organized into eight regional libraries. Georgia and North Carolina show similar gains. Ohio's plan of working from a library in each county has extended library services to many people. In other states with many established small libraries this movement has been slower. The figures and percentages of people without public library service have been reduced in many states even with the growing population.

While many elements enter into the increase in library support during the last twenty years, state grants have had an appreciable effect, both in the actual money they provide and in the requirements set for local support. Many specific instances can be cited where local appropriations were maintained or increased in order to qualify for grants. In the main, better trained personnel, better book selection, larger book funds and better standards of service have resulted from state grants-in-aid and the minimum standards adopted as requirements. Many librarians think that even grants too small to give financial stimulus are worth keeping because they enable the state library agency to maintain minimum standards and provide an opportunity for action with the poorest libraries and the weakest library boards.

State grants are of most worth when used to further a comprehensive plan of library development. It is difficult to interest legislators in long range planning, since they rarely think beyond the limits of their terms of office. With changing membership in the legislatures, a constant program of education must go on. Re-education enters the picture, too, as the concepts in the library world change.

Summarizing the 117 years of state grants to libraries, the plans have followed general library thinking, by beginning with grants to small libraries, then emphasizing county libraries and now moving, with a characteristic cultural lag, to encourage regional libraries of a larger scope. Perhaps there was an overemphasis on books in the early plans. By the 1940's the trend was toward broad provisions about what uses were made of the funds. As the program gets older, provisions become more complex in an effort to tailor each plan to carry out more

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specific objectives and meet wide variations in the conditions within each state. Requirements also become more specific and complex, with the age of the program and with larger grants.

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