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1991

## White House Conference on Library and Information Services: Joint Hearing (1991): Article 02

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## Preconference Activities Underway:

### Thousands Participate in Creating Preliminary Policy Recommendations

**A**s 1991 opens preconference activities will have taken place in 22 states and five U.S. territories. These meetings, teleconferences and public forums bring together citizens throughout a state to create proposals for improving library and information services in their communities and at the state and federal levels.

In addition to being forwarded to appropriate local and state officials, each state or territories' recommendations will be combined with other proposals from across the country. This final pool of proposals will create the foundation for discussion and debate in Washington next July.

Congressional interest in and support for The White House Conference



*At the Minnesota preconference state librarian Bill Asp presents Governor Rudy Perpich with a plaque in appreciation of his support of libraries.*

remains high. In the final hectic days of the 101st Congress this past December \$488,000 in additional funding was appropriated for Conference expenses. This new appropriation brings the total

monies allotted for The White House Conference and 59 state and territory preconferences to nearly \$5.5 million. Additional corporate and foundation

*Continued on page 5*

## Providing Library and Information Services for the 21st Century

**Information** will be our country's most important national resource as the technology revolution takes hold. As the next century approaches our ability to access, understand and use information is critical to government, industry, educators, consumers, voters, parents—all Americans.

The importance of library and information services has long been recognized by leaders in the field. The first White House Conference dealing with information delivery and library services was held in 1979. This July's White

House Conference on Library and Information Services continues the work begun over a decade ago.

Under a three theme umbrella—library and information services for literacy, for productivity and for democracy—the 1991 Conference will work to create policy recommendations on issues critical to our nation: a literate populace, a workforce with the productivity skills necessary to compete in the global marketplace of the 21st century and a citizenship fully equipped to participate in the democratic system.

A White House Conference affords the average American the unique opportunity to play a hands-on role in the public policy making process. This winter and spring thousands of Americans are doing just that in preconference activities in all 50 states and nine U.S. territories. Conference participants include library and information professionals, government officials, educators, library users and trustees and the general public.

Recommendations being formu-

*Continued on page 5*

*From the Desk of:*

**Executive Director  
Jean M. Curtis**



**M**y first two months as the Executive Director of the White House Conference on Library and Information Services have been productive, exciting and challenging ones.

During the past four weeks I've had the opportunity to attend numerous preconference activities across the country. Everywhere I go I'm impressed with the quality of the preconference programs. The genuine enthusiasm and intellect of the participants involved assures us that our message is being heard.

We all share a unique and important opportunity to influence the policy of our country into the 21st century and beyond. To ensure that our nation's library and information needs are met and to thereby foster literacy, productivity and democracy is in itself an awesome responsibility.

The staff of the White House Conference office and I share your concern for meeting this responsibility. We are working diligently to support your preconference events and create a working environment next July that will allow the conference delegation to formulate a set of policy recommendations which will serve our nation well.

My special thanks to each of you for the commitment you have made to the success of our 1991 White House Conference.

*Editor's note: Jean Curtis was appointed the Executive Director of the White House Conference on Library and Information Services in early November. She was formerly the Acting Director of the Women's Bureau at the U.S. Department of Labor. During her 30 year career Mrs. Curtis has been an educator, a county recorder and a District Service Director for a member of Congress.*

## Conference Themes Support President's Education Goals

**L**ast February, President George Bush called state governors from across the nation to a summit on the state of American education. As a result of this summit the President and Governors created six goals for the year 2000.

### BY THE YEAR 2000:

- Every child will start school ready to learn.
  - The high school graduation rate will increase to 90 percent.
  - American students will leave grades four, eight and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.
  - U.S. students will be the first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
  - Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
  - Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.
- The work of the White House Conference and its thematic umbrella of library and information services to enhance literacy, increase productivity and strengthen democracy will be an important ally to these worthy goals.

**Discovery** is the official newsletter of the White House Conference on Library and Information Services. The Conference is conducted under the direction of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, a permanent federal agency charged with advising the President and Congress on policy matters relating to library and information resources.

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*Speak Out Column:***Who's Saying What About The White House Conference**

**Presidential Proclamation:** July 2, 1990 was, by official presidential proclamation, National Literacy Day. In the proclamation President Bush declared the following:

"If the United States is to remain a free, strong, and prosperous country, and a force for good in the world, we must cultivate the talent and potential of all our people—in the work place, in our families, and in our communities. . . . Our future depends upon education, and education begins with literacy."

In the October 1990 issue of *Reader's Digest* **First Lady Barbara Bush** continues her fight against illiteracy by encouraging parents to read to their children in "Parenting's Best Kept Secret." Mrs. Bush told *Digest* readers to make reading aloud a family habit and advised that public libraries are a family's best source of good books at a bargain price—free!

**Governor Bob Miller of Nevada** told delegates to his state's preconference that "this conference is important to all Nevadans as we take responsibility for the education and enlightenment of our citizens. Services to children, including pre-school reading programs, and encouragement of family literacy in our public libraries are high among my priorities. School and academic libraries must be an integral part of the formal education process. We have a responsibility to address the problem of adult illiteracy and the needs of those learning to speak and read English as their second language. In addition, libraries are essential to the continued economic development of our state as they provide information, recreation, and cultural activities."

**Daniel Casey** a member of the White House Conference on Library and Information Services Advisory Committee and the Conference Taskforce (WHCLIST) made the following comments regarding the important role of the Taskforce leading up to the second White House Conference to other taskforce members at their recent meeting.

"... We carry a tremendous responsibility, our team of associations, individuals and agencies. First, we must examine the library and information services in our nation to determine what should be continued, and what should be redesigned and improved.



What messages are we going to hand President Bush when we meet him in just 10 months and 23 days? What would you advise him in terms of an intellectual resource—information—which influences the lives of everyone in the United States, in fact everyone in the world?

Our second obligation is to stimulate an overwhelming national involvement in the examination of our library and information services. We have a singular mission—we must enlist the minds and hearts of all Americans in our crusade. . . . We are selling a resource that will endure for generations, that will have a lasting impact on the quality of literacy, democracy and productivity in the United States."

**Governor Buddy Roemer of Louisiana** encouraged participation in state and national White House Conference activities in an open letter to state residents in which he said:

"I'm writing to you today to bring to your attention an opportunity you will soon have to help shape the future of Louisiana and America. . . . From ancient times, libraries have served as irreplaceable sources of human knowledge, culture, and advancement. Libraries possess a fundamental power for thousands of our fellow Louisianians, and millions of our fellow Americans. That power is a lever with which one can move the world: the power of accumulated human intellect.

This power is given free of charge, even though it is priceless. It is the power of literacy, the power of democracy, and the power of productivity. Knowledge, which is the key to self-government and economic self-sufficiency, can be found in the libraries of our state and nation."

**Governor Robert Casey of Pennsylvania** wrote the following to state preconference delegates: "The developments in information technology during the last decade have created both challenges and opportunities for the entire library community. . . . Your responsibility involves determining the roles to be played by libraries, other information services, the federal, state and local governments, the private sector and the users of information in a cohesive approach to making more information available to more people in the decade ahead and the century beyond."

*If you would like to have a speaker on the White House Conference for your organization contact the White House Conference office.*

## Conference Themes Discussion Papers Available

**A** set of recently published Discussion Papers on the White House Conference themes of literacy, productivity and democracy are available.

■ In her paper, *Literacy in the Information Age*, Dr. Patricia Senn Breivik warns that as information overload increases the gap between the haves and have-nots will widen as a new information elite emerges. She states that "information literacy is a means of personal and national empowerment in today's information rich environment. . . . It is therefore, the next logical step in all current programs to combat illiteracy. After we teach people to read, we must teach them how to locate and use the information they need."

■ In his paper, *Productivity in the Information Society*, futurist Paul Shay suggests that today the definition of productivity needs to be expanded to include the application of information to an economic

process or activity. "Information is the new strategic resource," Shay writes, "replacing land, labor and capital. A sophisticated information infrastructure is the foundation upon which the new growth industries can be built."

■ In *The Library in Service to Democracy*, Dr. Timothy S. Healy states "libraries, like universities exist to serve the societies that support them. . . . In a democracy, however, the simple word service has another dimension to it. Under any republican form of government, where knowledge and understanding must be attributed to individuals as citizens and voters, the service rendered by libraries is as necessary as that of the press, the colleges or the schools. In less political and more philosophical terms, libraries exist essentially in service to freedom."

To request copies of these discussion papers contact the White House Conference Office.



THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON  
LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES  
1991

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# The White House Conference on Library and Information Services

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## What's On Your Mind?

The White House Conference is a people's conference. We welcome ideas from library and information professionals, government officials, library users and members of the general public. We want to know what you think about our nation's library and information resources and their future. Organizations and individuals are encouraged to forward background research, discussion papers and policy proposals on relevant issues and themes—library and information services for literacy, productivity and democracy—to the White House Conference office.

### Questions? Call Us

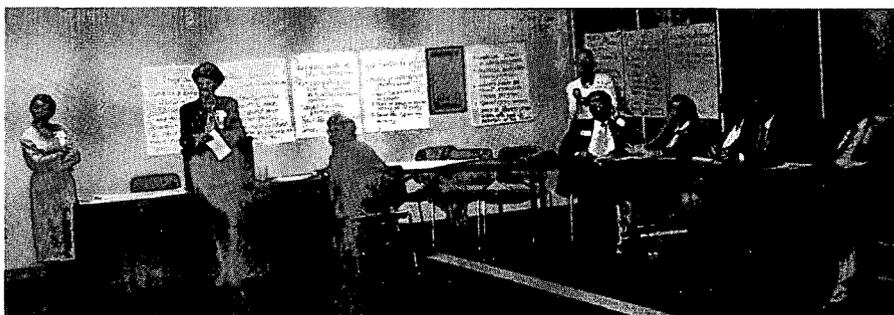
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## State/Territory Preconferences Underway Continued from page 1

support is currently being pursued.

The Conference and its themes have attracted the attention of state and local officials across the country. Fourteen state governors have participated in their state's activities including Joe Frank Harris of Georgia, William Donald Schaefer of Maryland, Mario Cuomo of New York, Robert Casey of Pennsylvania, Douglas Wilder of Virginia, Evan Bayh of Indiana; Bob Martinez of Florida, Carroll Campbell of South Carolina, Buddy Roemer of Louisiana, Rudy Perpich of Minnesota, John Ashcroft of Missouri, Bob Miller of Nevada, Cecil Andrus of Idaho and John Waihee of Hawaii.

Famous names who have spoken to state delegates include: author and historian Theodore Roszak, the author of *The Making of a Counter Culture* and *The Cult of Information*; Pulitzer Prize winning author William F. Kennedy;



*A small group breakout session at the recent West Virginia preconference wrestles with one of the many important issues on the conference agenda.*

Susan Stamberg, special correspondent for National Public Radio and long time host of NPR's *All Things Considered*; and Gloria Naylor, author of *The Women of Brewster Place*.

At the October West Virginia preconference, entitled West Virginia and the World—A Global Information Partnership, international participants included representatives from the State Library in Moscow, the UNESCO

Office for Information Progress and Service in Paris, the National Library of Scotland and the Department of Education in Finland.

This March preconference activities in each state and nine U.S. territories will come to a close. At that point every U.S. citizen will have had an opportunity to influence future policy regarding the improvement of our nation's library and information resources.

## Library and Information Services for Literacy, Productivity and Democracy

*Continued from page 1*

lated in the states will be presented to state and local officials for improvements to library and information services at these levels. In addition, their ideas will be mixed with other state proposals as well as those of other sources for deliberation at the national conference.

"If the United States is to remain a global leader in the 21st century, we must keep pace with rapid advances in technology, as well as with increasing trade and commerce between nations. Our ability to stay ahead depends, in large part, on our ability to stay informed..."

President George Bush

After nearly a week of debate in Washington (July 9-13), by some 750 delegates representing their states, a final set of policy recommendations will

be adopted. By November of 1991 these policy recommendations will be presented to the President and Congress.

The 1979 White House Conference resulted in 64 recommendations. To date 55 have been acted upon in part or whole.

Today the challenges that face the nation and our library and information resources are many. Among the issues expected to be on the agenda of the conference are:

- What will America's information needs be in the 21st century?
- How can the information needs of government, industry, small business and average citizens be met?
- Is America in danger of losing its memory? How can the survival of historical and important works be ensured? In the Information Age how should we determine what information should be archived for future generations?

■ Will new information technologies create a society of information have and have-nots?

■ The role that libraries and information resources must play in community economic development; partnerships between libraries and the business community, between libraries and schools.

Over 200 years ago Thomas Jefferson wrote that "a democratic society depends upon an informed and educated citizenry." Today, our society's ability to foster life-long learning and deliver information to people when they need it is dependent on our library and information services. The first White House Conference built a momentum of recognition for the importance of these services. The second conference will strive to find pathways which will take us into the 21st century appropriately equipped.