

each Federal agency expresses the individual nature, function, and tradition of that agency. When one considers Federal libraries, the problem is further complicated by the fact that since the library's duty is to serve the parent agency, its policies in turn are affected by changes in the policy and organization of the parent agency.¹

Throughout the intervening years, there have been various calls for coordinated library and information policies at the federal level, and there have been a number of attempts to develop coordinating mechanisms. For the present, however, it is important to note that there is still no coordinated federal policy governing library and information service to the nation. Today, as was the situation in 1954, it is within the context of each agency's mission that an examination of the governance of federal library and information service must take place.

POLICY-MAKING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION PROCESSES

Policy may be initiated in the Congress or in any agency in the government, and it must finally be made legitimate by an act of Congress. Resources required to conduct programs are determined by the executive branch and independent agencies. Appropriation of resources and, in many cases, allocations for specific projects must have congressional approval. Thus, both cooperation and conflict between executive and legislative branches is possible. The resolution of such conflict imparts political overtones to the formal resource allocation process. The Constitution provides formal mechanisms for resolution of conflict between the executive and legislative branches of the government: Congress initiates programs; the executive may veto them; Congress may override the veto; the executive may affect the implementation by such actions as delay, impoundment of funds, idiosyncratic interpretations of intent, and the establishment of guidelines for agency and citizen action. When programs are initiated by the executive, congressional support must be mustered to turn the program proposals into public laws and to acquire authorization for expenditures and for the yearly financial support required. Again, Congress has the ultimate power and may be involved in several steps of the policy-making process, i.e. when policy approval is sought and during appropriation deliberations to obtain funds for programs to implement policies that have already been approved.

This generalized description applies to all federal agency activities. It is significant for library and information policy at the federal level, because agencies can offer national library services only with congressional

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and executive branch agreement that such programs will be supported. The expectation that a federal agency will respond to national planning efforts, either imposed from within or initiated outside the government, is unwarranted unless both Congress and the executive branch can agree on three things: (1) the basic policy, (2) the authorization of funds to carry it out, and (3) the regular appropriations for programs to implement the policy.

Within this context, then, how are policy issues and statements derived and decisions made on the requests for funding and allocations for resources? At the outset of any policy or program idea, policy formulation is largely a matter of the sensitivity of federal officials, including cabinet officers and members of Congress, to constituent needs. Influence on policy and program decisions comes from a variety of sources — members of Congress and their staffs, government officials, agency managers, constituents, and consumer groups. Attempts to influence decisions at the federal level include processes which are traditional (e.g., lobbying) and those which have legal status (e.g., testifying on rule-making subsequent to legal announcement of hearings in the *Federal Register*). The impact of these influences on the formulation of policies is strongly tempered by the political, personal, and institutional priorities of the Congress, the president, the Cabinet and agency chief administrators.

The procedure for allocation of appropriated resources within a federal agency is as follows. General budgetary guidelines are provided to federal agencies by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), an agency of the Office of the President of the United States. These guidelines may include statements of priorities and mechanisms for planning, such as the establishment of budgetary ceilings and targets for agency fiscal requests. Presumably these guidelines reflect preliminary planning at the Cabinet level.

Although procedures within agencies for the preparation of budgets vary, they usually require that the heads of major units prepare budget estimates and justifications. These statements proceed through the agency hierarchy to the chief administrator's office, where decisions are made about kinds and amounts of resources to be sought. The agency budget then goes to Congress through OMB. At the same time, Congress, in a newly established process, works on its own budget and fiscal policy statements, so that congressional appropriations and oversight committees can respond in a coordinated way to the administration's budget request.

Congress holds hearings in both the House and the Senate during which agency heads, sometimes accompanied by lower-level managers, explain

and defend their requests. Congress establishes both personnel and fiscal limits for each agency, and often for functions within agencies. These congressional decisions are returned to the agency through OMB. Agencies then allocate their appropriated resources. Major changes in plans at the agency level must be approved by Congress, again working through OMB. As the process proceeds through the organizational structure of the agency, unit managers have varying degrees of freedom in the use of their allotments. The absolute guides are the congressionally determined ceilings on the number of positions and amount of funds to be applied.

It is not possible to generalize about the role of federal libraries in agency policy-making and resource allocation processes because there is no uniformity to their location among the federal departmental hierarchies — nor is there even stability of organizational arrangement within agencies. Some federal libraries report to top-level assistant secretaries for administration, some to research managers, some to personnel officers. Few, if any, report directly to the secretary or head of the department.

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON POLICY-MAKING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

It is significant that policy-making and resource allocation do not require input from agencies or individuals outside of the federal government. In reviewing program requests, Congress may invite citizens and special interest groups to offer testimony at hearings, but it is not required to do so. The existence of formal mechanisms for input from nongovernmental sources into this policy-making process is limited, and varies among library and information services at the federal level. The National Library of Medicine (NLM) has a formally established board of regents which reports to the secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. Members of the board are presidential appointees confirmed by the Senate. The purpose of the board is to advise on policies affecting the National Library of Medicine.

The Library of Congress (LC) has several liaison committees, including a committee of representatives from the major library associations in the United States. These groups, however, are not regularly or formally involved in the decision-making process at LC. The recently completed review of the structure and policies of LC, which has been released in the *Report to the Librarian of Congress from the Task Force on Goals, Organization, and Planning*, discusses the desirability of establishing a board of advisors to the Librarian of Congress to “assist the Library in articulating and fulfilling its national responsibilities.”²

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In general, interaction between local constituents and national library and information service agencies tends to be informal, that is, not mandated by legislation or established as a part of the administrative structure of the agency. For example, the Department of Defense has formed Regional User Groups to aid in making management decisions affecting users of the services of its Defense Documentation Center. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has established a number of user groups in its facilities, and it systematically solicits information about NASA products and services. More recently, the Federation of Information Users has been created to assist in the formation of other user groups. Such groups are needed, as one spokesman has said, because: "the fact remains that data bases, information packages, and information systems are created with little or no input from the user. In turn audits and evaluations of the systems are controlled by the vendor."³

The National Library of Medicine has informal relationships with the Medical Library Association (MLA) through an MLA liaison group. Changes in NLM services which have impact on the medical library community are discussed with the liaison group. This process, unlike the previously described board of regents, is informal. The National Agriculture Library (NAL) works closely with its network of land grant universities in attempts to gather support for its programs through this network and maintains informal contact with the National Association of Land Grant Colleges.

The Library of Congress, like NAL and NLM, interacts informally with professional and constituent groups. For example, the Library of Congress works closely with the Heads of Technical Services of Large Research Libraries and with the MARC Users Discussion Group in ALA. The Library of Congress has also turned to the Association of Research Libraries for advice, e.g., with the National Program for Acquisitions and Cataloging (NPAC).

When faced with the need to make a decision on the policy and allocation of resources for the expansion of its MARC services, LC's actions are typical of its interaction with the outside world. LC established an advisory committee widely representative of the library world, including computer-based cataloging system personnel, ALA officials, individual librarians and technical experts. The study resulted in a decision, supported by the advisory committee, to expand MARC to cover current literature in more languages rather than to devote resources to retrospective conversion of older records in the LC catalog. LC's further response was also typical of an agency which does not have a mandate to perform services for a

national constituency. LC urged the library community to bring pressure on Congress to increase the LC budget for expansion of MARC, rather than taking the initiative itself to raise the issue of national need in its budget request to Congress.

Several other developments demonstrate LC's interactions with the library community in response to national library needs. The assistant to the Librarian for Network Development has formed the Network Development Advisory Committee to assist in planning the possible configurations of a national library network, and to develop strategies for proceeding with national network planning. The group includes major library networks and other planning groups. LC has also agreed to undertake the management of a center for a national periodical system, but unlike the network planning effort, initiative to create this system was taken by the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS). As presently conceived, the national center would have an advisory committee of representatives from the library community.

Although it may be desirable to establish formal advisory mechanisms, federal agencies cannot formally create such advisory committees with impunity. In the past such advisory groups have been created with little review of their costs and contributions, and they have tended to proliferate. In order to limit and bring some order to this, Congress passed the Federal Advisory Committee Act (P.L. 42-463) in 1972. The act creates a system for the establishment and operation of groups such as committees, boards, commissions, councils, conferences, panels, taskforces, and whatever else they might be called. The law applies both to the executive and legislative branches of the government. It requires OMB to review annually the work and continued need for each advisory committee. No advisory committee can be established unless it is specifically authorized by the president or by an agency head. Furthermore, it must be determined that the committee's establishment is in the public interest and that it is needed to carry out the lawfully prescribed duties of the agency which created it. The agencies must consult with OMB and publish a timely notice of the formation of advisory groups in the *Federal Register*. All advisory groups are subject to a sunset provision, that is, they must cease operation after two years unless they are specifically renewed by the president or agency head.

LEGISLATIVE MANDATE

The impact of a congressional mandate on the governance of library and information service is significant. Congress is the ultimate authority

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for approval of policy affecting federal agency programs and for funds for these programs; therefore, the viability of national library and information services and the acceptability of funding requests is best achieved through the attainment from Congress of a mandate to offer a national service.

It has become routine for acts of Congress which establish mission-oriented programs to contain requirements for the development of information services to assist in achieving mission objectives. For example, the Department of Commerce operates the National Technical Information Service as directed by federal law⁴ in order to disseminate technical information in support of the development of American industry. Similarly, NASA is mandated to serve the information needs of NASA and its contractors. Within its mandate NASA has defined a relatively homogeneous constituency which in the past has enjoyed a high priority among federal programs. Fifteen laws passed in 1974 alone call for the establishment of science and technology information services. This has resulted in increased dispersion of the development and management of information activities among many government agencies.

The only congressionally mandated national library is the National Library of Medicine. This mandate is extremely important in the development and effectiveness of NLM services to the nation. In contrast, the library of the Department of Agriculture has been designated a "national library" only by the secretary of agriculture. The fact that Congress has not mandated that the National Agriculture Library be a national library contributes to the difficulty which NAL has had in acquiring the funds necessary to develop activities beyond those which support the staff of the department. Although the department has given at least intellectual recognition of the national importance of the NAL, Congress will not appropriate sufficient funds and positions to support a national service.

The Smithsonian Science Information Exchange (SSIE), which maintains records of ongoing research, has never been able to secure the legislative mandate which would recognize it as a national depository of such information. Without such a mandate the activities of the agency are limited and its data base is incomplete. Agencies which do deposit information in the SSIE files do so voluntarily.

The Library of Congress, as noted, has no congressional mandate to function as a national library, although for years LC has performed many national library functions on a de facto rather than a de jure basis. Presumably Congress has supported LC's national activities on the recognition that the vast collections of LC are a national resource which should

be made available to the nation. Since the recent change in top leadership, the Library of Congress has assumed more initiative in its role as a national library agency, but does so still out of sense of national responsibility and not because of a legislated requirement to do so.

COORDINATION

As noted earlier, library activity at the federal level is dispersed through many agencies. A characteristic response to this situation is to call for the establishment of coordinating mechanisms aimed at reducing conflict, overlap, and diversity. The need for a comprehensive and coordinated information policy is greater now than in the past. The issues have become more complex with the advent of what has been called the "information age." Traditional concerns, such as intellectual freedom and the protection of intellectual property, have assumed new and seemingly more urgent dimensions, in part because of the advent of computer and communications technology. New federal actions are required in a number of areas, such as: (1) to protect the investment of the existing suppliers of information and computer service, (2) to open access to information vital to the solution of social problems, and (3) to protect the privacy of individuals.

Dealing at the federal level with these and other social issues is all the more difficult because their dimensions do not neatly conform to current federal organizational structure. It is impossible to assign clearly the task of developing national policy in one or another aspect of the library and information services at the federal level. Furthermore, both a statement of policy in almost any aspect of information service and the development of programs to promote it usually have a potential impact far beyond the issue which they were meant to address.

A recent study by Becker for the National Science Foundation recommends that a new central locus of responsibility be established to formulate science information policy at the national level.⁵ Although this may conflict with the mission of NCLIS, it would certainly not be the first such example of the establishment of agencies with competing roles. Becker singles out the new Office of Science and Technology Policy as the appropriate locus for this responsibility. The proposed agency would prepare policy statements which, however, would be only advisory.

There are other proposals relating to organization and governance of information policy at the federal level which call for the establishment of centralized and high-level agencies to monitor and coordinate activities and to advise the White House and Congress of the need for information

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policy and programs. The president's Domestic Council Committee on the Right of Privacy for example, has recommended the establishment of an office of information policy within the executive branch and the establishment of an interagency council on information policy to be chaired by the director of the office of information policy.⁶ This report also recommends the creation of an advisory committee, including both government and private individuals representing the private sector, state and local government, academic and professional disciplines. Another of its proposals, to create a department of communications on the cabinet level, is more radical. The reorganization of existing governmental departments that would be required in order to create a department of communications might lead to such potentially destructive or enervating influences that achievement of the mission would become extremely difficult.

Another study for the National Science Foundation on options for national action in scientific and technical information service assumes that individual agencies will continue to be the focal point for the responsibility for direction and control of information activities. The report, therefore, recommends the creation of a federal agency coordinating group to promote integrated program development and operation. The group would include representatives from federal agencies which conduct national information services and from those agencies involved with planning, such as NCLIS. It also recommends the establishment of an information policy board to develop policy for the president. The board would be supported by advisory committees of "stakeholders" in the nation's scientific and technical information enterprise from both the public and private sectors.⁷

There do exist at least two active agencies which may perform some coordinating roles in national library service. One is the Federal Library Committee. As an example of its coordinating potential, the Federal Library Committee administers the federal library on-line cataloging network (FEDLINK). It has also produced a consolidated statement of federal library collection specialties. The second existing agency which has coordinating responsibility is NCLIS. Its program statement emphasizes its planning and coordinating role, which indeed is mandated to the commission by the Congress. The program statement clearly recognizes the dispersion of policy formulation at the federal level for library and information service, and recommends that the agencies that are or might become involved in achieving goals for a national program should continue their activity. The NCLIS program statement restates equally clearly the commission's central role in the development and recommendation of

plans and in advising appropriate government agencies on policy: "In the proposed national program, the Commission would exercise its responsibility through the development of national policy, coordination of existing programs and creation of existing programs as appropriate."⁸ To date, however, NCLIS has not attempted to undertake this role and there continues to be a vacuum in the coordination of federal library and information policy.

The governance of national library and information services is principally contained within federal agencies. There are no constitutional and few legislated requirements for constituents' input to the processes of determining national policy, program development and management control, except for the basic democratic process of elections and the "advise and consent" relationship between the executive and legislative branches of the government for the appointment of administrators at the policy level. The determination of national policy is a political process: citizen input and influence is diffused and has limited potential for visibility. Decisions on policy and program, even at detailed levels of development, are ultimately of congressional provenance. The manner in which policies are executed is the role of the president and his administration.

At more specific levels of operation, federal administrators (including agency department heads, such as librarians and information officers) work more closely, albeit usually informally, with the communities they serve. In many instances these people are active members of their professions. In the most critical incidents they rely heavily on ad hoc advisory groups from within the profession.

Whether or not a federal agency can offer a service to a national constituency is largely a matter of the mission of the agency and the mandate given it by Congress. If the objectives of its mission can best be served, at least in part, by national information activities, such a program will be developed. If the agency has no mandate to offer a national library or information service, its library will be largely devoted to the support of the agency personnel; Congress and the administration will not be responsive to proposals for library service that meet a national need.

The nation has no coordinated, broad-scale national library and information policy, although there have been, and continue to be, pressures for its creation. There will soon be a White House Conference on Libraries. It will be a grassroots conference with widespread citizen involvement, first in state-level conferences, and then at the national level in 1979. The advisory committee for the conference has only a minority membership

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from the library and information science community. The goals of the conference will be to assess the national need and to promote an integrated local and national effort in both the public and private sectors to fill that need. Regardless of the potential for White House conferences to produce significant results, the process is vital because it places the first steps of national policy formation in the hands of the potential beneficiaries of the policy. Strong input from these people at this point may lead to constituent access to the governance processes at later stages of policy and program development.

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