Current Concepts in State Aid to Public Libraries

ERNEST E. DOERSCHUK, JR. AND DAVID C. PALMER

This paper will deal with two basic forms of state aid to public libraries; (1) aid in the form of services and leadership and (2) aid in the form of financial grants to local libraries or library systems. “Normal” services of state library agencies to public libraries will be reviewed, and concepts underlying existing and contemplated programs of grants-in-aid will be discussed. Actual operation of grants-in-aid programs under existing law is analyzed in a separate chapter.

Aid in the Form of Service.—Although standards for state library services have yet to be formulated and accepted, preliminary work in this area by W. T. Brahm and H. F. Brigham presents an outline which is helpful in determining current concepts in state aid through supplemental services. These authors analyzed, extracted, and coordinated the contents of The Role of the State Library and Public Library Service; A Guide to Evaluation, with Minimum Standards. Working with the state library services outlined in the Role and direct references from among the seventy-two “guiding principles” and 191 “standards” enumerated in the latter, the authors remind us, however, of limitations in this approach. Many of the principles compiled in Public Library Service “have a ready application to the state library, with appropriate modifications.” These, combined with the conclusions reached through the concerted efforts of a state library standards committee, would undoubtedly elaborate and further expand the Brahm-Brigham list of services. At the 1959 Midwinter Meeting of the American Library Association, the Executive Board of the American Library Association adopted the following resolutions: (a) The Executive Board recommends that the state library standards committee continue its work of formulating minimum standards for state library services. (b) The Executive Board recommends that the state library standards committee consider the principles of state library services outlined in the Role of the State Library and Public Library Service; A Guide to Evaluation, with Minimum Standards. (c) The Executive Board recommends that the state library standards committee continue its work of formulating minimum standards for state library services.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Service</th>
<th>No. of agencies providing service, 1956</th>
<th>No. of agencies providing service, 1960</th>
<th>No. of libraries indicating weight of importance, 1960</th>
<th>Most</th>
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<td>2. Subject bibliographies</td>
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<td>3. Serious/expensive materials</td>
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<td>4. Popular printed materials</td>
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<td>5. Recordings (discs/tapes)</td>
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<td>6. Slides and filmstrips</td>
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<td>7. Films</td>
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<td>8. Supplies locations through Union library catalog</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>Advisory Services</td>
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<td>9. Consultation at state lib.</td>
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<td>10. Field visits</td>
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<td>11. By correspondence</td>
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<td>12. Conducts local surveys</td>
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<td>Educational &amp; Promotional Services</td>
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<td>13. Workshops or institutes</td>
<td>43</td>
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<td>14. In-service training</td>
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<td>15. Group leadership training</td>
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<td>16. Short term demonstrations</td>
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<td>17. Develop publicity materials</td>
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<td>18. Publishes newsletter or journal</td>
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<td>19. Gathers and disseminates</td>
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<td>20. Develops state-wide library</td>
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<td>21. State historical collections</td>
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<td>22. State archives</td>
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<td>23. State documents</td>
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<td>24. Research collections in</td>
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<td>particular subject fields</td>
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<td>25. Storage of little used materials</td>
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<td>26. Processes library materials</td>
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<td>27. Maintains union catalog</td>
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<td>28. Distributes state publications</td>
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<td>29. Provides deposit collections</td>
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<td>30. Provides traveling displays</td>
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<td>31. Administers grants-in-aid</td>
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<td>32. Contracts with stronger libs.</td>
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<td>33. Financial aid to students of</td>
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<td>librarianship</td>
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<td>34. Develops library legislation</td>
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<td>49</td>
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<td>35. Certification of librarians</td>
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Current Concepts in State Aid to Public Libraries

Association of State Libraries approved a project for a survey of the functions of state library agencies, one of the objectives being the development of standards for state library services.

The canons of librarianship relentlessly stress the library systems concept as an essential basis for achieving objectives of quality library service for all. As the agency in state government with responsibility for library affairs, the state or provincial library must judge its services and activities against how effectively it further the coordination of all library services within the state or province under the systems concept.

The underlying concept of state library service to local libraries is stated thus: “The various library systems within the state should function together as a network to make the full resources of the state available to every resident. An agency within the state government should carry responsibility for guiding and reinforcing adequate local service.”

In an effort to determine the methods by which, and the extent to which, the various state and provincial library agencies are “guiding and reinforcing adequate local service,” and to find out whether any trends are apparent since the analysis by Carma R. Zimmerman and Ralph Blasingame, Jr., in 1956, each state and provincial library was asked to indicate on a checklist those services which are being performed by the agency concerned. The results, showing a comparison with the Zimmerman-Blasingame report wherever possible, are tabulated in Table I.

The questionnaire used for the 1956 report was not available, and therefore direct parallels cannot be drawn for each question. Also the former questionnaire was sent to fifty-five state and provincial libraries, from which there were fifty returns. The present survey is based upon

* Each agency was asked to indicate which three services are regarded as being most important. Many checked the title of the service category rather than the specific question. These are underlined and entered beside the heading.

b Including 8 which lend only films on librarianship.

c Including 5 which lend only films on librarianship.

d Of the 31 agencies reporting, 18 operate under a mandatory certification system; 13 under a voluntary system.

* Of the 23 agencies reporting, 15 operate under a mandatory certification system; 8 under a voluntary system.
fifty-one returns from the fifty state libraries and ten provincial agencies. Granting these limitations, however, the table gives some indication of trends and will serve as a listing of supplementary services to local libraries. Conclusive indication of the general course which state library services is taking will have to wait for subsequent studies, since it would take more than two instances to plot such tendencies accurately. Furthermore, a mere checklist does not reveal the efficacy of the services listed, nor does it indicate the degree to which such services fulfill the principle of developing a fully coordinated library system for the entire state. An evaluative survey of these factors is needed on a national scale.

The balance of this section is a comparison of the 1956 and 1960 returns. Reference services and interlibrary lending of materials were combined in the Z-B report as one of the six broad headings covering supplementary services to local libraries. Figures for 1956, therefore, are not available under this heading. Extensive provision of subject bibliographies was a service noted in the 1956 returns when agencies were asked to list major services not covered by the inquiry form. Virtually all state and provincial agencies provide supplementary reference service and five consider this their most important function.

Two areas under interlibrary loan service show significant change. First, in the matter of popular printed materials, the 1956 report noted that “23 agencies indicated that they buy popular materials in some degree. Of these, six either emphasize the more expensive materials or buy popular items only of certain types.” Although the 1960 returns offered no qualifying remarks as to provision of popular printed materials, the number of agencies engaged in this type of interlibrary loan has almost doubled over the 1956 figure. Second, the number of state libraries lending films has increased 42 per cent and it may be noted that fewer of these agencies restrict such films to the subject of librarianship.

The decrease indicated in question eight warrants a word of explanation. Z-B remarked that twenty-one agencies “maintain or have access to a state or regional union catalog.” Presumably some of them did not habitually supply locations. The 1960 question was specifically directed to whether the state agency supplied locations to the inquiring library and the figure 19 may be considered to be more precise and not indicating a decrease in this service.

As in 1956, the later returns bear out the primary importance attached to advisory services. Almost half (21) of all those replying rank
this function among the most significant. A lesser but growing number of states will make local surveys of library services and, with Z-B, we may presume, make recommendations for action based on findings.

Of the eight items listed under the heading of Educational and Promotional Services, the sharp increase (10 to 25) in short term local demonstrations of library service may be ascribed to state programs under the Library Services Act. It is somewhat surprising that this method of local assistance and stimulation was not cited as among the most important. Although the development of statewide standards of library service may be viewed also in the light of an advisory function, it is considered here as both an educational and promotional service. Thirty-two agencies are actively involved in establishing and promoting library standards, and one of them considers this its most important service.

There are a number of state library functions which may be considered indirect services to other libraries. In many cases this is a question of taking responsibility for a service which is necessary to the whole area, but which through centralization relieves other agencies of needless expense and effort of duplication. Building a research collection in a particular field is such a function. Because of the diversity of patterns of state library organization within state government, it is difficult to interpret the figures relating to state historical collections, state archives, and documents. Although the maintenance of collections relating to the history of the state or province has been "a widely accepted function of state and provincial libraries," this activity would seem to have diminished by 44 per cent since 1956.

As for technical services again a marked increase is found which relates to Library Services Act projects. It is puzzling under the circumstances, that particular importance is not attached to this activity.

Two points should be brought out concerning items under this heading of Miscellaneous Services. The increase noted in question thirty-one relating to grants-in-aid, could be deceiving since the grants in some states are made possible only through federal funds. In regard to question thirty-five, while Z-B reported eighteen mandatory and thirteen voluntary certification systems in effect, the 1960 inquiry specifically asked if the state library administered certification of librarians. The two figures are not, therefore, comparable and it may be assumed that some of the state certification systems noted in 1956 were administered by other branches of state government.

The 1960 inquiry also asked for a listing of other services not
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covered by the questionnaire. Although most of the additions could be interpreted as falling within the definition of the services on the checklist, two deserve special mention. One agency reported that it conducts a placement service for library personnel and is also engaged in recruiting; two agencies note a microfilm program for state newspapers.

The Z-B report also investigated the number of states and provinces which had had comprehensive surveys and had developed written programs for public library development. Likewise, the 1960 questionnaire asked for information on this subject. A comparison of the 1956 and 1960 returns shows the following:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1956</th>
<th>1960</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of surveys</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18 (since 1954)*</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of written plans for public library development</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17b</td>
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<td>Program developed by:</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Library agency</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Library Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Both</td>
<td>19</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


b Includes four in process (Idaho, Michigan, New Hampshire, Tennessee).

Neither the 1956 nor the 1960 inquiries attempt to evaluate the quality of over-all state surveys and programs. It would be interesting to see whether the availability of federal funds to finance such studies has improved their quality. As of 1958 three states, Michigan, Nevada, and Pennsylvania, had devoted federal funds to state survey studies, and it is quite possible that some of the surveys and resultant plans indicated above are due to the impetus offered by the Library Services Act. In any event, a significant number of states and provinces have formulated and formalized well defined objectives through statewide programs for library development since 1956. Some of these, however, may have brought their former studies up to date rather than added to the list of states and provinces studied. Unfortunately the names of the states reporting in 1956 were not available for this report.

An intangible but vastly important service to libraries for which state and provincial libraries have accepted responsibility is that of
leadership in library development. Such devices as the publication of
trustee manuals, holding of workshops and conferences for trustees
and librarians, conducting surveys and developing statewide library
standards and library service plans, formulating library legislation,
cooperating with state library associations, and conducting vigorous
consultant services are almost universally practiced. In recent years
county conferences have been held with the sponsorship of the gov-
ernor in several states. It is perhaps enough to say that the concept
of state responsibility for leadership service in library development is
(or ought to be) universally accepted and is one which calls for
imagination, consummate skill and tireless effort on the part of state
library personnel.

Joint effort by several states in providing leadership services to
libraries is a concept that has become a reality in “North Country
Libraries,” published jointly by the State Library of New Hampshire
and the Free Library Commission of Vermont. Another project in-
volving cooperation among state agencies is the tri-state film circula-
tion plan of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Looking toward
expansion of this multi-state concept, the Library Legislation Com-
munity, Governmental Relations Section of the American Library
Association, Library Administration Division has prepared a “Sug-
gested Draft of an Interstate Compact for Library Service” and “Draft
of an Act to give Congressional Consent to Interstate negotiations
for Library Services Compacts.” (1959)

The idea of extending state library services through state operated
regional offices or branches is not a new one. In 1931 an experiment
in regionalization of services was begun in Vermont with the Billings
Library of the University of Vermont serving as headquarters and a
Carnegie Foundation grant paying the bill. In 1937 the Vermont
Legislature passed a bill which set up statewide regional service
under the direction of the state library agency, and by 1958 there
were five regional libraries functioning.7 In 1956 twenty-five different
regional state library centers were operating in six states.8 That other
states have found state regional library centers desirable is indicated
by the provision for establishing or strengthening such centers in
fourteen of the state plans for use of Library Services Act funds for
the 1958 federal fiscal year. These projects are summarized as follows: 9

Establishment of an auxiliary State Agency, e.g., a branch of the
State Library, is a new development in several States; in others, such
a branch has been established for some time. The branch services vary
from State to State. Some State library branches offer a majority of the services available at the main State library; others, only advisory and consultative staff services. A few branches offer only one service, such as direct bookmobile service to an area of the State. In some States, the direct public service is the only library service in the area; in others, the branch offers indirect assistance in the form of materials or staff to supplement the resources and services of small local libraries.

One state has at least partially changed its mind about the desirability of state library services being given from a regional office. In 1948 the New York State Library set up the Regional Library Service Center in Watertown to perform the following services for libraries in three counties: (1) book collection for loan; (2) film collection; (3) delivery service; (4) cataloging service; and (5) advisory service.\(^1\)

The Commissioner of Education’s Committee on Public Library Service, 1957, found that the Watertown experiment was eminently successful on two counts; (1) it provided easy availability of a wide selection of good books to libraries in the area and (2) “a feeling of unity grew among librarians and a parallel development of in-service training and improvement of local libraries.”\(^1\)

On the other hand, the Committee pointed out that the Center, while “performing to approximate saturation the traditional services of the Education Department,” did not embrace all the features of a regional library system; i.e., there was no bookmobile service, no cooperative services such as part-time children’s librarians, and no system-wide advisory or governing board. These considerations, and adherence to the principle of local responsibility for library service, led the committee to recommend that the three counties now served by the Regional Library Service Center establish county or regional boards and, as in the case of other systems established in the state, “the regional board would be required to present its plan for state aid for approval by the Commissioner of Education.” If desired by the regional board, the present Regional Library Service Center could be continued either by a contractual arrangement with the state library, or under the direct administration of the regional board, but not as a branch of the state library.\(^1\)

In contrast to New York State’s withdrawal from direct operation of a regional service center is the Ohio State Library’s proposal for extending library service in Ohio. This plan\(^1\) proposes approximately
nine storage and service centers to be established in strategic areas of the state to provide loans of individual books and special book collections to libraries, storage of infrequently used books, loan of films, display collections, duplicating services, publicity aids, operation of bookmobile service to areas not now operating or not wishing to administer such service, professional advisory or consultant service, and professional librarians to hire on a temporary basis. One or two centers would be created to do centralized processing and/or purchasing for the entire state. A further feature of the plan is the proposal that the state employ skilled library personnel in key cities like Akron, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown who would draw on the total library resources of the city concerned to provide assistance to researchers or information seekers.

While some state library agencies are seeking to effect regionalization of library services through the device of state library branches or regional service centers, others are using different methods to achieve the same ends. In New York State, for example, systems are growing rapidly as a result of far-reaching legislation which makes it easy for local libraries to take the initiative in forming systems and provides incentive in the form of financial aid and guidance by the state library agency. Here the services of the state library, so far as they relate to the concept of regional library systems, take the form of leadership, regulation, and the administration of state aid rather than the direct service offered by the Watertown Regional Library Service Center.

The Pennsylvania library development plan\(^{14}\) proposes that the state library designate twenty-seven to thirty library districts, each district to have a center, based on an existing library, of some strength. In a few instances district library centers would be based on college libraries. Operating under local administration, the district library center would coordinate library service within the district, i.e., extend the services presently offered by the State Library Extension Division such as advice and counsel to local libraries in the district, interlibrary loan, rotating book collections, film circuits, and the like. Each center would be in a good position to offer centralized book purchase and processing services, although this would be a matter of local preference. Where college libraries would serve as district centers, the State Library would retain some of the extension functions for the district (provision of advice and counsel, and encouraging new libraries within the district, for example), since these functions would be foreign to
the general college library program. In this form of de-centralized, locally administered regional service, the State Library's aid takes the form of financial grants, review of plans submitted by district centers and local libraries for the use of state funds, a minimum degree of regulation, certification of personnel, and increased leadership in the form of promotion and demonstration.

This last method of extending state aid in the interest of regional library development would call for state operated demonstrations over a period of several years, with the locality taking over as the demonstration ends. The state may hire the people and buy the books and equipment, or it may, through contract or grants, provide funds to the locality for its own demonstration with some degree of supervision by the state. Library Services Act funds are being used for both kinds of regional demonstration; the Tri-County Library Service Center of New Jersey being an example of the former, and the Lehigh County project in Pennsylvania of the other.

Which of the concepts for encouraging regional library service by the state will in the long run prove most effective has yet to be seen; again a comprehensive study in depth seems to be called for.

A concept, as yet radical, representing the ultimate extension of library service by the state agency, is the idea of a statewide or even nationwide library system. Public library systems in the four provinces of the Union of South Africa, as described by Ruth J. Wertheimer elsewhere in this issue of Library Trends, come close to this, since the provincial administrations are empowered to establish free libraries, with the locality providing building facilities and a given amount of money per head, and the province supplying books, mobile libraries, technical services, and other assistance. In America, this concept has been expressed by Brahm at Ohio State Library, who suggests: "one library system, one library board, one librarian, one budget—that may well be the organization of library service in Ohio in 2050 A.D."  

The current stress of library literature on system building, with the idea that a system is good and a larger system better, might be interpreted as moving in the direction of the monolithic, single library system for an entire state on which Brahm speculates; but at the same time the literature also emphasizes at least partial local responsibility for library service. A general principle stated in Public Library Service, for instance, is that "The public library should be an integral part of local government."  

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Inquiry, while he acknowledges that it is possible to conceive of state owned and operated library systems, says "It is one of the assumptions of the Inquiry that in a large-scale modern democratic, industrial society there are advantages both in local initiative and participation and in larger units of administration; that neither should be neglected, but that governmental structure should be contrived to give the greatest possible scope to both principles;" and in a later writing he stresses the probability of slow piecemeal advances toward realization of library systems through cooperation rather than the sudden emergence of a full-blown state wide organization of library service.

Grants-in-aid.—Public Library Service says of grants-in-aid only that the state library agency should administer them. While the constant stress on the library systems concept contained in that document clearly implies that grants-in-aid ought to be used in the building of library systems, one must look elsewhere for a detailed discussion of the concepts underlying state grants-in-aid to libraries.

A good starting point for a discussion of this subject is A National Plan for Public Libraries which makes the following basic points about grants-in-aid:

1. The unrestricted grant which may be used for any purpose is clearly preferable to restricted grants.

2. Reasonable effort on the part of localities to provide adequate financial support to their libraries should be a prerequisite to any state grant-in-aid.

3. State grants should be of sufficient size and should be administered in such a way as not to perpetuate ineffective libraries. Standards of service and personnel should be required of those libraries receiving grants-in-aid.

4. Grants-in-aid ought to be administered by the state library agency but such administration should avoid an excess of state control and interference.

5. While population is the easiest basis for distribution of grants-in-aid, provision should be made to equalize the total state and local amounts available for library service in communities of varying economic wealth, i.e., provide larger sums of state money to the poorer communities.

6. Grants to county and other large unit libraries should be stressed, especially where library service to new areas is an objective.

Leigh, in The American Public Library, reinforces the principle
of state grants of "authority, of funds, of books and skilled personnel—or all four—to create and maintain larger units," but finds (as of 1950) "no state system of financial aid to local libraries designed solely and without compromise to attain this objective." 

Alice I. Bryan, in her contribution to the Public Library Inquiry, relates state grants-in-aid to the problem of personnel, advocating grants "large enough to enable each public library system, in conjunction with local financial support, to provide professional salaries on a decent minimum standard." She further recommends that the state library agency administering grants should also accept responsibility for administering compulsory certification of librarians, classification of positions and accreditation of library schools. To this might well be added the allied responsibility of recruiting able people into the profession.

While a strong program of grants-in-aid would tend to alleviate personnel shortages, one State Public Library Commission believes that rules and regulations governing state aid can be minimized if the state will insist on a properly state-certified "regional librarian" being at the head of state-aided regional libraries. Thus grants-in-aid are expected both to improve the supply of qualified librarians and to require qualified librarians to carry out the state-aided program.

With the above principles in mind, the following classification of types of grants-in-aid, by which is meant "a grant or subsidy from public funds paid by a central (in this instance, the state) to a local government in aid of some public undertaking" (here meaning public libraries), will be useful.

**Establishment Grant.** The state may provide a once-only sum of money to a locality to assist in the establishment of new library service or of a new library system involving existing libraries.

**Continuation Grant.** A state may provide a sum periodically to a locality to help the local library or library system meet its operating costs. In the proposed Florida state aid law this is referred to as an "operating grant."

**Incentive Grant.** Availability of state funds may be contingent on the local library or library system achieving stated standards of support or service. The grant then becomes an incentive for such localities to achieve the standards required. The term "achievement grant" is sometimes used (e.g., in Georgia).

**Per Capita Grant.** The size of the state grant may be determined by the number of persons served by the agency receiving the grant.
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Area Grant. The size of the area served by the receiving agency, such as number of square miles or number of counties, may determine the size of the grant.

Equalization Grants. If a locality served by a library agency is economically depressed, the size of the grant (usually on a per-capita basis) to that locality may be increased so as to provide total state and local funds available for library service relatively equal to those available in wealthier communities.

Integration Grant. For the purpose of strengthening existing libraries through unification of small units into larger systems, state grants may be awarded to a small library when it joins a system, to a large city library when it combines with a district library, or to a district library when it combines with another district. (Term used in Washington State.)

Restricted and Nonrestricted Grants. The purpose of a state grant may be to provide funds for the purchase of specific items, such as books. This is a restricted grant. A grant which, though for the broad purpose of improving library service, may be spent for any item is nonrestricted.

Personnel Grant. State funds may be granted specifically for augmentation of librarians' salaries (as in Rhode Island and North Carolina).

Scholarship Grant. Library education of individuals may be subsidized by state funds, as in Arkansas where $35 per semester hour for a maximum of ten hours at accredited library schools is granted.

Experience of various states with grants-in-aid programs has revealed at least three major pitfalls. One, already mentioned, is the awarding of sums so small as to have no real effect on the quality of library service in the locality receiving the grant. A pittance grant by the state tends to encourage pittance support by the locality receiving it.

A second pitfall is the encouragement of large area units of service without providing the necessary funds, strong central collection, and administration to produce quality service throughout the area. L. A. Martin comments thus: "I have seen size and larger territory pursued for their own sake, without the central base and without adequate support. It is not surprising that a feeling of bewilderment and frustration arises when the larger unit simply results in a bigger stretch of territory with definitely substandard service." 26

A third pitfall is the failure to relate grants-in-aid to standards of
achievement by the localities receiving the grants, and failure to set up machinery to check on the way the grants are spent. The state aid law of Pennsylvania is a good example of these last two pitfalls; the law encourages countrywide systems by restricting grants to county libraries only, but the grants are too small ($4,000 maximum) to provide real incentive, and the only check by the state on expenditures is the requirement that an annual county auditor's report of the library's expenditure be sent to the State Library.

Selection of the "building blocks" for state aided library systems is a matter of concern in planning grants-in-aid programs. Shall the unit within the system be a town, township, county, or any combination of these? There are instances where political boundaries do not represent logical or politically feasible borders for the organization of library service. A grants-in-aid program which is designed to build systems must therefore be accompanied by legislation which permits arrangement of library service according to logical and workable patterns.

Where rapid growth of library systems takes place, the provision of adequate buildings, and procurement of personnel become acute problems. State aid for building purposes, common in public school aid programs, is not presently incorporated in state aid to libraries, although the library receiving a nonrestricted state grant-in-aid may of course elect to use a portion of it for building improvement. In 1959 an act was placed in the Pennsylvania legislative hopper which would have provided two million dollars annually for a ten-year period for library buildings, the state grant to be matched fifty-fifty by the locality, and the maximum total state grant to be $200,000, except in the case of district library centers where a slightly different formula for capitalization was proposed. The act failed to pass. In British Columbia the Public Library Commission in 1956 reported that "the Commission intends to ask for Provincial aid in financing construction" of library buildings.

To meet the personnel shortages resulting from rapid library growth, and other causes, some state aid plans have incorporated the idea of scholarships for library trainees. These may take the form of grants to individuals, on the basis of competitive examinations, as in New York; state support of library schools within state universities; or the provision for library traineeships whereby nonexperienced persons are hired with state funds for a specified period, and during part of the period of state-aided employment these persons attend an ac-
credited library school while receiving normal pay. This plan was written into a Pennsylvania law which failed to pass in 1959.

One clue to the direction of trends into the future exists in the record of how the various states are making use of federal funds under the Library Services Act. It is significant that almost all states participating in the Library Services Act program have made a project of strengthening the state library; the clear implication is that state library agencies want to be and think they ought to be stronger than they are. This new strength takes the form of increasing extension personnel, augmenting resources, and adding new services. Recruitment, in-service training, and scholarships have been included. Most of the techniques and concepts used in Library Services Act projects were ones that had been tried somewhere before.

Increased aid in the form of services from the state library is thus seen to be one goal toward which those agencies are aiming; they have had a chance at more money and that is one of the things they have chosen to do with it.

But that is not the only goal. “Every plan (under the Library Services Act) includes the goal of larger units of library service. Cooperation is the key word in all.” Thus, twenty-eight plans have projects for regional or multi-county library systems, and fourteen include projects for state aid.

Which of the two basic forms of state aid, i.e., services from the state library agency or grants-in-aid, will be more effective as a means of attaining the ultimate goal of quality library service for all? The phenomenal growth of systems in New York, resulting from substantial grants-in-aid coupled with legislation to permit flexible patterns of system organization, is clear evidence that grants-in-aid do achieve results. At the same time, the State Library Agency in New York is a strong one which provides quality services in the form of leadership and back-up resources to local libraries. It does not attempt to provide local library service in any community, but takes steps through counseling, provision of financial aid and a flexible organizational framework, to enable every local community to help itself.

Whatever type of aid a state library offers, it can make such aid effective only if the agency is itself strong and has a position of strength in state government. The fact that a first priority for Library Services Act programs has been the strengthening of the state library agencies is evidence that those agencies were weak and that undergirding the state library with state funds has high priority for the
future. The Public Library Inquiry pointed to the need to strengthen state agencies. While many things have been done since 1947, obviously many agencies have had to use federal money in areas which are "normal" services. One gets the impression that state library agencies, had they achieved adequate financing and governmental status, might have been able to use Library Services Act funds in more imaginative ways. At any rate a combination of strong state library agencies which provide effective backup and leadership services to libraries and well designed financial aid programs appears to be the trend.

References

4. Ibid., p. 17.
6. Ibid., p. 383.
8. Zimmerman and Blasingame, op. cit.
12. Ibid., p. 27.
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