The Relationship of State and National Library Service Standards to Grants-In-Aid Programs

CARMA RUSSELL ZIMMERMAN

What is the relationship between financial grants-in-aid from state and national governments to local public libraries, and state and national library service standards? Does a cash grant-in-aid from a higher level of government to a local government for public library purposes affect the service standards of the local public library? Twenty-five of the fifty states had enacted state grants-in-aid to local public libraries in January 1960, according to a tabulation by American Library Association headquarters for The Book of the States. This number did not include Hawaii, where all support of all public libraries has since the beginning of the public libraries come from the territorial—now state—government. As Hawaii has complete coverage of all its area by county public library systems, the number of states with grants-in-aid to public libraries should, perhaps, for this discussion, be twenty-six, or one more than half of all of the states. The tabulation for The Book of the States excludes all federal grants for public library service.

We are not here discussing “state aid” in the form of services, as contrasted to “state grants-in-aid” which are cash financial grants, with or without conditions or standards for receiving such grants to public libraries. Service aid is covered more fully in another chapter of this issue of Library Trends. Such services have, of course, played some part in the establishment and development of much local public library service which exists in localities. All modern local public library standards call for continuance and strengthening of state library services to local libraries, appropriate to the need.

With one more than half of all the United States having state financial grants-in-aid to or state support of local public libraries, it should be possible to learn what effects these grants have had and are having upon local public library service standards. It should also

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be possible to answer the question, “What is the effect of state grants-in-aid on local control?” Up to the present time, however, there has been no comprehensive, nationwide study of these effects. Individual states have made some attempts to evaluate the effects of their own grants-in-aid programs. The American Association of State Libraries has, since its establishment as a division of the American Library Association in 1958, had as its major program objective the securing of a nationwide survey of the state library agencies in the fifty states to determine the present status of state library activities. From this survey which will begin in 1961 under a grant from the Carnegie Foundation standards are to be developed for state library service which would supplement the present standards for public libraries. From this survey, and the subsequent development of standards for state library service, it is expected that, in addition to other accomplishments, the survey’s examination of the functions, services, and governmental-legal-administrative settings and organization of state library agencies will reveal more factual and documented information than is now available as to the relationships between state (and, probably, also, federal) grants-in-aid to public libraries, and the effects of such grants on local library service standards and local control.

Meanwhile, some observations of a general nature may be made as to these relationships and effects. The Public Library Inquiry general report, a decade ago, opened its chapter on “Library Financial Support” with the sentence,1 “The quality of public library services depends upon the amount of financial support.” The Inquiry’s discussion of state financial aid to libraries pointed out that the amount of state financial participation in support of local public libraries then varied considerably in different regions of the country, and did not exist in some regions. Study of the tabulation which follows shows that this variation still exists.

A review of state financial grants-in-aid shows that the early forms of the grants were simply uniform amounts of $50 to $100 given to each existing library. Few if any requirements were made for a library to qualify for the grants. It is not recorded whether these grants served as enough incentive to localities to establish libraries where none existed. While these small “flat” grants obviously added, at least slightly, to the financial support of existing local libraries, they were of no fiscal significance for the building of a modern local library service. Nor were they used to establish minimum public library service standards of any importance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Name of agency and functions</th>
<th>Budget Period</th>
<th>Appropriation for agency</th>
<th>Appropriation for grants-in-aid to public libraries</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>Public Library Service Division, State of Alabama 1, 2, 18</td>
<td>1959–61</td>
<td>$359,390 d</td>
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<td>Alaska</td>
<td>Department of Library Service 1, 2</td>
<td>1957–59</td>
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<td>Arizona</td>
<td>Department of Library and Archives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 16</td>
<td>1950–60</td>
<td>121,157</td>
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<td>Arkansas</td>
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<td>226,103.60</td>
<td>130,453.60 a</td>
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<td>California</td>
<td>State Library 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 14+, 16, 18</td>
<td>1959–60</td>
<td>759,133</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>State Library 1, 2, 11</td>
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<td>96,102</td>
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<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>Bureau of Library Services, Conn. State Dept. of Education 1 in part, 2, 9, 11, 12</td>
<td>1959–61</td>
<td>234,034</td>
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<td>Delaware</td>
<td>State Library Commission 1, 2</td>
<td>1959–60</td>
<td>51,970</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>State Library 1, 2, 14+</td>
<td>1959–61</td>
<td>148,976</td>
<td>none</td>
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<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Div. of Instructional Materials and Library Service, Dept. of Educ. 1, 2, 14, 14+, 19</td>
<td>1959–60</td>
<td>1,440,327 c</td>
<td>1,302,571 a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>No state library agency (Library system being surveyed; all public library support comes from the state.)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Idaho</td>
<td>State Library 1, 2, 14</td>
<td>1957–59</td>
<td>125,000</td>
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<td>Illinois</td>
<td>State Library 1, 2, 3, 11, 14</td>
<td>1957–59</td>
<td>1,564,290</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>State Library 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 14+, 15, 16</td>
<td>1959–61</td>
<td>668,498</td>
<td>none</td>
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<td>Iowa</td>
<td>State Traveling Library 1, 2, 3 in part, 4, 11, 14</td>
<td>1959–61</td>
<td>69,100 e</td>
<td>none</td>
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<td>Kansas</td>
<td>Traveling Libraries Commission 2, 14, 14+</td>
<td>1958–59</td>
<td>61,100</td>
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<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>Library Extension Division 1, 2</td>
<td>1958–59</td>
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<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>State Library 1, 2, 4, 8, 10</td>
<td>1959–60</td>
<td>284,894 d</td>
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<td>Maine</td>
<td>State Library 1, 2, 3 in part, 4, 5, 6, 7</td>
<td>1959–60</td>
<td>347,963</td>
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<td>Maryland</td>
<td>Division of Library Extension 1, 2, 11</td>
<td>1959–60</td>
<td>129,556</td>
<td>318,992 b</td>
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<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>Division of Library Extension 1, 2, 10, 14+, 15</td>
<td>1959–60</td>
<td>132,908</td>
<td>none</td>
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<td>Michigan</td>
<td>State Library 1, 2, 3 in part, 5, 6, 8, 14</td>
<td>1959–60</td>
<td>551,174</td>
<td>420,000 b</td>
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<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>Library Division, State Dept. of Educ. 1, 2, 12, 14</td>
<td>1958–59</td>
<td>167,102</td>
<td>135,750 a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>Library Commission 1, 2, 14</td>
<td>1958–60</td>
<td>192,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>State Library 1, 2, 11, 14, 15, 16</td>
<td>1959–61</td>
<td>323,500</td>
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<td>Montana</td>
<td>State Library Extension Commission 1, 2, 14</td>
<td>1959–60</td>
<td>78,544</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>Public Library Commission 1, 2, 8, 14+</td>
<td>1959–60</td>
<td>128,000</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>State Library 1, 2, 4, 5, 14+</td>
<td>1957–59</td>
<td>173,950</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>State Library 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 14</td>
<td>1959–60</td>
<td>178,558.91</td>
<td>1,500 a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prepared by the American Library Association

The functions of state library agencies reported are:

1. General library service, including reference.
2. Library Extension, including traveling libraries and/or establishing public libraries.
3. Archives and History.
4. Legislative reference.
5. Law Library.
7. Genealogy.
8. Service to the blind.
9. Special Education library.
11. Service to correctional institutions.
12. Special service to schools.
15. Placement service.
17. Science and Technology.
18. Service to State Employees.
20. Medical library.

a. Grants-in-aid are included in the agency appropriation.
b. Grants-in-aid are not included in agency appropriation.
c. Includes funds for books and locally employed librarians.
d. Includes funds for state supported county (or parish) and regional library demonstrations or centers.
e. Does not include building maintenance, janitors, etc.
The next general form of state grants-in-aid in a number of states had as its direct purpose encouragement toward the formation of larger local units of library service. This type of grant is in two forms: an establishment grant given to county or multi-county libraries at the time when larger units are formed to help provide the initial stock of books and other equipment; and annual grants thereafter for partial payment of operating expenses. Thus began the conditional type of state grants-in-aid to public libraries. A typical condition required the local library to meet minimum standards for their personnel. In some cases, formulas were and are used to assist poorer areas financially without pauperizing them.

An example of a state grants-in-aid program representative of the transitional period between the earlier type of grants and the later ones carrying sufficient amounts of money to be a substantial factor in creating strong local library systems capable of achieving minimum modern standards is that of Washington State. Washington began state grants-in-aid to public libraries in 1945 when the state legislature voted an appropriation for this purpose, implementing what is probably the briefest statute governing any state grant-in-aid program: “In order to provide, expand, enlarge and equalize public library facilities and services and thereby promote and stimulate interest in reading throughout the entire state, the State Library Commission shall, from time to time, make studies and surveys of public library needs and adopt rules and regulations for the allocation of money to public libraries to be expended on vouchers approved by the Commission.”

The regulations which the commission subsequently adopted included provision for establishment grants of several thousands of dollars, to be granted only once to each county that voted for the establishment of a county library. In elections immediately prior and immediately after the enactment of the state grants-in-aid program, fourteen Washington counties voted for the first time to establish county libraries. It is not known to what degree the availability or expected availability of state establishment grants influenced the majority of voters in these fourteen counties to vote for a county library. It is certain that the grants enabled the new libraries to organize on a more substantial scale and provide a better quality of public library service than would have been possible otherwise. For example, many of the new county libraries immediately purchased bookmobiles for rural and suburban service, with the state funds.
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Other regulations of the Washington State Library Commission provided continuing annual grants of much smaller amounts, based on a few cents per capita, with special grants to areas of unusually low assessed valuations, to all existing public libraries. Conditions for these grants included evidence of compliance with a state law passed in 1935, which took effect two years later, requiring that positions classified as professional be filled by professional librarians, in all public libraries serving over 4,000 population and in every library operated by the state or under its authority, including libraries of institutions of higher learning, except state and county law libraries.

Another condition made it necessary for the existing library to keep its annual tax appropriation up to an amount not lower than the average of the previous three years, not including amounts received from state grants-in-aid in the previous three years. These per capita grants, while fairly substantial for cities or counties of high population, frequently amounted, for libraries in areas of very low population, to less than $50 or $100. While these small amounts could do little to raise the standards of the individual local public library, several towns used the grants to apply toward the cost of contracting with county library districts for county library service, thus bringing to the towns the advantages of the wider tax and population base.

In 1948-49, Washington State, faced with the need to make the most effective use of a reduced total amount of money for state grants-in-aid to public libraries, abandoned this latter type of per capita grant. The commission voted to use all of the aid funds either for establishment grants available only to larger units of library service that might be voted in additional counties, or for “integration grants” to larger units that might be created when existing libraries contracted together to form a larger library system.

The more recent systems of state grants-in-aid have as their clear objective the stimulation of the development of larger local public library systems having a staff and a book stock adequate for modern library service meeting certain basic, minimum standards. The most extensive such system is that which began in 1950 in New York State, for which in April 1960 the New York State Legislature appropriated six million one hundred thousand dollars. New York Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller signed the new library aid bill on April 10, 1960, to take effect immediately. A full statement of its provisions is given in Morin’s article elsewhere in this issue.

In 1950, the “Report of the Governor’s Committee on Library Aid”
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in New York State, during the administration of Governor Thomas E. Dewey, announced a definite change of policy in the use of state grants, in the following words:

The Committee is of the opinion that the chief support of libraries should continue to be derived from local revenues. It feels, however, that sufficient state aid should be provided to encourage and assist the people of counties in the development of library systems which will serve residents of the State now deprived of library service and the improvement of the service to other areas where service now fails to meet minimum standards.

The State has provided financial assistance to libraries for well over a century but the basis for payment of this assistance has not been re-viewed or changed in more than fifty years. It now bears no relation-ship to the size of a library, the number of people served or the quality of service provided. Neither does it provide an adequate in-centive to the improvement of library services in a given area or to their extension to areas now without service.³

New York State still retains in its now expanded state grants-in-aid program the system of small grants to the decreasing number of public libraries which do not yet qualify for the much larger grants available under the 1950 and 1958 laws.

The generally low standards of public library service existing throughout most of the United States were officially recognized by Congress in 1956 when it passed the Library Services Act. The pur-pose of this Act is to assist financially (maximum possible annual appropriation, $7,500,000) the establishment and improvement of public library services in rural areas of the states and territories. Even with the token programs of small flat grants of a few states, plus the later conditional types of grants of a few more states, added to ex-clusively local support of public libraries and state library services other than cash grants, these standards were the best that localities had demonstrated themselves thus far able to achieve.

Besides the large areas with substandard existing public library service, the device of organizing public libraries only by local initiative and control had, up to ten years ago, resulted in the creation of public libraries of any kind in less than half the municipalities of the country. At the same time, no public library of any kind was available to more than one third of the nation’s population that lived outside cities, towns, and villages, in unincorporated rural territory. Because of this latter condition, it is obvious why Congress chose to make the benefits
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of the Library Services Act of 1956 available to rural areas only, at least as a beginning attack on the total problem of public library deficiencies and nonexistence.

Such evaluations as have so far been made of the effects of this federal grants-in-aid program point conclusively to improved standards of public library service in the limited areas of the United States that have been affected by the approximately twenty million dollars that have been allocated to states and territories up to April 1960.

Fifty-one senators, as of mid-April 1960, have cosponsored a single bill in the current 1960 session of Congress to extend the Library Services Act for another five-year period. Fifty-two House bills have been introduced by Congressmen from thirty-three states for the same purpose. Some bills call for raising the population definition of “rural” from 10,000 to 25,000. It must be supposed that only reports from localities of the beneficial effects of this relatively small expenditure of federal funds could account for the widespread support of the further extension of this program. There are numerous additional evidences in each state that this program of grants-in-aid is succeeding well, within its financial and other limitations, in improving local and state standards of public library service.

This federal money is all administered by state library agencies, and once the state’s own plan for the use of the money is approved by the federal government as being within the purposes of the law, the money becomes state money and is administered in the same way as other state money. No further federal control has been or can be exerted, except a post audit to insure that none of the funds have been used for other purposes.

The Library Services Act carries its own provision for research to be carried on to determine the effects of the program. Until the research can be done and its results reported in research terms, we shall have to depend upon the voluminous and enthusiastic reports from recipients of the new and improved public library services that are resulting, to evaluate the effects of the program.

Some knowledge of the way current, modern state and national public library standards have developed is necessary to an understanding of their relationship to grants-in-aid programs. Prior to 1943 little existed that could be recognized as a body of standards for public library service. In that year, the American Library Association published Post-War Standards, which, among other more useful standards, set up some per capita dollar standards for financial sup-
port. These were in practice too literally interpreted and applied to all sizes of populations served, regardless of the total amount of money the library received. Considerable misunderstanding about minimum standards still exists in smaller communities that appropriate relatively higher amounts per capita for public library service than communities with larger populations and lower per capita appropriations. The misunderstanding centers around a belief that because their per capita support is higher than that of cities and counties with larger populations, their standards of library service must necessarily be higher. This belief persists despite the lack of many of the elements of a more complete and modern public library service in the “richer” but smaller community.

In 1953, the California Library Association and California State Library together developed and adopted Public Library Service Standards for California Public Libraries, based, primarily, upon a broadened concept of the educational functions, the quality of the performance of the services of the public library, and the way in which those services are organized. The California standards recognized that minimum standards for such functions and services are usually attainable at reasonable cost only when the population and tax bases of the library or library system are sufficient to yield a total amount of annual support that will pay for a modern public library program with minimum standards. The concept was adopted that costs should be revised with the changing value of the dollar.

By 1956, the American Library Association had amplified all existing public library standards and published Public Library Service, A Guide to Evaluation, with Minimum Standards. A separate statement of 1956 costs was published, as was done in 1953 by the California Library Association, and the national statement of costs was revised in 1959.

One unique feature of the 1956 A.L.A. public library standards is that they differentiate clearly between qualitative and quantitative standards; statements that describe quality of services and other elements of a modern public library program are set out as “guiding principles,” basic to the establishment of standards. “They are neither objective, concrete, nor statistical. As principles, they require interpretation when applied to individual libraries . . .” 4 On the other hand, under the guiding principles, are stated, in quantitative terms, the actual, measurable standards, 191 of them! Both principles and stand-
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ards must be used together in measuring an existing library and in planning a public library program. Only such quantitative standards were included as have a direct and positive relation to quality of library facilities and services. "Measures that are quantitative but not, in fact, qualitative have been excluded."  

Neither the current A.L.A. public library standards nor the standards that preceded them were conceived or built as tools for the administration or management of state grants-in-aid programs. With the recent growth of modern state grants-in-aid programs, designed to stimulate the development of larger library systems capable of providing services of minimum standards, the state of New York has selected a few standards, many fewer than are embodied in the current A.L.A. standards, which it uses as the minimum "conditions" that localities and local libraries must meet in order to qualify for state grants. These conditions were simplified and made fewer by an amendment to the 1958 New York State grants-in-aid law.

New York also incorporated into the 1958 amendments to its library aid law the "principle of gradualism," to a greater degree than this principle had been present in the 1950 enactments. For example, under the 1958 New York State law, full approval is not given to a library system unless it will serve at least 200,000 people or 4,000 square miles of area. Provisional approval may be given to a library system which will serve at least 50,000 persons provided the area includes three or more political subdivisions and provided further that a satisfactory plan is submitted for expansion of service during the ensuing five-year period.  

Although the libraries of New York City qualified as library systems under the 1950 law, it was not until the 1958 amended law that there was a rapid growth of systems serving rural populations. While the population served by library systems increased only 5.4 per cent from 1950 to 1958, it has increased 17.6 per cent from 1958 through 1959. Eighty-three per cent of the people are now served by library systems, demonstrating that the new legislation, based on the use of a few basically important and administrable minimum standards appears effectively to meet the needs of both urban and rural areas.

The New York State Library estimates that service from library systems to all the people of New York State will approach 100 per cent in 1965. At that time, they estimate that the total cost, with all systems qualifying for full financial grants-in-aid, will reach its peak and level
off, varying primarily with changing dollar values, and related costs of services. No more than 20 per cent of the total cost of New York public library expenses can by law be supplied by the state.

The California Public Library Commission, in state grants-in-aid legislation proposed to the California State Legislature in 1959, but not passed, also proposed the establishment of several minimum standards as conditions to the receipt of grants. These standards would have required the adoption by each system, and by each constituent member, of a policy statement of objectives and a statement of policies for the selection of materials; annual addition of minimum stated numbers of current adult and juvenile titles of books and periodicals; the central processing of books and similar library materials; the separation of routine clerical work from professional work, adoption of a position classification plan with at least three levels of professional and three levels of nonprofessional positions in the entire system, a pay plan; certain management aids such as an organization chart and an estimated program of major work to be accomplished annually; a minimum current population figure in the system area of 100,000 or more persons; or, if the population density is less than thirty per square mile in the entire service area, an area of 3,000 or more square miles; and provision for a local library tax expenditure for current operating purposes equal to the proceeds of 95 per cent of a tax of ten cents per hundred dollars of assessed valuation.

Common characteristics of the recent actual (New York) and proposed (California, Pennsylvania, and others) state grants-in-aid programs are that they are based on the belief that the quality of library service which an individual enjoys is determined by the range and depth of the book collections to which he has access, more than by any other factor, and that smaller libraries can buy scarcely more than a token few of the 12,000 or more book titles published annually in the United States alone. They recognize, further, the need for improved administrative, management, and professional skills in the operation of all libraries.

What is the effect of state grants-in-aid on local control? Obviously, there can be very little effect one way or the other when the amount of money involved is negligible, as in early programs, and in some present programs. In New York State where the largest amount of money is devoted annually to state grants-in-aid to public libraries in any state, the amount of local money spent for local public libraries has increased. Local financial responsibility is still the bulwark
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of public library service in New York's and other state and federal grants-in-aid programs. The level of government that provides the largest percentage of the total support controls the institution.

In a good program the control of book selection and the selection of all other library materials rests and should rest exclusively with the local library; the state's role in book selection is to stay out of the field altogether as far as local libraries are concerned. This leaves all important controls—those over personnel and the selection and provision of materials—at the local level; there is centralization only of such mechanical and administrative processes as will promote efficiency and economy.

To realize the good library service that could exist, one must either have experienced good library service, or must have a creative imagination that can develop the situation from one's own thoughts. Almost unimaginable inequalities of library service exist throughout the United States. Those people who, in some part of the country, have experienced good library service become the most persistent developers of the better library service when they move to areas that are backward in library development. Those who have creative imaginations and see in their minds' eyes what library service could be, beyond the nonexistent or inadequate service available to them, also become developers of good library service.

The leaders and responsible people in a community where poor or no library services exist have usually not studied modern public library standards, but they are developing or failing to develop libraries just as surely by standards as if they held the A.L.A. public library standards up to their communities as a measuring stick. The standards in the one instance are the best that they have experienced, and, in the other case, the best that they have imagined. With these standards, however good or poor, in mind, the plan for library service is developed. There is then the necessity to "price it out" to see whether the revenue potential in the community can pay for it. If the present financial ability of the community cannot afford the modern, minimum standards, the next question is, how can the community get library service of minimum standard?

There is little doubt that most local governments could do a much better job than they are now doing in the establishment and support of public library service; the fact is that most local governments have not provided adequate support. Where even rather small incentives of cash grants, with reasonable but not authoritarian conditions for their
receipt, have been provided by state and/or federal governments, local governments are making very rapid strides in the provision of minimum standard services. In general, where these grants are absent, public library service is standing still, and, in areas of great population increases, slipping backward. The “outside” funds make it possible for two or more local governments or libraries to “get over the hump” of taking the practical steps that make it possible to centralize the mechanical and certain administrative functions at the local and regional level, and perform them more efficiently.

Relatively few legal barriers exist in any state—in many states there are none—to prevent two or more library jurisdictions from “cooperating” to improve public library service. But until some outside funds are available, the record shows that almost no “pairs” or other groups of political subdivisions or library jurisdictions can or will take the complicated and difficult-to-figure-out-who-should-pay-for-what steps that result in reorganization and improvement. Meanwhile, the people who pay for whatever library service does exist go without the better service they could have if relatively small outside sums, collected from the whole state, were available on a rational basis for local library improvement.

Where state grants-in-aid programs exist, providing significant amounts of money but no more than approximately 20 per cent of the total, the question of state infringement on local autonomy and control of public libraries has virtually ceased to exist. This is not to say that local fears of control by higher levels of government suddenly dissolve into sweet reasonableness when a modern state grants-in-aid program is adopted. There is very little disagreement as to the desirability and importance of good public libraries. They are accepted as an essential institution in the American way of life. This is in spite of the fact that millions of Americans are without any public library service whatever, or have inadequate library service that meets no minimum standards. It would be the consensus of almost any group of present-day citizens that all of the people of the United States are entitled at least to minimum quality public library service, that public libraries should be well-supported, and that most people would not want to live in a country where good, free, public library service was not available—even if they themselves did not use it! Increasing numbers of progressive citizens would agree that the librarian’s function is not simply a “custodial” one, and that there is more to the work of a professional librarian than serving only as a “keeper of books.”
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From these points of probable agreement on, however, agreement would end in these citizen groups. When the discussion develops further into the quantity, the quality, the organization, and the financial support of public library service, agreement ends, and differences of opinion are often strong.

The "political" factor of local autonomy, as well as an imagined greater tax cost than could ever be required if the public library service were organized efficiently to meet the needs of all the people, are the two factors that give rise to the greatest disagreement, emotion, and fear. These can be allayed, at least in part, by more information as to the actual workings of existing cooperative support of public library service by different levels of government. A number of factors can contribute to acceptance of such cooperative plans. The provisions of the law can be designed to secure greater acceptance, by placing limits upon the percentage of the total support each level contributes, so as to show clearly where control will be; the conditions for grants should be positively related to quality of service in such ways that reasonable people can understand and accept them. The conditions should be as few as possible in numbers. The plans for local library systems should be developed by localities to fit local needs, within a very broad and flexible legal framework, and should contain provision for gradual improvement over a foreseeable period of years.

In the operation of the system plans and the administration of the grants-in-aid programs, the degree of acceptance seems to depend on the confidence and understanding developed by the administrators in dealing with local authorities and the publics served. There is no guarantee that could be written into any program that would insure the absence of all administrative and other frictions. Experience indicates these can be reduced to a minimum under capable administration at all levels. Given a sound law and sufficient funds, the solution to the problems of the intergovernmental relations involved in state grants-in-aid and other library programs depends largely on the sensitivity of the administering personnel to a major working rule of sound administration—direct and perceptive relations with the people served.

Increasing numbers of states have recognized in law their obligation for library service as an educational function of government at all levels, including the state; most states have thus far made only token effort to discharge this obligation. Under present conditions,
money for libraries in most states comes primarily from local property taxes. This means that the local property taxpayer is carrying the load, almost exclusively in his property tax. It is probable that the local property taxpayer has in most areas been taxed about as heavily as an equitable or progressive taxation system can possibly tax local property. This means that numerous localities are simply not going to have enough money to run libraries of anything like minimum standards if they are limited to local property taxes.

References

5. Ibid., p. xix.