



The Responsibility of the State Library Agency Toward the Larger Unit

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MEL SCOTT, a California authority on planning, in "Public Library Service for Thirty Million Californians,"¹ writes that the one hope he sees for improving library service in California is the development of more cooperative systems, so that the many small libraries which will be needed in the future may enjoy the advantages of being parts of large organizations. Then the strength of the small outlying library will be the strength of the whole system. The collection of each library probably will be small, but libraries will be able to borrow from other libraries in the system. Needed, however, will be the resources of at least one very large central library, especially for specialized reference materials, including government publications. Scott emphasizes that all systems, surely, will have to rely even more on the state library than they have been doing in the past, perhaps through regional branches of the state library.¹

As Scott indicates, the state library does have a responsibility toward the larger unit—a responsibility which may take many forms, depending upon the particular need of the locality involved. As systems develop, they will rely upon the state library agency in varying degrees and in ways designed to meet specific needs.

These library systems do, of course, require planning. The planning-role of the state library cannot be overemphasized in the development of public library service and in its incorporation into a master plan. The standards already adopted for the library functions at the state level point up the participation of the state library agency in the development of state-wide plans for all types of library service; these standards recommend that when planning groups do not exist, the state agency should take the initiative to see that qualified groups and agencies do engage in such planning.²

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Planning requires time, effort, and funds; it requires a cooperative spirit among librarians and a determination to implement ideas and goals. Often, the combined efforts of the state library agency and the library association result in overall plans for library service in a specific state; frequently, the plan is officially adopted by the state association as its plan-of-service, and then becomes a blueprint for the state's public library development.

Edward A. Wight has pointed out that this development of long-term state plans by the state agency working with the state professional and other groups is essential to extending library service.³ Such a plan was developed in California in 1962 and was officially adopted by the California Library Association on October 26, 1962.⁴ Many other states have adopted state plans for public library service or are in the process of developing such plans, e.g., Missouri, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Ohio, and Texas.

But before a state agency can be effective in the development of a master plan for library service, there must also be activity in the development and acceptance of standards for public library service. In 1953 the California State Library and the California Library Association developed standards for public library service, in a workshop held at the California State Library and directed by Robert D. Leigh. These standards were adopted by the California Library Association in October 1953. They have since been amended and were republished in 1963, and included 1963 costs.⁵ The Consultant Services unit of the California State Library has accepted the responsibility, in cooperation with the California Library Association's Library Developments and Standards Committee, of keeping up-to-date the "Costs of Library Service" section of the standards. The Consultant Services unit has issued a leaflet, "How Does Your Public Library Stack Up?"⁶ for use with citizen groups and local officials in explaining the standards for public libraries. This leaflet is based on *Public Library Service*,⁷ the minimum standards for public library service developed on a national scale. The American Library Association has issued a similar leaflet suitable for use in any state.⁸ State consultants assisting in the development of public library systems will work with both the national standards and their own state standards, if such have been developed.

The responsibility of the state library agency toward the development of public library service is described in the standards. Those for national public library service indicate that the state agency should have personnel available with specialized competence in service to

children, young people, adults, and other groups. These standards indicate that the state library agency should also have personnel who can provide leadership, general guidance, and help in planning as well as the specialized information service that is needed at the state level.⁹ The national standards developed for state library agencies add to these requirements that there should be enough consultants to visit every publicly supported library within the state at least once every year, and to provide intensive work sessions with libraries and library systems in developing active programs to improve service.¹⁰ Both of these compilations of standards urge that consultants be provided at the state level in the number necessary to the work, that they have the ability to provide guidance on known problems, that they aid in identifying problems, and that they provide assistance in identifying opportunities for improved service. These consultants will assist in the building of the state-wide program set forth in the state plans. It should be emphasized that the standards do not presuppose that the consultants will work with only small and substandard libraries. They must be able to assist all types of libraries in all types of services, in administrative problems, in reorganization of services, and in planning for buildings.

As libraries develop into systems, the consultants become the means to guide them in providing service of greater scope and greater depth. Guidance from the state level in system development is essential, as the mere joining together of libraries into systems is, in itself, not sufficient. Multi-county libraries have been developed in many states as libraries throughout the United States move toward the larger unit of service. Lowell A. Martin has pointed out that some of these larger units have resulted in a trend toward quality service. However, he also has observed that a multi-county library does not necessarily result in quality service—it can result in just a larger and more far-flung substandard library.¹¹ To achieve the overall standard of quality service in the larger unit and to prevent the development of substandard systems, planning and guidance on a state-wide basis are necessary; thus planning and guidance are required if the systems within the state are to function together—supplementing and complementing each other. The standards recognize that as systems develop, the work of state personnel will shift from advisory visits to individual units to the broader function of statewide planning, of advising system personnel on major problems, and of promoting co-operation among systems.

As both the master plan and the standards are evolved within a state

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and applied, it will become more and more apparent that the state library staff requires a sufficient number of experienced library consultants to assist library systems in organizing and administering the system, to conduct studies, to help librarians plan for local library systems, and to work with library and citizen groups toward implementation of a public library development program. John Henderson wrote in 1961 that many opportunities exist for consultants to help with the planning and developing of metropolitan area systems, and that librarians should receive special instruction for consultant work on state agency staffs.¹² In 1961, Ralph Blasingame noted that state libraries have traditionally worked more with small libraries than with large libraries, and he forecast that the state library agency must, in the future, also work with cities.¹³

The role of the consultant is at all times one of stimulation and assistance. Probably the greatest assistance that can be given initially to a system by a consultant is in the identification of a need for improved library service. Stimulation often takes the form of assisting the librarians, and other leaders in the community who are interested in the improvement of library service, to point-up the exact need and to translate it into a course of action. Also, in order that the identified problems might have a thorough discussion, the state agency must provide the opportunity and the climate for those people involved to work together to find solutions. One of the best settings for such discussion is a workshop.

The California State Library has held many such workshops—sometimes in cooperation with the California Library Association. In 1956 a workshop on cooperation was held.¹⁴ The established pattern of the workshop was that no librarian could attend without at least one other librarian with whom he could cooperate. The Director Edward A. Wight, the state library agency staff, and the workshop participants either identified new needs or sharpened their awareness of the already identified needs they had come to consider. Many ideas and plans were developed during the workshop, but one of the most far-reaching plans resulted in the establishment of the State Library Processing Center. This idea materialized as the need for a processing center for those libraries in the geographic area of California known as the Mother Lode was identified. The librarians concerned, the director, the consultants, and the members of the State Library administrative staff all considered seriously the need for such a cooperative arrangement; the plan was later implemented. It is probably a rare instance when the consult-

ant provides the stimulation for the identification of need where no previous awareness existed in the community. Usually and ideally, the awareness of need and the request for assistance comes to the state library agency from the local librarians and citizens.

It may be, however, that the awareness of the need for improved public library service exists only among the librarians in an area. Then it becomes necessary for the librarians, with the assistance of the consultants, to make the community and the governing board aware of the need for improved service. Both the San Joaquin Valley Information Service¹⁵ and the North Bay Cooperative Library System¹⁶ in California, developed under the Library Services Act, are examples of identification of need for improved service by librarians and the development of this awareness by others, through the work of the local librarians and the State Library consultants.

In the San Joaquin Valley Information Service, the librarians in the Valley had, for some time, realized that they needed a regional reference service which would provide fast, specialized service. The request came from the local librarians to the State Library. A library consultant worked with the Valley group throughout the development of the request and the plans. During the period of about three years of operation under total or partial support by federal funds, a State Library consultant served as director. The consultant provided intensive work that could not be provided on the local level. When the San Joaquin Valley Information Service became self-supporting, the Library Consultant Services provided the usual advisory assistance to the project customarily provided to public libraries over the state.

The North Bay Cooperative Library System was first and foremost the result of early cooperative meetings of groups of librarians. The California State Library sponsored jointly with the California Library Association a workshop on systems in 1959. Stimulation for the actual development of these cooperative libraries into a system came as a result of the workshop. The North Bay group worked with a consultant from the State Library during the development period, and was financed with federal funds. As the system matured and employed its own staff, the State Library consultant attended, as often as possible, the monthly meetings of the System Council to provide liaison between North Bay and the State Library. Consultant advisory service was also available from the state to the system administrators and consultants.

These were two systems for which a clear path was outlined by the

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local librarians, and the consultants worked with them to develop these plans. Such is, of course, not always the case. The situation of an unclear course of action arises most often in an area without library service or without a librarian. In such cases, usually a citizen group or governing body approaches the state library, with a definite request for development of a plan for the provision of library service or for improved library service. There may be no proposed plan for the development of a system nor for cooperation, but rather only an expression of a desire for service. In studying the problem and in gathering the facts, the consultant will have in mind, along with the establishment or improvement of service, how this can be accomplished through a cooperative arrangement and provision of services which implement the standards. All local plans should fit into the master plan in such a way that they will eventually lead to a library system. In developing these ideas, it is probable that the consultant will formulate alternate courses of action. If possible, a study is undertaken to explore the factors involved, a report made, and alternate plans are presented. In some cases only one set of recommendations will be given, e.g., a study was done at the request of Nevada County (Calif.), presently without county-wide library service, and a course of action recommended.¹⁷

Throughout the development of library systems, the consultant has the role of interpreter of standards and of the over-all master plan. This role comes into sharp focus in areas where library service has been underdeveloped. In studies prepared for such areas in California, the *Master Plan for Public Libraries in California* is emphasized as are the California public library standards, the American Library Association standards for public libraries, and other standard references for public library service. A review of the more than twenty-seven studies completed by the California State Library Consultant Services since 1954 shows that these standards are consistently referred to and that the recommendations (which may point out several alternative methods) in the studies are for cooperative action.

Consolidation is one method often recommended for achieving a larger unit of service. Such a method brings all units under a single administration, but it may be difficult to achieve at any given moment, so the recommendation may be for cooperation through contract. This can be done in many different ways in California under the Joint Exercise of Powers Act.¹⁸ The terms of the contracts determine the degree to which the local units are unified. In some circumstances the rec-

ommendations recognize the principle of gradualism and that the ultimate pattern of tomorrow may not be achievable today. The pattern decided on today, however, should lead to an ultimately desirable pattern and thus prevent the development of larger units which may become stumbling blocks eventually to the best overall development of public library service.

Since September 1963, the California State Library has played an even more important role in the development of the larger unit of service, as the Public Library Development Act (Assembly Bill 590) became effective that month. Two more consultant positions were added to the State Library staff as a result of the legislation, but all the staff members of the State Library have been involved in the implementation of the act. The members of the Public Library Development Board established by the new legislation were appointed by Governor Edmund G. Brown. Activity began first with the planning grants which provided up to \$2,000 of state funds per library engaged in cooperative planning as described in the law and in the regulations implementing the law.¹⁹

Immediately after the passage of AB 590, librarians, city and county officials, and official and unofficial citizens groups throughout the state were eager to know how to qualify for funds, when planning funds would be available, and how they could be obtained. Consultants and administrative staff of the State Library attended meetings of librarians who were exploring the idea of requesting a planning grant for joint planning. After the regulations for the Public Library Development Act were formulated consultants helped to interpret them in areas where a group of libraries was exploring the idea of requesting a planning grant. During the month's time that the regulations were on trial, the information gathered by this consultant work had a direct effect on the revision of the regulations, which were modified to reflect the realities of the creative thinking that was taking place throughout the state.

Consultant work with the Public Library Development Act varied from area to area as to the degree of involvement in the planning, from active participation in developing guidelines to attending meetings of the group as a resource person. During this stage of the program the entire implementation of the planning part of the Public Library Development Act was in an experimental stage. It is gratifying to note that each group developed differently from each of the other groups of libraries. The law, the regulations, and the State Library staff were

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flexible so that the best plans suited to the local situation could develop.

Some of the planning is long range—the contracts drawn up between the state and the planning groups allow up to two years for the expenditure of the planning funds. Several systems have been established, with the state consultants working with each system to some extent. Again, no specific pattern can be found in the work of the consultants in the development of the systems nor in the speed with which the systems were developed.

One group was eager to develop its plan of service and to become an established system at an early date. Several library consultants, depending upon the particular problem involved or the consultant available, worked with this group. For example, when these libraries were planning the development of a reference center, the Library Consultant who was former director of the San Joaquin Valley Information Service gave them the benefit of her experience and ideas. The librarians in the group employed a faculty member of a library school to act as a planning consultant to assist them in developing their plan of service. The plan of service was developed; it was approved and the system became the Black Gold Library System, the first system to receive a planning grant under the Public Library Development Act and to become an established system.

The North Bay Cooperative Library System had already had several years of experience as a system, with the use of Library Services Act funds, so that neither a planning period nor a planning grant was needed. Many of the plans for the establishment of the system officially as the North Bay Cooperative Library System were discussed at the Council meetings of the system. However, representatives of the libraries in the system knew that certain changes in the organization of the North Bay Cooperative System would assist considerably in providing a higher level of service. The Library Consultant from the State Library regularly attended Council meetings and maintained liaison with the system as these organizational changes were made. The Library Consultant worked also with the system staff on specific problems that arose. A plan of service was developed and approved, with the North Bay Cooperative Library Systems as an entity with which the state of California contracts rather than as a group of libraries held together by many contracts, and the Council became the Board of Directors.

The other cooperative federal program which had been assumed lo-

cally was the San Joaquin Valley Information Service. This was a natural group to begin planning for a system with other features in addition to the reference service. This group, with library consultants working with them as needed, applied for and received a planning grant. A former California State Library Consultant was employed to assist in developing a plan of service which was drawn up and approved. The group became known as the San Joaquin Valley System.

A group of libraries with which a consultant worked during the early part of the development of their plan of service was the Santa Clara Valley System. A consultant worked intensively with representatives of the Santa Clara County libraries as they developed their request for a planning grant. The Santa Clara Valley System involved only two of these libraries which originally applied for the planning grant, so that the same complex problems did not arise here as in the other groups, all of which are multi-county.

A group of libraries in Northern California had been most interested in cooperation for many years and had been the nucleus for the State Library Processing Center. A Library Consultant worked with the group to develop guidelines for a planning proposal. Many meetings were held and much good work was done by librarians, officials, and citizens groups. A very full report was developed by the planning consultant employed, entitled *A Proposed Mother Lode Library System*.²⁰ The librarians and the planning consultant worked closely with a library consultant at the State Library throughout the planning stage. Because only two of the libraries included in the planning proposal voted to join the system, the Mother Lode Library System is yet to be formed. Several other planning groups have been formed with library consultants working actively in the development and execution of a planning proposal.

Does the library consultant's work stop with the planning or with the establishment of a system? At present, the answer is, "No." Even in cases where no system is established as a result of planning, the consultant continues to work with the group of libraries. He interprets, guides, advises, and assists in the drafts of the plan of service for the system to be established, but does not dominate or dictate; the plan of service must come from the needs of the libraries included in the plan—not from the consultant. The consultant is however in a strategic role because an establishment grant is made to libraries in order to defray the expenses of establishing a system; therefore, care must be taken to develop a plan that promises to use those funds profitably and will

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and experience that will help to guide libraries working beyond their be approved. The per capita grant, a continuing grant, is also based on this plan of service. The plan of service in the California system of grants is all-important throughout the life of state aid to public libraries.

As New York State law permits diversity of organizational patterns of systems²¹ so does California. Again as in New York, the cooperative library system has become the dominant organization pattern. Although California has not had extensive experience with established systems, it is likely that the systems will provide consultant services to member libraries, as is done in New York State. *The Standards for the Library Functions of the State* recognizes that systems will have consultants who will, in turn, work with state library consultants. The committee developing the standards realized that the need for state consultants would be tempered by the number of library systems in a state and the number of system consultants available.

Undoubtedly as indicated by Robert H. Rohlf in "A Plan for Public Library Development in Illinois," the state libraries will have a new siderably. The specialized consultants will need to have background and different role as systems are developed. He pointed out that in Illinois the consulting services of the State Library would change con-own political boundaries.²²

There are several different tasks facing state library personnel interested in public library development: (1) Creation of service in an unserved area through local development, (2) Bringing up to a minimum level local library agencies now below it, and (3) Creation of systems to make possible service not being provided even by local agencies, which are already up to minimum service levels. All of these courses of action can be pursued simultaneously, but it is likely that one of the activities will receive more emphasis than the others. The state library will not accept what has been traditionally done as sufficient for the future. Rather this agency will anticipate the need for more specialized staff and more depth of material at headquarters and in regions throughout the state. In some cases this will result in turning over to systems some of the previous obligations of the state library—not entirely but in part, e.g., conducting in-service training and the supplementing of local collections. The activity of the state consultants will be primarily directed to system personnel. Regional Research Centers will provide an advanced level of service.²³ The state will provide

aid to public libraries in the form of financial grants to local libraries or library systems and aid in the form of services and leadership.

The future place of the state library agency in the development of public library service poses many unresolved questions, but it clearly has definite and important functions to perform in this area. Harold Hacker has stressed that cooperation can exist among libraries to improve public library service without state leadership, but that such has never occurred on a large scale without this leadership.²⁴ Roger McDonough has indicated that the role of the state library in the total picture is a peculiar one, perhaps because in most instances it is an advisory agency rather than supervisory. This then calls for a special kind of leadership—leading without seeming to lead, and serving as an inspirational cohesive and coordinating agency for all the libraries in the state.²⁵ Lowell Martin predicts that the state library agency will in the future have an increasingly responsible role in setting standards, seeing that these standards are understood at the local level, and helping localities achieve them; if localities lag behind, it will see that they are brought up to the proper level.²⁶ Leigh stressed in *The Public Library Inquiry* that the studies conducted by the Inquiry showed that library expansion could not be achieved entirely through the initiative of independent municipal or county units of government, nor could voluntary confederation of libraries be depended upon. State participation in providing local library service seemed necessary. He foresaw that the state was the strategic center for public library development.²⁷

In the study of Missouri library service, it was pointed out that a team consisting of the state library and the state library association make a combination that can plan on a state-wide basis and can achieve that plan.²⁸ Carma Zimmerman and Ralph Blasingame, Jr., had stressed this in their statement, "If as has been said the key to local library development in the states is the existence of a strong and effective state library agency, . . . the body already in existence with the greatest ability to turn that key and unlock potentials is the library association. . . ."²⁹ Janice Kee also emphasized the same theme when she wrote that public library development will advance at a pace compensatory with society's rapid changes only if the state library extension agency is adequately supported and furnishes the necessary leadership on a statewide basis and if there is full cooperation between the state library agency and the state association.³⁰

As future development is planned, the pattern of service should be flexible but also so directed as to provide a good foundation for the

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future. Leigh said in the late 1950's that the public library units being constructed then seemed to be creating a balance between the needs of centralized activities for efficiency and the values of maintaining the community library for direct contact. He continued, however, to question whether this statesmanlike balance is characteristic only of a pioneering period, a period of transition, or whether the balance can become characteristic of the permanent federal-state-local public library structure. He expressed the hope that in the library field there was a possibility of preventing desirable and necessary centralization from having an adverse effect on the local vitality and identification.³¹

State libraries are now in an era when they are shouldering ever increasing responsibilities with the adoption of the new state library standards. One of their major undertakings should be to compare present performance and services with these standards and to develop in those areas which are found lacking. There is no doubt that there are many roadblocks between public library service of today and the nationwide standard of the quality and quantity of library service which it is hoped will be attained. State libraries and public libraries must carefully watch that flexibility in library service is maintained equal to the requirements of a mobile population in our life of constant change. A combination of strong state library agencies which provide effective backup and leadership services to libraries and a well-designed financial aid program appear to be the present way of life.

A demonstration of many of the concepts developed in this paper was presented in two workshops sponsored by the California State Library and the California Library Association in May 1964 on the subject "Your Library in the 'Master Plan for Public Libraries in California'."³² One section of the workshop was held in Southern California and an almost identical section was held in Northern California. One emphasis in these workshops was for a strong state library program which was different and better, a program where a new balance would be developed between state and local levels. Within the state of California the workshop emphasized that librarians should reexamine the standards, define the system idea at every level, develop more citizen participation, and secure a new and effective balance in state and local programs of money and services.

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