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ABSTRACT
The Commission on Freedom and Equality of Access to Information was an independent commission appointed in 1983 by American Library Association President Carol A. Nemeyer to re-examine some of the basic tenets that determine how the American people gain access to information in order to enable them to function as citizens and as productive members of society, with the focus on future access to information. This article examines the recommendations of the commission which focus upon dissemination of and access to information (particularly the broadcast industry, electronic information, and government publications), reports the ALA membership's responses to the commission report, and notes benchmark publications and activities since 1986.

INTRODUCTION
The democratic experience in the United States has depended heavily upon a free flow of information. First Amendment protections have, however, been oriented toward print distribution of information. There has been growing concern about the effects of technology upon access to information. In response to this concern, Carol A. Nemeyer, president of the American Library Association (ALA) in 1982-83, appointed the Commission on Freedom and Equality of Access to Information in April 1983. The commission's goal was "to reexamine some of the basic tenets that determine how the American people gain access to information in order to enable them to function as citizens and as productive members of society" (ALA, 1986, p. xi).
The 1986 report that resulted from the commission's deliberations has become known as the Lacy Report, a reflection of the leadership of the commission’s chair, Dan Lacy.

The commission was charged to contribute its best thinking to the problem of future access to information. It was an independent commission composed of notable leaders with authoritative expertise in many different aspects of the issues of access to information with membership drawn from both the public and private sectors. The resulting report was, therefore, a reflection of commission members’ thinking, not a reflection of the American Library Association’s policies or positions. The commission presented its report to the ALA Council with the intent of stimulating further examination of the issues. The Lacy Report clearly succeeded in that regard as ALA membership debated vigorously the content of report drafts in various open hearings during the commission's deliberations, and a variety of actions have resulted subsequent to the submission of the final report. In a number of instances, ALA positions do not agree with recommendations or statements in the Lacy Report. The debate within ALA generated by the commission's report has generally been acknowledged as healthy, important, and timely.

**The Lacy Report**

The Lacy Report is important to the discussion of intellectual freedom in that people must have access to information if there is going to be a free flow of ideas in a democratic society. The thrust of the commission deliberations was not on censorship but rather upon dissemination of, and access to, information. In that context, the commission looked at three aspects: (1) the appropriateness of First Amendment coverage to broadcasting and electronic information delivery systems; (2) the physical, financial, educational, and technical barriers which technologically based systems pose for citizens; and (3) distribution of, and access to, government information, particularly in light of increasing government reliance upon electronic information delivery systems. These elements, as presented by the commission, are summarized in the following discussion.

**The First Amendment and the Federal Communications Act**

With the exception of film, which originally was viewed by the courts as an entertainment medium and therefore not covered by the First Amendment (but which now enjoys full First Amendment protections) (ALA, 1986, pp. 22-23), other new technologies have not been viewed as appropriate to First Amendment protections. Public policy in the United States veered from the First Amendment approach of an earlier paper communications environment and began to rely
instead on anti-trust law and licensing of channels, cables, or wave-
lengths. While the various media allow for very broad public access
at output, they also narrow access at the point of input, since those
who control the channels, airwaves, and cables also control what
is broadcast or transmitted. Rather than applying the First
Amendment to radio, television, and telephony, as in the case with
print and films, the United States has adopted a policy of licensing
whereby licensees must observe a "fairness doctrine" which requires
that they afford a reasonable opportunity for the presentation of
differing points of view on important controversial issues. In addition,
political candidates must be afforded equal time and reasonable access
to station facilities, and licensees cannot censor the content of a
candidate's presentation. The Federal Communications Commission
(FCC) has no censorship authority over the content of programs,
but it has the power to vacate or refuse to renew a license if the
licensee fails in its responsibilities as a trustee. Those responsibilities
include ascertaining issues that are important to the community and
offering contrasting points of view. This approach invests the licensee
with a public trust to use the licensed segment of the spectrum in
such a way as to serve the public interest (ALA, 1986, p. 7). In addition
to licensing, anti-trust law has become increasingly important by
creating competition (p. 7).

An argument can be made that the First Amendment is
appropriate to the broadcast environment.

Any restraints the licensee placed on, for example, political access to
the public through radio or television were in a sense restraints imposed
by, or at best licensed by, the Government itself. Hence, the First
Amendment could be considered not as enfranchising the station owner
to determine program content, but rather as restraining the owner, as
it restrained the Government itself, from inappropriately abridging the
freedom of those who might wish to speak over the radio or television.
Common carrier treatment of broadcasting is both conceivable and
consistent with the First Amendment. (pp. 23-24)

Broadcasters themselves and many civil libertarians have thought it
wrong that the First Amendment should not be applied to broadcasting
in the same way it is to print and to films. They believe that licensees
should be freed from the obligations of the fairness doctrine and the
equal-time provisions of Section 315 [of the Federal Communications
Act]. Their argument is that these requirements in fact narrow rather
than enlarge access; broadcasters may decide to avoid controversial topics
and political campaigns altogether rather than deal with these
restrictions. The argument for not applying the First Amendment to
broadcasting as it is to print has been based primarily on the scarcity
of broadcast channels. That is, in a medium not inherently open to
all, the Government must license the few. The Supreme Court has indeed
stated that it is because of this scarcity argument that it has upheld
the constitutionality of the content-regulatory provisions of the Federal
Communications Act. (p. 25)

The Lacy Report, in looking at technological developments broadly,
concludes that new telecommunications developments (increased
numbers of channels, cable systems, and electronic information delivery systems such as teletext) are modifying the structure of broadcasting and enhancing the opportunities for access to the media, which argues for reconsidering the appropriateness of First Amendment applicability to broadcasting.

In every city there is a far wider choice of television channels than of newspapers, and that there is no reason why the rights of a television station owner should not be as fully protected by the First Amendment as the rights of a newspaper publisher. Moreover, it is argued that the journalistic ethics of accuracy, objectivity, and fairness are as fully recognized and adhered to by broadcast as by print journalists. (ALA, 1986, p. 35)

The report argues that requirements of equal time for all candidates for office may actually restrict, not extend, access to the medium, that broadcasters may simply avoid such topics or not make free time available to any candidate for fear of having to provide it for many candidates (p. 36).

The commission acknowledges four arguments for regulation: (1) the exclusive use of a television channel still has a great scarcity value as evidenced by purchase prices of channels; (2) the public must have means of assuring the fulfillment of the station's responsibility imposed by the use of a license in the public interest; (3) the fairness doctrine and equal-time provision protect the First and Fourteenth Amendment rights of the public and are intended to assure access to information as well as diversity of viewpoints; and (4) that broadcast television is so pervasive that it requires special consideration, and precedents from the field of print should not be automatically extended to it (p. 36). Though acknowledging these arguments and recognizing areas in which broadcasters have not been responsive to the public good (children's programming, programming for the information-needy poor, elderly, or non-English-reading populations), the commission comes down on the side of deregulation.

There would thus be an end to the governmental effort to seek fairness on all issues, case by case, that represents such a deep intrusion into daily editorial processes. There is a "letting in" process driven by technology but commendably furthered by government policy that is resulting in an explosion of new services, commercial and pay, terrestrial and satellite. This process should be accompanied by a "letting go" of excessive governmental restrictions on broadcast journalism. (p. 38)

An eloquent dissenting opinion by Ben H. Bagdikian (p. 19) was entered into the record, and it became a focal point for critics of the commission's report. In his minority opinion, Bagdikian states:

I disagree with my colleagues on the deregulation of television. I do not share their optimism that cancellation of equal-time provisions will result in a substantial increase in responsible public affairs programming on a local and national level. I believe that the main deterrent to such programming will continue to be the preference of commercial broadcasters for more profitable entertainment programs. There are other
methods to permit stations to hold political interviews and discussions while still being held to fair standards such as debates held by the League of Women Voters. I believe equal-time provisions should apply to both paid and unpaid programs. I do agree that fairness standards should apply to patterns over a license period rather than on individual programs, but this requires that license challenges should be practicable for citizen groups with serious complaints. (p. 115)

Going beyond television and radio, the commission examined the question of whether the electronic transmission of data and texts should be governed by the regulatory requirements of the Federal Communications Act or have the First Amendment freedoms of print. Drawing heavily from Ithiel de Sola Pool's (1983) *Technologies of Freedom*, the commission took the position that: "Much of the problem will be solved if this type of regulation is very largely ended for television itself; but if not, the commission believes that teletext and similar transmissions of text and data electronically should have full First Amendment protection (i.e., the same as print)" (pp. 41-42). As with broadcasting, the commission bases its stance on the proliferation of alternatives.

**Electronic Information Delivery Systems**

Apart from the issue of First Amendment protection for electronic information discussed earlier, the Lacy Commission divided its concern for access to electronic information into three broad areas: (1) access to telecommunications systems; (2) impediments to users of electronic systems; and (3) need to create an infrastructure to support electronic information similar to that which exists for print resources such as defined publishing services, bibliographies, catalogs, organized distribution mechanisms, review services, and clear legal bases (p. 54). The concern about telecommunications networks are very much like those pertaining to publishers, broadcasters, or common carriers in the ability of the owners of such facilities to control access in a discriminatory way.

Historically we have sought to assure equitable access by competition among numerous facilities for the dissemination of ideas, as among book publishers; by a sense of professional responsibility when there is imperfect competition among facilities for dissemination, as in the case of the Associated Press or dominant newspapers; by federal regulation when there is governmental licensing of scarce facilities, as in the case of broadcasting; and by a common-carrier requirement when there is a franchised monopoly, as in the case of telephone services. (p. 42)

Like the analysis of First Amendment issues, few would argue with the description of the problem as provided in the commission report, but many do argue with the commission's conclusions. The report identifies the fundamental changes as follows:

Fundamental changes are now being made in public policy in this area. Competition is to be relied on in place of de facto regulated monopoly...
for long-distance telephone service. Though local telephone service remains a franchised monopoly with common-carrier status, its monopoly is challenged by unregulated competition, particularly for data communication. New kinds of dissemination facilities, notably cable television networks, have arisen which have an unresolved regulatory status. Private networks of large corporations play an increasingly important role. (p. 42)

The commission generally supports deregulation of the telephone industry and supports the resulting competition (p. 43). And yet, the commission took a quite different stance on cable systems that have the capacity to move data as well as video and thus potentially become information providers or joint venturers in information provision, giving cable systems the opportunity to discriminate against or exclude competitive information providers. Because the user of a cable network is tied to one specific cable system, the user is a captive to that system in a way that the user of satellite or telephone networks is not, since the latter user has multiple options. For this reason, the commission recommended that cable systems come under sufficient regulatory control to assure nondiscriminatory access to some reasonable extent, following the general approach of the Cable Act of 1984, which generally eschews broadcast-type regulation of cable in favor of a combination of print and broadcast approaches (pp. 44-45).

Whereas the discussion of First Amendment protections for radio, television, and cable systems referred little to the library as a major factor in access, the portions of the report which deal with information delivery, as opposed to broadcast journalism, recognize the central role that libraries will play in making electronic information available to the public. In this respect, it equates access to electronic information with that of print, in which public policies at the federal, state, and local levels have been enacted to overcome or reduce barriers to print resources, primarily through educational and library programs. The commission sees print and electronic information as analogous in terms of policies on what to provide, librarians acting as intermediaries to help patrons using these and other resources.

It should be emphasized that these policies and practices [of providing access to databases] are not departures from but continuations, in another medium, of the policies and practices governing access to printed materials and that they have the same basic objectives: not to exclude users or narrow access, but to broaden access and make it more equitable and in particular to maintain the library's services to those most in need of them...keeping in mind always that the objective is to provide the broadest and the most equitable access possible within resources that are or can be made available. (p. 50)

The commission points out that user fees imposed by libraries to offset costs of electronic database access are “inherently discriminatory
in publicly supported institutions and may constitute, for some individuals, a significant barrier to access to the best available or most appropriate information technology" (p. 50). Thus chapter 6 of the report deals with recommendations for sources of funding which would not pass the costs on to the library patron.

The one area in which the commission recognizes access to databases as being different both in degree and kind from access to print is in the lack of an infrastructure to support that individual access or interlibrary cooperation.

We have indicated in other sections of this report our sense of the urgent necessity of the library profession, in cooperation with others, undertaking to create a bibliographical, cataloging, and institutional infrastructure for electronic data bases comparable to that for print. As a part of that infrastructure an arrangement will be badly needed that will allow state or regional libraries or networks to supplement the service of private online vendors in brokering access to national data bases; these might be analogous to the arrangements by which regional networks facilitate local library access to the Online Catalog Library Center (OCLC). (p. 51)

The report goes on to discuss the capital investment needed for libraries to have the necessary equipment required to provide access to databases, the need to upgrade librarians' skills in provision of electronic information services, and the need for user education in learning to use such systems; it describes roles for public, academic, and school libraries in these areas. The overall tone of the report continues to stress the need to balance legitimate private sector products and services with the need for public access.

Marketplace forces that are propelled by the exotic and expensive new information technologies must be tempered by consideration for public interest and public need. Of course the free enterprise system must be allowed to function, indeed to flourish, but it must be understood that an information need is not always synonymous with the existence of an information market. Neither is it in the national interest to permit the development of a two-tier society incorporating a permanent underclass of print and information illiterates. As noted before, those who are denied access to information resources in either traditional or electronic formats are in a very real sense denied thereby the opportunity for full and effective participation in modern democratic society....In particular...some major categories of government information are already accessible only electronically. This has profound consequences for libraries which have long served a social function to assure at least minimum citizen access to government information by means of the depository library program. (p. 100)

An important suggestion of the report regards extension of the concept of postal subsidies for higher education and libraries to telecommunications networks, including the possibility of a dedicated satellite network or subsidy of telecommunications costs. (p. 114)
Access to Government Information

The Lacy Commission dwells at some length on the role of the federal government in collection, availability, and dissemination of its own information, taking the position that access to government-controlled information—that created and collected by the government—is essential to the public understanding of national issues and often to the conduct of private business. The analysis is from four perspectives: (1) policy issues having to do with increasing restrictions to government information, particularly under the Reagan Administration; (2) policy issues pertaining to public versus private roles in packaging and distributing information gathered by the government; (3) increasing use of security labeling or classification of documents to restrict the flow of scientific information and the publication of information by former governmental employees; and (4) increases in access costs under the Freedom of Information Act via administrative interpretation. The commission cites a study issued by the Committee on Government Operations of the U.S. House of Representatives which identified two potentially conflicting policies regarding federal statistical services, one which maintains that wide and ready access to basic information is essential to a democratic society and free market economy and thus supports the importance of a federal role, versus a second policy which maintains that federal data collections can be justified only to meet specific federal administrative or policy needs. The latter, narrower, policy has governed recent cuts in statistical services and suggested policy modifications in OMB Circular A-130 (p. 57).

The commission tries to set out guidelines for public versus for-profit roles in dissemination of electronic information. In particular, it tries to distinguish what role the private sector plays in enhancing government electronic data through value-added software for retrieval and manipulation of information and data. While the commission concludes that "it is the responsibility of government to formulate and apply principles in the dissemination of government information that preserve a broad and balanced mix of public and private channels of access and distribution, and that enhance rather than diminish, citizen access" (p. 79), the specific list of seven principles which the commission sets forth in hopes of providing a basis for policy decisions created much controversy upon release of the report to the ALA Council with many ALA members feeling that the principles (listed below) were biased toward the private sector:

1. The federal government should take a leadership role in creating a framework which would facilitate the development and foster the use of information products and services.
2. The federal government should establish and enforce policies and procedures that encourage, and do not discourage, investment by the private sector in the development and use of information products and services.

3. The federal government should not provide information products and services in commerce except when there are compelling reasons to do so, and then only when it protects the private sector's every opportunity to assume the function(s) commercially.

4. The federal government, when it uses, reproduces, or distributes information available from the private sector as part of an information resource, product, or service, must assure that the property rights of the private sector sources are adequately protected.

5. The federal government should make governmentally distributable information openly available in readily reproducible form, without any constraints on subsequent use.

6. The federal government should set pricing policies for distributing information products and services that reflect the true cost of access and/or reproduction, any specific prices to be subject to review by an independent authority.

7. The federal government should actively use existing mechanisms, such as the libraries of the country, as primary channels for making governmentally distributable information available to the public.

The commission stressed that: "More than change in any particular law or regulation, we need a consistent policy to maximize the availability of information from the Government to its citizens" (p. 80). Specifically, the commission suggested that: "The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science and the American Library Association and its allies should set up a means to give steady and continuing attention to the development and achievement of public policies in the light of the goals this report has tried to state (pp. 114-15)."

**ALA Response**

The Lacy Commission Report, in its final form, was submitted to the ALA Council at its 1986 Midwinter Meeting. After much discussion, which centered around the concern over the disparity between philosophical views of members of the library community and some of the positions represented in the Lacy Report, the following resolution was passed by the Council:

VOTED, that the report of the Commission be received with thanks, printed with a statement about ALA policy in this area and explicit clarification in the preface and cover layout that this is a report TO
ALA, not a statement of ALA policy, and refer it to all units of the Association for review and discussion at the 1986 Annual Conference. (ALA. Special Committee, 1987, p. 2)

The ALA Executive Board, at its spring 1986 meeting, authorized the formation of a committee to coordinate the review of the Commission Report; the seven member committee was charged to: (1) define and clarify access to information, resources, and service; (2) recommend appropriate actions to the ALA Executive Board and Council relative to “access” specifically in terms of ALA committees, divisions, and other units, ALA programs and policy; (3) review the Lacy Report and other documents which may pertain to that report for implications for ALA programs and policy; (4) coordinate the review by all ALA units of the Lacy Report; and (5) submit a final report to the Executive Board (p. ii). A rigorous two-year review was undertaken by the Special Committee, which included interviews with ALA staff, open hearings, written reactions to the Lacy Report from ALA units, a review of the ALA planning process and ALA priorities as they pertained to access issues, a review of the ALA structure, and a review of ALA policies.

A summary of unit responses was presented to the ALA Council in an Interim Report (June 28, 1987; 1987-88 Council Document #37). The Special Committee found that a significant majority of the recommendations in the Lacy Report were in alignment with current ALA policies. ALA units responding to these recommendations usually supported the recommendations and current ALA policy. Three of the Lacy Report recommendations appeared to be in conflict with ALA policy: (1) its recommendation for telecommunications-broadcast deregulation; (2) copyright and the cost of access to electronically stored information; and (3) availability of government information. Seven areas were not specifically addressed in ALA policy (p. 4). Because the ALA Legislative Committee was in the process of revising its Federal Legislative Policy, these areas were referred to that unit for development of appropriate policies. Most of these areas are now reflected in the new ALA Federal Legislative Policy (ALA, 1987). Unit responses included appreciation to the Lacy Commission for its role in bringing important issues to the forefront for discussion, but also expressed concern with the lack of consistency in some instances between the text of the report and the final recommendations in the appendix. There was also serious concern expressed about the text drifting into subjective and undocumented style, with conclusions not supported by analysis or fact (ALA. Special Committee, 1987, p. 4).

In reviewing ALA unit activities, the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee and the Executive Director of the Office of Intellectual Freedom expressed the opinion that all access issues were a subset
of intellectual freedom issues. However, the Special Committee eventually interpreted intellectual freedom as a subset of access issues as illustrated in the following definition and Figure 1:

Library users are central to ALA's concern about access. To focus attention on this centrality, the Special Committee developed a model which graphically conveys the multiplicity of factors and activities related to serving the users' needs. At the center are "users" and various political, economic, and social constraints which affect the individual's ability to access information. Surrounding the users are institutional and environmental factors impacting access. The outer circle represents the impact that laws, regulations, public policies, standards, and ALA policies have on the access issue. The diagram illustrates the complexity and interrelationship of issues that fall within the domain of "access to information." (ALA. Special Committee, 1988, p. 4)

Figure 1. Intellectual freedom as a subset of access issues

Further, the Special Committee found that:

Historically, intellectual freedom and federal library legislation have been major and compelling issues for the Association. Although we have forged strong action-oriented programs in these two areas, the attention paid to access by the units and offices interested in intellectual freedom and legislation has been necessarily bound by their particular focus. Other units have addressed some specific access issues such as standards, bibliographic instruction, and library automation. However, to fulfill its mission statement, ALA needs an infrastructure to allow an association-wide concern and ability to respond rapidly and more extensively than the current primary focus on federal legislation and intellectual freedom allows. (p. 5)
The Special Committee recommended formation of a standing committee of the ALA Council as an initial step in developing an association-wide infrastructure for confronting access to information issues (pp. 8-9). This recommendation was approved by Council at its annual conference in June 1988. That standing committee has since been activated. In addition, recommendations were also accepted for an annual inventory of ALA activities pertaining to access issues, for a periodic survey of national access issues by the Office of Research, for an annual “town meeting” forum for ALA members to discuss access issues, and for an annual article on access in the ALA Yearbook.

**Subsequent Benchmark Publications and Activities**

The Lacy Commission was astute in identifying the elements of the national debate pertaining to access to information which has continued to occupy the library profession. Those issues have received intensive scrutiny since 1986, resulting in a number of important subsequent publications which are summarized below:

1. **1987 ALA Federal Legislative Policy.** The ALA policies were updated to include sections on public access to federal information, equal access to library service, and a new section on policies surrounding information technologies. Specific references are made to national library and information networks, technical standards and copyright protection, telecommunications and broadcast media, and information technology education.

2. **Electronic Collection and Dissemination of Information by Federal Agencies: A Policy Overview.** This report by the Committee on Government Operations of the U.S. House of Representatives (1986) identifies problems raised by electronic information systems and suggests how the new technology can be employed without undermining the objectives of government information policy. The report recommends that:

   Agencies use the new information technology to broaden and improve public use of government information; more administrative guidance on the development and use of electronic information systems be provided; agencies consult regularly with those affected by electronic information systems; competitive procurements be used for the acquisition of automated information products and services; and laws that have been interpreted to allow agencies to maintain exclusive control over electronic data bases be modified. (p. 2)

3. **Technology & U.S. Government Information Policies: Catalysts for New Partnerships.** This report of the Association of Research Libraries Task Force on Government Information in Electronic Format (1987) focuses on the issue that technology, moving faster than policy development, has left U.S. government information programs resting on uncertain foundations. The report tries to develop a framework for understanding philosophically, function-
ally, and fiscally the patterns that exist for government information and the shifts in those patterns resulting from the introduction of government information in electronic formats. It presents a taxonomy to acknowledge distinctions and categorize the characteristics of government information in electronic format and a model that identifies potential value-added processes for an information system. It urges studies on the budgetary mechanisms that support government information creation, delivery, and usage and the impact of different electronic formats on these mechanisms, which should contribute to a clearer picture of present and prospective public and private financing of government information programs (p. v). This report draws heavily on concepts in Robert S. Taylor's (1986) *Value-Added Processes in Information Systems*.

4. *Informing the Nation: Federal Information Dissemination in an Electronic Age.* This critical work published by the U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment (1988), surveys a wide range of governmental issues including the Government Printing Office, the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), the Superintendent of Documents, and depository libraries. It provides an overview of federal information dissemination, key technology trends relevant to federal information and dissemination, alternative futures for the Government Printing Office, alternative futures for the Depository Library Program, electronic dissemination of congressional information, and an analysis of the Freedom of Information Act in an electronic age. In the words of the report:

OTA has concluded that congressional action is urgently needed to resolve Federal information dissemination issues and to set the direction of Federal activities for years to come. The government is at a crucial point where opportunities presented by the information technologies, such as productivity and cost-effectiveness improvements are substantial. However, the stakes, including preservation and/or enhancements of public access to government information plus maintenance of the fiscal and administrative responsibilities of the agencies, are high and need to be carefully balanced by Congress. (p. 3)

5. *ARL's Executive Briefing Package, "Linking Researchers and Resources: The Emerging Information Infrastructure and the NREN Proposal."* This packet describes the National Research and Education Network (NREN), a proposed advanced computer network that would link universities, research libraries, national laboratories, nonprofit institutions, government research organizations, and private companies engaged in government-supported research and education. The NREN would consolidate and build upon existing interconnected telecommunications networks, commonly known as the Internet. It presents material
on the evolution of the proposal, pending legislation through July 1990, and benefits which would accrue to researchers and to the U.S. competitive position vis-à-vis other countries through development of new technologies.

6. **Coalition for Networked Information.** This voluntary coalition was initiated in 1989 and is composed of member institutions that belong to the Association of Research Libraries, CAUSE and EDUCOM. Its mission is to promote the creation and utilization of information resources in network environments by formulating and promulgating policies and protocols that enable powerful, flexible, and universal technical infrastructures (ARL, 1990, p. 1). This mission addresses the concern for lack of an infrastructure similar to that for print which was addressed in the Lacy Report.

7. **Helping America Compete: The Role of Federal Scientific & Technical Information (STI).** According to this report by the U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment (1990), electronic media offer the only way to manage the massive volume and complexity of federal scientific and technical information, but state that the transition to electronic formats will be difficult for many users. It goes on to say that:

> Progress on STI also depends on resolving governmentwide information dissemination policy issues. During the 1980's, OMB [Office of Management and Budget] used its authority under the Paperwork Reduction Act to favor private-sector responsibility for Federal information dissemination. The OMB view was controversial and sent mixed signals to the Federal R&D agencies about whether electronic STI should be aggressively pursued. Legislation pending before Congress would rebalance government policy to emphasize that Federal agencies (including the R&D agencies) have the primary responsibility for dissemination of information generated for agency missions, with an important supplementary or complementary—rather than preemptive—role for the private sector. This legislation also addresses information management, pricing, public access, due process, and other policy matters that would directly affect STI. (pp. 2-3)

**Conclusions**

The issues raised by the Lacy Report provided the library profession with a full agenda for years to come. The issues are very complex, and the technology is changing faster than the profession's ability to grapple with the legal and policy implications which come with each new product or advance. While the federal deficit will continue to restrict availability of public funding and therefore encourage contracting out and privatization of information, the release of *Informing the Nation* indicates an increasing awareness that the policy issues cannot be ignored. New approaches to copyright of electronic information to protect intellectual property rights must still be sought, and experimentation with new definitions of public/
private roles in information production and dissemination suggested by the Association of Research Libraries' study and Robert Taylor's value-added models await the concerned librarian.

REFERENCES


