The Library Services Act of 1956 marks an important forward step in library development. In signing the bill passed by the 84th Congress, President Eisenhower noted that the federal program it established represents an effort to stimulate the states and local communities to increase library services, particularly library services available to rural Americans. The legislation, thus based on the concept of complementary local, state, and federal responsibility, is the product of long evolution in the library field. The provisions of the Library Services Act and the experience under it to date provide a starting point for a brief consideration of cooperation which has developed among levels of government in the public library field.

The general term, "intergovernmental relations," it has been pointed out, was not found in the vocabulary of American political science until the twentieth century. Earlier discussion of intergovernmental affairs was chiefly in terms of constitutions and statutes and narrow analyses of specific rights and privileges of the various levels. Only within the last generation has there been any extended examination of intergovernmental relationships with reference to broad matters of public policy, economics, financial responsibility, and administration.¹ The library field is no exception; not until comparatively recently have both state-local and federal-state relations been identified as major considerations in library development. In April 1953, Paul Howard, writing in Library Trends, identified a series of activities which indicated an acceleration of federal and state interest in library extension, but concluded, "It is generally accepted as a historical fact that public library development in the United States has been, up to now, predominantly local."²

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Standards for the evaluation and development of public libraries published by the American Library Association in 1956 were based on the recognition that the plan or structure of development must be built up from the local community. Illustrative of the recognition the report gives to shared responsibility for the tasks ahead are the following:

The public library should be an integral part of general local government.
In each state a program of supplementary library service must be maintained at the state level to back up separate libraries and library systems throughout the state.
The Federal Government should support at the national level a program which supplements and stimulates library facilities of the states.

The basis of the interest of the national government in education generally was well established by the Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. The commission quoted with approval President James Madison: "A popular government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both." The commission, however, felt that there was nothing incompatible between strong national interest in an educated citizenry and the tradition of leaving primary responsibility for general public education to the states. The commission recognized the importance of incidental federal activities in support of education, but did not favor a general grants-in-aid program.

The Office of Education of the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare is the agency of the federal government established "to promote the cause of education." The office has in general discharged this function through the collection, interpretation, and publication of statistics; through research and publication of its findings, and through rendering consultive and advisory services. Since 1937 the Office of Education has had a special unit, now known as the Library Service Branch, to carry out the above functions in the library field. The role of the Branch has been one of technical services and professional leadership. Much of its research activity has been carried on in cooperation with state library agencies and the American Library Association.

The activities of the Library of Congress should also be noted at this point. It too supplies technical services and active leadership and
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its staff has had a part in most programs of public library development. In maintaining the Library of Congress the national government has provided for the entire field an institutional resource of major importance.

The Library Services Act established a system of conditional grants-in-aid. Unconditional grants, with no strings attached, have been used in various federalisms, including our own, but the system which has developed here is one of conditional grants. Both types of grants serve to bridge the gap between disparate state functions and revenues, but the more immediate motive behind conditional grants has been the desire to stimulate state action about matters in which there is a national interest.6

The principal provisions and conditions in the Library Services Act are summarized in a bulletin prepared by the Office of Education.7 These provisions show the governmental relationships established by the Act. Some of the more important summary statements follow:

The determination of the best use of funds, the administration of public libraries, the selection of personnel and library books and materials—insofar as is consistent with the purpose of the act—shall be reserved to the States and their local subdivisions.

State plans are formulated by State library administrative agencies in each of the States and submitted for review and approval of the United States Commissioner of Education.

Funds can be used only to provide library service in places defined as rural in the act—places of 10,000 or less according to the latest U.S. Census, although funds may be used by urban libraries to extend public library service to rural areas.

In order to remain eligible for the Federal grant, State expenditures for all public library service must be maintained at least at the same level as in fiscal 1956 and State and local expenditures for rural public library service must also be maintained at the 1956 level.

Federal funds must be matched with State or local funds . . . The programs under the act are State and local programs in which the Federal Government pays part of the cost.

The prohibitions in the Act are few, but definite. Federal funds, for example, may not be used for the purchase of land or erection of buildings. The provisions of the Act as a whole are positive and give evidence of careful planning to encourage action on a wide front. In order to make clear the general intent of the statute in reference to choice of methods and general administrative responsibility, an interpretative section was included, Section 2(b).8 This section makes
it certain that the key decisions establishing a developmental program will be those of the state:

The provisions of this Act shall not be so construed as to interfere with State and local initiative and responsibility in the conduct of public library services. The administration of public libraries, the selection of personnel and library books and materials, and, insofar as consistent with the purposes of this Act, the determination of the best uses of the funds provided under this Act shall be reserved to the States and their local subdivisions.

The Library Services Act authorizes annual appropriations of $7,500,000 for five successive years. The recommendations of the President and the appropriations to date are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Budget Estimate (in millions)</th>
<th>Appropriated (in millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>$7.5</td>
<td>$2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To put the amount available in perspective, it can be noted that federal aid to state and local governments from budget and trust funds reached a grand total of $6.8 billion in the year 1959 and increases in both 1960 and 1961 are assured or in prospect. It should at the same time be emphasized that grants-in-aid are far smaller in amount than direct federal expenditures which can be allocated on a state basis. For example, in the year ended June 30, 1959, the portion of defense expenditures alone which can be traced to states amounted to well over $32 billion.9

On January 14, 1960, Senator Lister Hill introduced a bill in the 86th Congress to amend the Library Services Act by extending for five years the authorization for appropriations. Senator Hill, who introduced the original Act in the 84th Congress, based his request for extension on the record of progress to date and the needs which still exist. Only half of the job will have been done by the end of fiscal 1961. In many states time was needed for necessary legislation and for appropriation of matching funds. Senator Hill placed in the record excerpts from the January 1960 issue of the American Library Association Bulletin, in which J. G. Lorenz summarized the extent
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to which the states have benefited during the first three years of
operation of the Act.\textsuperscript{10}

The general picture is of new equipment, increased book stocks,
more personnel, the establishment of regional libraries, patterns of
interlibrary and even interstate cooperation, research and survey ac-
tivities, conferences and training, and many other items denoting
progress and accomplishment. The Library Services Act is credited
with stimulating in one state the first program of state grants to local
libraries. A total of fifty-two states and territories are now participating
in the program and the gains recorded in each are impressive. The
request for an extension of the 1956 Act could thus be made on a
record of solid achievement as well as on the basis of continuing needs.

In 1955, appearing before a committee of the House of Representa-
tives, R. D. Leigh stated that the development of strong state library
agencies has high priority in the public library program for the years
immediately ahead.\textsuperscript{11} This objective can be considered part of the
general movement to revitalize state government in the best interest
of basic federalism. The states must be able to plan broadly,\textsuperscript{12} and
assume leadership in many fields, some traditional and well-established,
others now emerging as governmental responsibilities.\textsuperscript{13}

States and local governments are spending well over $50 billion
per year. It is estimated that this amount will more than double in the
next ten years. This estimate, considered conservative, is based on the
established fact that the demand for better public services grows as
incomes climb. Population increase in the next decade will be in the
age groups that require the most public services—children and old
people. Population shifts will mean more expensive services—not only
in new or expanded metropolitan areas, but in rural sections in which
both farm and nonfarm population must receive consideration. Rural
people generally now demand urban-type services, and ways and
means of providing them is part of the problem of the adjustment of
institutions to population.

Rapid changes in the economy and in the size and distribution of
population cause many of the greatest public needs to emerge at the
local level. Unfortunately at the same time the traditional sources of
revenue available to local governments are proving progressively less
adequate. The deterioration in administration of the ad valorem prop-
erty tax is widely recognized. As a result cities and counties must
turn to other tax sources, many of which are not well adapted to
use by local jurisdictions. The financial plight of these governments
strongly suggests increased grants-in-aid from the states for such locally administered institutions as the public schools; presumably public library services have an equally valid claim to support from the same source.

Local government often is inefficient, costly and confusing because necessary services are rendered by over-lapping and competing agencies. Students of government view with misgiving the number and variety of governmental units in the United States. Over one hundred thousand local governments exist to supply various services. In spite of the need to consolidate counties into larger units, the number has shown no reduction in modern times. In recent years the number of school districts has decreased but other special districts continue to grow in number. A few municipalities merge with others, but new incorporations swell the total. No local governmental organization broad enough to cope with metropolitan problems has appeared, or at least none has been widely approved or accepted. Plans for extending local governmental services to urban fringes and for supplying urban type services in rural areas present many unsolved legal and political problems as well as financial and administrative difficulties. Adjusting service areas in the library field is made difficult by the fact that the structure of local government is relatively inflexible, with unit boundaries not coinciding with natural administrative areas. A state responsibility, usually not well exercised, is to appraise the adequacy of local government organization and to make or encourage needed adjustments.

The legislative and executive branches of state government are faced with the necessity of providing more assistance and guidance for services traditionally local in character. State agencies, having as one of their functions service to municipal, county, and regional libraries are general among the states. In some instances state grants for library service are available to local governments. Equally important has been the unique arrangements for pooling of library resources, often under the guidance and direction of agencies at the state level, where local libraries or groups of libraries share facilities and responsibilities with each other.

Functional consolidation of county and municipal services is sometimes feasible when more comprehensive reorganization is not. Intergovernmental contracts and special working arrangements, some of them quite informal, are increasingly used. State plans and reports of activities under the Library Services Act indicate a great deal of prog-
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...ress in the establishment and extension of regional libraries and regional library centers. Contracts between municipalities, between counties, and between counties and municipal governments are in common use in many states. In certain phases of public library service, as, for example, reference and research assistance, intergovernmental cooperation offers opportunity for the widest and most effective use of scarce library resources.

Public Library Service in outlining standards gave due recognition to the factor of cooperation. “The central library and the community libraries in a natural district should function together in a ‘system’ or affiliation for library service.” This type of cooperation is needed in any governmental function for which responsibility is in any degree shared. The development and elaboration of the standard will be difficult as long as the horse and buggy form of organization characterizes the local government structure, but the professional outlook of librarians generally, and a service concept which transcends narrow political boundaries, can facilitate continuing progress in intergovernmental cooperation.

Intergovernmental relations in the library field may appear to be especially complex and difficult. They are of special significance in public library development, in which the center of decision should remain the individual citizen and his local government. The importance of intergovernmental relations in this field is shared with other functions of government—local, state, federal. Frank Bane, chairman of the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, recently observed: 15 “I believe we can all agree that world peace and disarmament are and will continue to be the leading problem in the field of international relations. The leading domestic problem is and will continue to be, however, intergovernmental relations and the internal strengthening of our federal system of government for the freedom and well-being of our people in the future.”

Bane’s belief in the importance of the task of his newly established federal agency will lend perspective to the over-all problem of local, state, and federal participation in public library development.

References


