White House Conference on Library and Information Services: Final Passage (1988): Memorandum 04

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Education LAs
FROM: Minority Staff
DATE: August 3, 1987
SUBJECT: Stafford Amendment to S.J. Res. 26

Attached is an amendment to S.J. Res. 26, authorizing a White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services that will be offered by Senator Stafford at Wednesday's mark-up. This amendment was drafted with the cooperation of the American Library Association. It addresses Senator Stafford's concern that funds appropriated for library programs under the Library Services and Construction Act would be diverted for use to organize activities related to the White House Conference. This amendment restricts the use of LSCA funds for the White House Conference to Title III appropriations under that act. Title III provides funding for interlibrary cooperation. In FY 87 Title III received an appropriation of $18M.

Grants made to states under Title III of LSCA are for the planning, establishment and operation of cooperative networks of libraries at the local, regional and interstate level. When the 1979 White House Conference was held states using LSCA monies for conference purposes used Title III funds almost exclusively.
Suggested language for inclusion in Committee report on S.J.Res. 26

On Stafford amendment on use of LSCA funds:

The Committee is concerned that State, territorial, and regional pre-White House Conference activities not be funded from sources that would otherwise be used for library resources and services. Section 8(b) provides that the use of Library Services and Construction Act funds for such activities is limited to title III, Interlibrary Cooperation and Resource Sharing. However, section 8(b) is not to be interpreted to prohibit LSCA-funded activities from being used in connection with the White House Conference or related pre-conferences. The Committee encourages States to coordinate the planning requirements of LSCA with planning for the White House Conference on Library and Information Services, and, where appropriate and cost effective, to make use of LSCA-related data, resource materials, meetings, and so forth, in the White House Conference process.

On accomplishments of 1979 WHCLIS:

The most important result of the 1979 WHC was an increase in public awareness of libraries and their impact on individuals, the economy, and the nation. This is evidenced by the coming together for the first time of friends of libraries groups to form a national organization. Through pre-WHC activities, many friends of individual libraries met other friends' group representatives for the first time, and realized they could learn from one another and increase their impact through regular contact. The national organization, Friends of Libraries, U.S.A., was established in June 1979. They brought their first membership forms to the WHCLIS and have shown great growth since then. One goal is "to encourage and assist the formation and development of Friends of Library groups in the United States."

The number of states having an organized Friends group has increased to over 37. A recently released nationwide survey shows that 2,329 Friends groups have more than 600,000 members who raised $27,714,066 in support of libraries in 1985. In addition to raising money, Friends now use their projects and their clout to promote reading, library use and increased state and local funding. Friends groups have most often formed to support public libraries, but in recent years there is growing interest among school and academic libraries in forming Friends groups.

As a direct result of the WHC recommendations on library networking and resource sharing, LSCA title III interlibrary cooperation appropriations were increased 140 percent in one year, from $5 to $12 million in 1981. Unfortunately, the Administration has, since then, recommended elimination of all federal support for libraries. Despite several years of zero budgets, Congress has continued to increase funding for LSCA titles III and I; has restored funding for LSCA II public library construction, and has funded the new title VI library literacy activities.

Congress responded to the 1979 WHCLIS recommendations, not only in the funding of LSCA, but in amending the basic law in the 1984 reauthorization (PL 98-480). New or expanded priorities in LSCA I public library services included serving individuals with handicapping conditions, serving the elderly, serving as community information referral centers, projects designed...
to combat illiteracy, and making effective use of technology. LSCA II was amended, reflecting the WHCLIS emphasis, to require States to develop a long-range statewide resource sharing plan, and "resource sharing" was added to the title to reflect this emphasis.

In direct response to a WHCLIS recommendation, a new LSCA title IV was added, Library Services for Indian Tribes, to help remedy the scarcity of library resources for Indian Tribes, which as separate nations were seldom eligible for direct library allocations from States, and often had access to no libraries at all. LSCA IV receives an automatic setaside of two percent of appropriations for LSCA I, II, and III.

One of the themes and several recommendations of the 1979 WHCLIS related to international cooperation and understanding. In recognition of the significance attached to the roles of library and information services in increasing international understanding and cooperation, Senator Claiborne Pell, then as now, Chairman of the Education, Arts, and Humanities Subcommittee, requested preparation of a report by the Congressional Research Service on "International Information Exchange: Relevant Activities of the White House Conference on Library and Information Services." A report with this title was issued by the Committee on June 22, 1980.

Since that time, the Committee notes with pleasure the increased attention and activity in the library community on international standards and the linking of computerized bibliographic databases, the support by the Administration of the Nairobi Protocol to the Florence Agreement which would allow additional duty-free trade in educational and library resources, passage of the Japanese Technical Literature Act and of additional authorization for the acquisition of foreign periodicals under the Higher Education Act title VI international education programs. Both the Senate and House-passed trade bills now in conference would provide permanent implementation of the Florence Agreement Protocol, which has so far been temporary on the part of the United States.

On why a second WHCLIS is needed:

Glenn R. Wilde, Associate Dean in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences for Extension and Life Span Learning Programs at Utah State University, in testimony at the April 3, 1987 hearing of the Subcommittee on Education, Arts, and Humanities on S.J.Res. 26, provided a succinct and eloquent rationale for a second WHCLIS. He quoted Don Dillman, professor of Rural Sociology at Washington State University, who

(see attached quote from Wilde testimony)
Dr. Dillman has described societal change of the 20th Century in the context of three particular eras of social and technological change: (1) an era of "community control, 1900-1940"; (2) an era of "mass society, 1940-1980" and (3) the "Information Age, 1980 -present". Since 1980, Americans have confronted, according to Dillman, the Information Age, which "provokes massive increases in people's abilities to organize, store, retrieve and transmit information. . .at a speed much faster than either of the previous two eras." The greatest pressure of this Information Age will fall upon societal infrastructures, especially rural infrastructures, that seemingly do not possess or utilize the technologies or have the skill or education to adapt to this new environment.

Dillman's study establishes, from my perspective, the context for the 1989 White House Conference on Library and Information Services. There are some particular, if not urgent, needs that the conference must address:

1. This nation must develop a national policy for information which reflects principles of access and opportunity for all citizens. Such a policy must be formulated from the grassroots issues and needs, in cooperation with state and regional associations, and federal agencies.

2. The people of this nation, whether from rural or urban areas, must assess their learning and information needs to facilitate and build community capacities to
meet the challenges of this Information Age. The community, state, and national processes associated with the White House Conference will accommodate such societal evaluation.

3. This nation must address the development of government informational databases to provide vital problem-solving informational and educational resources which are accessible to the publics. These informational resources must be packaged by agencies or libraries to make them affordable, accessible and usable by citizens.

4. The conference must also address how governments and governmental agencies must link informational and educational resources to build and strengthen the capacity to deliver needed services for citizens. A societal environment knitted together through telecommunications can improve services and result in access, utility and economy for this nation's citizens.

Senator Pell, and other distinguished members of this Senate Committee, I concur with the content of Senate Resolution 26 of January 21, 1987 and with Congressman William D. Ford's House Resolution 244 of the same day, calling for a 1989 White House Joint Conference on Library and Information Services. Such a conference is needed because it addresses our future, and it promotes the integrity of our commitments, public and private, to our nation's people.
Economic, social and political factors affecting libraries have shifted and changed significantly since 1979. Even more important, the technology of information organization, retrieval and access has evolved so rapidly since then that it is entirely appropriate that we look again at libraries through the focus of a WHC, and redefine the roles of local, state and federal governments in support of these precious national resources. Many developments of the current decade raise policy issues which could be explored during the WHC process. The Committee lists only a few as examples:

Technology is changing the nature of materials; it can increase information access but also exerts cost pressures on libraries. The over 2,000 online databases generally cost money each time they are used, unlike printed materials. How to budget for these services, and whether to charge users are difficult questions. A pending Federal Communications Commission proposal would double the telecommunications costs for access to many of these services. Compact disk technology shows promise, but raises thorny intellectual property issues.

Despite continued congressional support, six years of zero budgets, rescission proposal delays, and even illegal impoundments of federal library program funding, have taken a toll. What have the effects been on program planning and effectiveness?

Stimulated by LSCA, interlibrary cooperation has become a way of life for our nation's libraries. The boundaries drawn recently by auditors of LSCA funds between eligible uses of title I and III monies have caused problems. Is it time for Congress to clarify the means by which LSCA I priorities may be achieved?

What have been the effects of recent budget cuts at the Library of Congress on its national library services?

What has been the effect on school library services of the consolidation in 1981 of a major program of assistance to school libraries into the ECIA Chapter 2 school block grant to the states?

How has the abrupt withdrawal of general revenue sharing funds beginning in FY 1987 affected public libraries? In some localities where it was a major source of support, citizens will need to marshal their forces to explore new ways to support their libraries, and to learn of the latest and most cost-effective methods for maintaining access to up-to-date library and information resources.

A series of federal policy decisions in recent years have had the effect of restricting the amount of information collected or compiled by the federal government, and the amount and nature of such information published and disseminated. Various policy directives have caused agencies to cut back or discontinue such activities. What has been the effect on libraries' ability to meet their users' needs?

Looking to the upcoming observation of the Bicentennial of our U.S. Constitution and its historic underpinnings reminds us of the critical importance of fostering the basic tenets of our democracy. But, in addition, we are confronted with the absolute necessity for researching effective
methods of preserving the rapidly deteriorating documents and other rare resources and records in our libraries and archives. What should be the roles of the various players in increasing preservation efforts?

Libraries must also cope with the spiraling cost of materials, particularly the cost of journals. The average cost of a U.S. periodical has been increasing an average of about 11 percent each year during the 1980s, and is now at $71.41. A severe crisis has been precipitated by the decline of the dollar overseas. New York University, for instance, reports a 40 percent average increase in foreign journal prices.

Sven Groennings, a former staff member of the Education, Arts, and Humanities Subcommittee, recently explained "Why Libraries Increase Acquisitions of Foreign Books" (in an interview in the Spring/Summer 1987 issue of Connection: New England's Journal of Higher Education). The number of countries producing literature of all kinds has increased dramatically. The social sciences have become worldwide, with an explosive expansion in the number of foreign books and journals. Finally, he said, a quarter-century ago, two-thirds of the world's science was American, whereas now two-thirds is carried out abroad.

He added: "American libraries need to keep up with this change in order to enable our scientists to be knowledgeable about developments in their own fields, and to ensure that our science will be more than parochial. This is essential for the international competitiveness of the American economy."

The Committee agrees with these observations. As the White House Conference Preliminary Design Group noted in its excellent December 1985 report to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science: "Libraries are information agencies in an information society. They are indispensable to the economic well being of our nation. Research and development depends upon access to information. Libraries are needed by industries, business, and government as they deal with the need to increase productivity and adapt to new technology. Libraries offer, as well, an historic avenue for individual advancement, a means for increased social and economic mobility for poor and disadvantaged persons."

Libraries face major problems, as well as technological opportunities, in reaching their full potential to fulfill these purposes. The WHCLIS offers an unparalleled opportunity to examine these and other issues with the library community, public officials, and wide citizen involvement. A highlight of the first WHCLIS was a joint congressional hearing focusing on the themes of the conference. The Committee looks forward to such an opportunity in connection with the second WHCLIS.