

Development and Coordination of Library Services to State Government

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IN RECENT YEARS the size, complexity, pervasiveness and burgeoning growth of the federal government have made it a prime focus of the nation's news media, and it consequently has captured the attention of the general public. A similar expansion has occurred at the level of state government, but without as much commentary or analysis by the press. One author refers to the "surprising discovery that the largest growth sector in the 1960s and 1970s is not national defense, automobile manufacturing, or even the federal government" but is instead state and local government.² When the broadened scope of responsibilities, services and agency functions are considered, the changing nature and importance of state government is even more impressive.

Like the federal government, state governments have responded to the needs of a population beset by accelerating technological, social, economic, cultural, and political change. Thus there are state agencies, commissions, committees, bureaus, councils, and departments whose responsibilities and concerns range from atomic energy to drug addiction treatment, and from medical care to the aged to the development of the arts. This expanding scope of interests has meant that the business of state government, in all its facets, requires an expanding variety of information

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sources and services. Like the rest of society in this postindustrial era, state government has become heavily information-dependent.

How have state libraries responded to the burgeoning information needs of state government? Almost every state library gives some kind of information service to other agencies of state government³ and, indeed, many have been doing so since the early days of the Republic. The fifth chapter of *Standards for Library Functions at the State Level* makes clear the state library's responsibility to provide quality services to other agencies of state government.⁴ The ways in which state libraries fulfill this responsibility, the variety of services offered, the intensity of effort, and the degree of coordination with other agencies varies widely among the fifty states.

As early as 1966, Phillip Monypenny noted a variety of provisions to supply service to legislative, executive and judicial branches of state government, with varying degrees of coordination between law libraries, historical societies, archives, departmental libraries, and general state library agencies.⁵ Some indication of the variety of such services offered by state library agencies may be gained from the 1977 Simpson survey,⁶ where state library agencies listed the following: library services to state government, consultant services to state agency libraries, research library for state agencies, special collection for state agencies, cooperation with agency and departmental libraries, reference services to state agencies and officials, centralized purchasing for agency libraries, centralized processing for agency libraries, audiovisual production and direction for state agencies, legislative reference library, reference services to legislature, special administrative and legislative library, legislative research, computerized on-line bill status, state law library as part of state library, current awareness services, depository for state publications, depository for historical records, distribution of state publications, index of state publications, published checklist of state documents, records management service for state government, consultant services to state institutions, and library services to state institutions. State library collections range in size from the large and comprehensive libraries of New York, Illinois and California, to the more typical 100,000-200,000 volume collections held by many states. A few state libraries, such as Maryland's, do not maintain collections, but provide reference service by other means.

In addition to the services and collections of the state library itself, agency or departmental libraries exist in many states. Although reliable and up-to-date data on these are difficult to obtain, a U.S. Office of Education (USOE) survey conducted in late 1977 of special libraries serving state government will provide such data when compiled and published.

Services to State Government

It is known, however, that the number of such libraries varies from state to state (New York has nearly fifty, Texas twenty-three, New Jersey thirteen). Similarly, the collection size, budget and number and level of staffing will vary widely from state to state, from major and sizable libraries (most typically court or law libraries) to office collections with part-time or no library staff.

The literature on the activities of state library agencies during the past fifteen years has clearly dealt more with statewide library development and extension services than with other functions. A similar bias was observed by Ralph Blasingame in a survey of library studies conducted between 1965 and 1969 based on an ERIC bibliography. He reported that only seven of the eighty-nine studies listed were concerned with services to state institutions (none specifically with services to state government), while two-thirds were studies of public libraries.⁷ A reading of the literature indicates that information services to state government have not been the leading edge of "state library" program development during this period.

This emphasis on statewide library programs is not surprising in view of the passage of the Library Services Act of 1956, and the attendant influx of federal funds to support this type of development. Forced to respond to pressure from the field and anxious to seize the opportunity to effectuate long-sought improvements in statewide planning and library system development, many state libraries clearly have not given the same attention to the development of information services to state government. Regulations of the federal Library Services and Construction Act specifically prohibited use of federal funds for service to state government.

Several states, however, have commissioned studies during this period designed to improve information service to state government. Studies in South Dakota, Ohio, Indiana and New York do indicate a growing concern and offer recommendations for implementation of programs in this area. Michael Jackley, in a 1965 analysis of the functions of the South Dakota Library Commission, opted for greater centralization. His recommendations take the form of central purchasing of library materials, with those appropriate to departmental libraries being placed on permanent loan with the departmental library as a branch of the central agency. Better access to materials held by archives, history and law would be promoted by close coordination with these agencies and the central library. He suggested that those agencies of state government whose major function is research, such as the Legislative Research Council, should be housed with the state library on the Capitol grounds.⁸

Blasingame, in a 1968 study for Ohio, advocated that the Information Resources and Services Division of the state library become a governmental service unit with three new staff positions. Each of these new staff members would work with a specific group of logically chosen state agencies in order to become knowledgeable about the concerns and problems of these groups. This would enable the state library to provide strong leadership in planning the development of information services in state agencies, and provide individual advice and assistance to those agencies with their own libraries. Duplication of effort and materials would be avoided, and maximum exploitation of existing resources insured.⁹

Recommendations by Genevieve Casey were made in 1970 in a study for the Indiana State Library. Detailed recommendations for the coordination of services to the legislature and to state agencies include: consultant services to agencies desiring aid in cataloging and classifying materials; better circulation procedures; the provision of more sophisticated bibliographical services; centralized purchasing and processing; periodical print-outs and centralized records in the state library of the holdings of agencies; some form of current awareness service, with staff members working with administrators and librarians in the agencies assessing information needs and helping to establish acquisition policies; the use of existing TWX facilities by state employees; contracting for access to the collection and services of the Indiana University Medical Library for all state employees, especially those in the fields of health and environment; and the evaluation of the state library collection in terms of state government. To provide guidance in establishing priorities for comprehensive information services, a council of persons responsible for department libraries and staff libraries in institutions would meet regularly with state library staff to discuss common problems and concerns. Work with large state agencies might be organized with small advisory councils within the agencies to work directly with the staff member from the state library responsible for that agency. Financial arrangements could take the form of either increased budget for the state library to support additional services to agencies, or an interaccounting mechanism between the library agency and departments receiving special services. The state library would require additional funds in any case, primarily for new staff to implement these activities, but also for materials and equipment.¹⁰

In 1974, the New York State Library undertook a major review of information services to state government in other states.¹¹ To obtain up-to-date information on existing patterns of service from the other forty-nine state library agencies, a brief but pointed questionnaire was developed

Services to State Government

and distributed in autumn 1974. A summary of responses to this questionnaire is given in Table 1. Followup visits were made to Texas, North Carolina and Ohio in this study, and additional data were gathered from Washington State. These visits provided information on both innovative programs and the varying approaches to state agency services taken in each of the states.

The Texas State Library, employing a former public library consultant, has emphasized cooperative activities with other state agency libraries in Austin, resulting in the development of a lively organization called State Agency Libraries of Texas (SALT). SALT publishes a newsletter, holds regular meetings and workshops, and has developed a number of cooperative projects, including a union list of serials and a Texas state documents project.

Building on the recommendations of the Blasingame report summarized above, the Ohio State Library has expanded its services in recent

TABLE 1. SURVEY OF STATE LIBRARY SERVICES TO STATE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

<i>Services</i>	<i>Number of States</i>
Cooperative Relationships (maintain or administer other libraries)	9
Acquisitions & Technical Processing:	
a) Coordinate purchases	14
b) Centralize cataloging	16
c) Maintain union lists	21
General Information & Reference Service:	
a) Current awareness	36
b) Subject bibliographies	34
c) "Spot research"	44
Automation:	
a) Available to state agencies	20
b) Technical services	12
c) Information retrieval	16
Training:	
a) Orientation & indoctrination	25
b) On-site "in-service"	26
Innovative Programs	10

Source: Greer, Roger C., and Paulson, Peter J., eds. *Meeting the Information Needs of State Government in New York: A Survey and Report*. Albany, N.Y., State University of New York, 1977, p. 15.

years through an aggressive campaign to create awareness. According to Richard Fisher, Acting Head, Information and Reference Division:

Active marketing of the information provision capabilities of the State Library of Ohio is emphasized — through “sales calls,” by presentations before department groups, through orientation and familiarization classes and tours, with follow-through in the form of individualized current awareness services which provide an ordering tool to the recipient. In the last year, more than a third of the circulation to state government personnel can be traced to the stimulus provided by the direct mail current awareness program. An important positive aspect is the system for *delivery to the requestor* whether he is remotely sited or contiguous to the library.¹²

Like Texas and Ohio, the North Carolina State Library created a special unit to provide service to state agencies, entitled the “Library Services to State Agencies Branch.” The program differs from Texas’s and Ohio’s reference-centered operations in that a considerable portion of the unit’s thrust is in the area of technical services. In 1973-74, this unit provided cataloging, consultative and other support services to fourteen agency libraries, including the large Public Health Service library, the Department of Public Instruction, and newly organized libraries in the Labor and State Personnel departments. In the latter instance, the state library provided the necessary in-service training to assist the agency in starting the new library and the department provided staff, furnishings, shelving and a card catalog.¹³

Central to an understanding of the Washington State arrangement is the fact that the state librarian is a cabinet officer reporting directly to the governor, and the state library is responsible for all library services for state government (except law), no matter where the facility served is located. Maryan Reynolds, former Washington State Librarian, described the program in refreshingly nonbureaucratic language:

Some departments want us to operate fully and where they can generate federal funds for the service we enter into a “contract”. . . . We pay no attention to the actual dollars so generated but render the service as needed. In some instances the department prefers to have the library staff on its payroll. . . . All materials are purchased and processed by us so that our catalog reflects the total information resource. The staffs are given orientation here so they realize we are back-up to their limited collection. The collections are weeded fre-

Services to State Government

quently and materials returned here for final decision as to retention.

Some offices around the state have small collections but we encourage the employees to use their local public library and to call us directly. In addition to subscribing to key professional publications, we Xerox tables of contents and route them around. People write their names by the article desired and we send a Xerox copy which they can keep or throw away.

It is a very wide ranging, flexible and effective program.¹⁴

Special consultative services are also available to state agencies by contract and have resulted in a comprehensive bibliography on disasters in Washington State for the Department of Emergency Services, and a combined subject index for environmental impact statements for the Department of Ecology.

The New York State Library, building on an 86-year history of special services to the legislature, established a Legislative and Governmental Services unit in 1977, directed by a member of the top-level administration. This unit will promote library services to state agencies aggressively, provide special research and bibliographic support, and conduct orientation and other programs for legislative and agency staff. Publications currently issued by the unit include *Legislative Trends* (an annotated list of state library acquisitions on topics of interest to the legislature), *Spotlight* (guides to basic resources in selected subject fields), *Topics on Tap* (short bibliographies on topics of current interest), and comprehensive literature searches on requested subjects. Resources offered include free search services on twenty-six computerized data banks.

Despite the considerable variety of state library programs described above, certain general norms or patterns emerge which suggest the following elements as essential in developing an effective program of state library services to state agencies.

1. *Attitude.* An aggressive, outreach approach is needed, based on a commitment to service and a wide-ranging, well-defined program to meet the needs of state agencies, officials and employees.
2. *Organization.* The state library should serve as the hub or center of library activity for state government, and should create a special office or unit which will provide leadership, coordination and the necessary monitoring of the program. At the least, it should assign one or more staff members to carry out this outreach program on a continuing and preferably full-time basis. Staff should be carefully chosen for many of the same qualities which characterize successful field consultants, as

- well as for their perception of reference and bibliographic needs, and of the operation and structure of state government.
3. *Agency Involvement*. As many agencies as possible should be involved, not only in the planning of service patterns, but in their refinement and evaluation as well. Even if the cooperating agency has no library per se, it should assign someone to work with the state library coordinator.
 4. *Shared Activities/Shared Financing*. Services which are beyond the capability of the individual cooperating agency should be explored carefully and implemented as practicable, including centralized ordering and processing of library materials, union lists and other methods of bibliographic control, central computerized data banks with terminal access as required, cooperative storage and materials retirement plans, etc. Shared financing on some unit cost basis, by means of contractual or other arrangements, is desirable and tends to stimulate mutual involvement, respect and commitment, and provides a basis for evaluating cost-effectiveness.
 5. *Visibility, Direct Contact with Administration*. In order to gain the support of the administration and the legislature, the state library and its program of service to state government needs visibility, a voice and some degree of clout. This may be achieved organizationally, with cabinet rank for the state librarian or with strong advisory groups who can make their voices heard by the power structure. It may likewise be achieved personally, through the visibility and personal dynamics of the chief state library officer and the program specialists; and functionally, through the provision of services of demonstrable value and reliable quality. All these avenues may be necessary and should be bulwarked with an effective public relations program including publicity, orientation workshops and appropriate accountability through regular reports.

The data assembled in this article indicate that state library agencies generally accept information service to state government as a primary responsibility. Although this function does not appear to have been the "leading edge" of state library program development in recent years, there is evidence of increased interest and innovative activity in a number of states. As state government expands its interests, as legislative, judicial and executive agencies become increasingly information dependent, and as the relationship of information availability to cost-effectiveness and productivity becomes clearer, it may be expected that information service

Services to State Government

to state government will become an increasingly critical area of state library agency activity.

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