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"TOWARDS 1989"

WHCLIST: A View from the States

By Barbara Cooper

IN TWO resolutions at the White House Conference, the delegates defined a method for implementing the 62 others: set up an *ad hoc* committee of one lay and one professional member from each state, territorial, or special delegation to the Conference; and have the National Commission convene it and assist it to plan, implement, and follow up on the resolutions. As they did at many state conferences, the delegates so believed in the value of their work that they envisioned the vehicle to carry it out. One year later the *ad hoc* "committee of 118" met in Minneapolis under the auspices of NCLIS and its committee chaired by Commissioner Frances Naftalin. Since then, the White House Conference on Library and Information Services Taskforce (WHCLIST) has met each September and will meet again September 14-16, 1985, in Princeton, New Jersey.

WHCLIST has given Charles Benton a special award for his long-term support. Very helpful assistance has been forthcoming from NCLIS Chair Elinor Hashim, Commissioners Bessie Moore and Margaret Warden, Executive Director Toni Carbo Bearman, and especially Associate Director Mary Alice Hedge Reszetar. It has come about as the delegates desired. WHCLIST has remained independently governed and financed by dues and gifts. The chair is a layperson, as are more than half of its members. (Some of the library-related delegates are trustees.) The vice chair is a library professional, Bruce Daniels, deputy direc-



tor of the Rhode Island State Library. Don Wright of Evanston, formerly served as vice chair. William Asp, Minnesota State Librarian, is the exception: having served as the first vice chair and the second chair, he has been instrumental in bringing vital support from the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies. Every state has slots for two delegates, one lay and one professional. In April there were 108 delegates, with states being urged to fill the ten vacancies. Several years ago a category of associate membership was created for those who want to support WHCLIST's mission; most states are represented.

The process

As important as it is to implement the resolutions of the 1979 White House Conference, we need to keep in mind the unique nature of the process over many years. While each state and territory had its own method of involving the grass roots in state pre-conferences, thousands of lay people were drawn into a new partnership with librarians. They became believers in libraries. They became Friends of Libraries, trustees, LSCA advisory council members, state legislators, and local officials. The culminating national conference process also developed willing lay leaders.

This process was remarkable not only in the field of library service, but unusual in any field. The introduction by Senator Claiborne Pell (Rhode Island) and Congressman William D. Ford (Michigan) of legislation calling for a second conference in 1989 offers us a "hook" to engage again in the grass roots process of orientation and

consultation in order to deal with the future. This time WHCLIST is available for a role in promoting it. More than one-third of its members have testified before committees of Congress about meeting the needs of people for knowledge and information.

A second conference?

Why should the library community go through the long enterprise of having a second national conference, preceded by state conferences? WHCLIST will try to answer this with two publications in 1985. The first is ready, a five-year review of progress made toward implementation of the 1979 resolutions. For WHCLIST's meeting last year, Asp, Reszetar, and Daniels worked with Eileen Cooke and Carol Henderson of the ALA Washington Office to collect all known examples of implementation. Input was requested from ALA units and from the agencies and associations called upon for action.

This five-year review is impressive and inspiring. The original resolutions are still very much alive, and many issues are of immediate concern. WHCLIST's Princeton meeting will provide an early forum for discussion of possible future issues, at the time when NCLIS's Preliminary Conference Design Group is doing its work. Alice Ihrig, consultant to many states for their pre-White House conferences, is preparing another publication for WHCLIST, a brochure explaining to the general public and to legislators what went on and why the second conference is needed.

The coalition

The heart of WHCLIST is the an-

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nual meeting, where a group of its size can get at issues with vigor. In 1982 the issue was "coalition-building." With the help of Joan Collett of the St. Louis Public Library, WHCLIST initiated a survey of its membership's memberships, which is updated yearly. The variety of these connections proved impressive. Aside from those related to libraries, delegates belong to more than 300 organizations including the PTA, League of Women Voters, bar associations, chambers of commerce and economic development councils, political parties, black caucuses, church and civic groups, and those supporting the arts and humanities.

Laura Chodos, WHCLIST chair from 1982 to 1984, says, "coalitions begin at home—right in the neighborhood." The WHCLIST concept is that implementation has to come in the states and localities as well as on the national scene. Chodos' theme for 1984, "Toward a Nation of Readers," gave delegates the background to go back to their states and communities and stimulate the formation of coalitions working for literacy, which she regards as a "moral imperative." California and Florida are among the states that now have formed literacy coalitions.

Voting sessions on action issues are yeasty parts of annual meetings. When WHCLIST met in Cheyenne in 1983, a plan was developed to get state and national political parties to include in their platforms a 200-word statement on libraries, literacy, and their importance to economic development. In 1984 delegates called for a national taskforce to address implementation of "Realities" and "Alliance for Excellence."

Virginia Mathews, one of two WHCLIST delegates representing Native Americans, carried this message to ALA President E.J. Josey, who appointed her as one of three members of the Coordinating Committee on Realities and Alliance for Excellence (CCRAX). During the year, Mathews and others report on their work in the WHCLIST newsletter and in monthly meetings of the WHCLIST Steering Committee by conference call.

Report from the States

Progress on implementing resolutions is charted by WHCLIST in the annual *Report from the States*. NCLIS requested the first edition as a working paper for the 1980 organizational meeting. Since 1981 it has been produced by New York State Regent Chodos with substantial assistance from Joseph Shubert and the New York State Library staff. These are not statistical exercises; they contain insights into the uneven progress of follow-up activities such as new legislation, public

awareness campaigns, statewide citizens' councils, and the expansion of services. They also stand as records of the accomplishments of state library agencies and other institutions in effecting some of the changes forecast by the White House and state conferences, and by early NCLIS studies. The grass roots process of examining such complicated "turf" topics as interlibrary cooperation, multitype systems, and universal library cards has helped foster later acceptance and legal adoption.

COSLINE

In August 1984, WHCLIST's Robert Case, library director in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, reviewed five years of annual reports for a meeting of the Council of State Library Agencies in the Northeast. The organizer of the meeting, New Jersey State Librarian Barara Weaver, replicated WHCLIST's Cheyenne conference, which focused on the benefits of statewide citizens' councils. COSLINE's 11 sponsors brought from their states over 100 people who might help establish such groups. Case, active in Pennsylvania Citizens for Better Libraries, said, "we often forget that a library advocate constituency had been developed in the conference process."

WHCLIST has reports of statewide groups from 39 states and two territories, having been organized since the 1979 White House Conference. (Accurate information awaits a survey this year by Friends of Libraries USA.) Most are concerned with public awareness and advocacy, and stimulating vigorous local Friends of the Library. Some administer grants as high as \$100,000 from federal, state, and private funding sources. After testing the waters gingerly, many state librarians have developed respect for the ability of these groups to tackle sizeable projects and give high visibility to library issues, that helps the state library in its work.

Statewide councils

The White House Conference recommendations on public awareness were particularly strong on raising the low profile of libraries in communities and in the Nation. Rhode Island's Coalition of Library Advocates recently staged its official incorporation at a champagne reception in the Governor's chambers. As the guest speaker, the Governor expressed his support for libraries. COLA worked with the state library to create the earliest formal gathering of educators, librarians, and others to consider applying the recommendations of "Realities" and "Alliance for Excellence" within the state.

The Governor of Pennsylvania chose to announce a new plan, "Access

Pennsylvania," at the time of the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Citizens for Better Libraries. Part of this bill would initiate a statewide library card system which would allow every citizen to use every publicly-supported library in the state. This relates directly to resolutions on access.

Alabama's advocacy efforts have been strengthened because a White House Conference delegate was committed to organizing a statewide Friends group that raises public awareness and funds with a golf tournament. Alabama's reports show increases in per capita state aid. They also show that the state agency is one of very few having a specific PR staff position.

Neighboring Florida chose its citizens group, the Council for Florida Libraries, to promote the priority resolution of its state conference—public awareness. A professionally-directed multimedia campaign promoted services to the public and to business. An added benefit was improved local expertise and interest in community relations activities through local application of state PR materials.

One 1979 White House Conference resolution called for the involvement of citizens in "informing the public about existing library and information services which are needed but not available." Citizens need experience and confidence to do this. The Illinois State Library helped the Illinois Coalition of Library Advocates, led by White House Conference lay delegates, create a statewide speakers bureau of citizens who could talk well about libraries.

The need for a library symbol was also brought out in a 1979 resolution. The development and use of the library symbol in public awareness projects has become widespread. Its recent clearance for use on federal highways is only a reinforcement of enthusiastic adoption that had occurred earlier within the states.

The number of state "library legislative days" has been increasing. There are remarkable success stories at the local and state level in passing bills for networking, multitype cooperation, confidentiality of library records, and construction funds. Librarians, trustees, Friends of the Library, and citizens work together for their passage, just as they do within WHCLIST.

Copies of the *Report from the States* are available from WHCLIST. Those who were involved in the 1979 White House Conference may now see it in perspective as a national "planning process," needing evaluation and updating. The final resolutions have become goals and objectives. They were arrived at in a unique partnership with citizens, and many of the participants remain dedicated to continuing the process.