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National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (1990-1991): Report 03

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NATIONAL COMMISSION ON LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (NCLIS)

PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

NCLIS

* is unique and none of its work is duplicated by any other agency. Our mandate, by law (PL 91-345), is to advise Congress and the President on policy in the library/information field, not to fund institutions or programs. A large portion of our effort is spent in providing advice to the Legislative and Executive Branches.

* works with state and local governments, libraries and the private sector to improve library/information services to all citizens.

* gives technical advice and assistance to Members of Congress, Congressional Committees and agencies in the Legislative and Executive Branches.

SELECTED ACCOMPLISHMENT AND CURRENT PROGRAMS

Legislative Activities

At the request of Congress, the Commission, has provided technical assistance on the reauthorization of the 25 year-old Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) by gathering information from members of the library/information community regarding their needs and ideas for the new legislation and making specific recommendations for changes.

At the request of the Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities, the Commission provided assistance to the Senate as they drafted their version of LSCA and selected witnesses for hearings.

The Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education also requested NCLIS' assistance with drafting the House version of LSCA and with the series of hearings which were held across the country, during which more than 200 witnesses testified on the need for LSCA. NCLIS also assisted this Subcommittee on the preliminary work toward reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA).

In addition, we provided expert advice to Congressman George Brown on his Institute for Information Policy and Research bill and worked on other programs on the protection of intellectual property.

Services to Older Americans

For its work on the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA) the Senate requested that the Commission provide information about its aging program and the results of a recent survey on current library services to the elderly. The NCLIS Vice Chairman presented testimony to the Select Committee on Aging on amending the Older Americans Act to specify that public libraries could be recipients of OAA grants.

NCLIS has signed a major agreement to work closely with the Administration on Aging (Department of Health and Human Services) to improve library and information services to the Nation's elderly.

Services to Rural Citizens

NCLIS is assisting Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Block in a major initiative to develop and conduct educational and information delivery programs for the rural public. The Commission's role is to ensure the participation of public libraries in this effort.

Since FY 1983, a Program Officer has been on full-time detail from USDA to NCLIS to direct the Commission's Rural Library and Information Services program. USDA published the report of the NCLIS coordinated Joint Congressional Hearing on "The Changing Information Needs of Rural America--The Role of Libraries and Information Technologies."

In January 1984, NCLIS organized a National Advisory Board on Rural Information Needs (NABRIN) Planning Committee in cooperation with USDA. This committee has recommended that a NABRIN should be established in USDA to focus on the information needs of rural America. NABRIN will be established in FY 1985. This is the Commission's and USDA's response to the testimony at the Joint Congressional Hearing mentioned above.

NCLIS was instrumental in establishing a new Special Interest Group on Rural Information Services in the American Society for Information Science (ASIS).

Censorship

NCLIS was directed by the Congress to study in fiscal years 1985 and 1986 the extent of censorship over the past decade in American public and school libraries and how our society is responding to it. This must be presented to Congress in January 1986.

Improving Literacy

NCLIS initiated a demonstration project with the Department of Defense/Army Human Engineering Laboratory, for transferring technology developed by Navy research to local libraries for adult literacy programs. The Department of Education and the private sector have participated in discussions which explored the possibility of extending and expanding the demonstration project.

Productivity

As followup to the White House Conference on Productivity, NCLIS is helping make better use of the valuable library and information resources available; stimulate the necessary increase in qualified personnel; and encourage needed research and development to assure maximum and speedy return on the investment in these resources, all of which impact on productivity.

In FY 1984, NCLIS co-hosted with the British Library the first US/UK bilateral meeting on information productivity. Plans for an FY 1985 meeting are underway.

Library and Information Science Education

In cooperation with the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE), library/information schools, and the information industry, NCLIS has established a roundtable on Support for Education of Library and Information Professionals. The goal is to explore ways to enlist private sector support for the education of information professionals.

Access to Government Information

During 1984, the Commission worked with the Joint Committee on Printing (JCP) regarding the Ad Hoc Committee on Depository Library Access to Federal Automated Data Bases and the proposed revisions to the regulations of title 44 of the U. S. Code. NCLIS advised the JCP to expand its view of federal publishing and printing responsibilities to include the larger perspective of federal information resources management.

NCLIS advised the Department of Commerce on archiving satellite data. NCLIS aided the Congress and the Administration in reaching agreement on legislation authorizing the commercialization of land remote-sensing satellites.

NCLIS has assisted the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in collecting data on public libraries from the states. The Commission will continue to advise and assist NCES on data collection from libraries. NCLIS co-hosts, with NCES, a semi-annual meeting which provides a forum for the library/information community to keep up-to-date on NCES activities in the library/

information area and provides NCES the opportunity to learn, first-hand, the statistical needs of the library/information community.

At the request of Congress and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), NCLIS is providing a forum for the discussions of contracting out of library services under OMB Circular A-76. They determined that NCLIS was the appropriate agency to chair and coordinate the meetings to discuss how well the contracting out of library services is working; which services lend themselves to contracting out and which do not.

NCLIS is the liaison between the Bureau of Census Interagency Working Group on the 1990 Census Content (Education) and OMB.

Protection of Intellectual Property

NCLIS provided advice at the request of Senator Charles Mathias on a bill proposing a National Commission on the Public Lending of Books.

At the request of Senator Mathias and Congressman Robert Kastenmeier, NCLIS participated in a Congressional symposium on copyright and technology. The Executive Director moderated a session on "Publishing, Libraries, and Education" Three basic themes emerged from the symposium: (1) subject matter and software; (2) transmission and access; and (3) how Congress can best position itself to maintain a balance between production and compensation in order to compensate for creative work and protect intellectual property as well as protect the public interest.

The Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) has begun a study on "Intellectual Property Rights in an Age of Electronics and Information." A panel of experts, including NCLIS Commissioner and former Chairman Charles Benton, was convened to review the issues and prepare an assessment. NCLIS has been named an advisor to OTA as they begin a second two-year study on the topic of "Federal Government Information Technology: Administrative Process and Civil Liberties."

International Information Activities

Beginning in FY 1983, NCLIS became the Secretariat for the US National Committee to the UNESCO General Information Program. The Commission, at the request of the Department of State, will continue in this role for as long as it is appropriate. NCLIS, working with Gregory Newell, is the key advisor to the Department of State on alternative mechanisms to UNESCO information-related programs. These are crucial to the U.S. information industry. State is relying on NCLIS to implement the alternatives.

NCLIS has assisted the United States Information Agency in revitalizing and strengthening its book and library-related programs abroad. The Commission sees this as a continuing relationship.

White House Conference on Library and Information Services

NCLIS is working with lay citizens, the Congress, the library/information community, federal agencies and the private sector toward implementing the 64 resolutions from the First White House Conference on Library and Information Services which was an investment of time and money of more than 100,000 people-- not to mention the considerable investment of Federal and State money. NCLIS has taken a leadership role in planning a 1989 national conference.

SUMMARY POINTS

Were it not for NCLIS, these projects would not have been initiated or carried out by any other agency in the Executive Branch of the Federal Government.

The Commission delivers a huge return on the investment Congress and the President have made in it. This year we will more than double the value of our ~~\$720,000~~ appropriation.

For example:

690,000 (FY 86)

o AT&T Bell Laboratories and others in the private sector are working with NCLIS to develop a three-quarter million dollar library/information center for an international meeting later this year in Chicago. NCLIS will use this center to demonstrate United States technology. At the end of the Conference, the library/information center will become the working information center for NCLIS and will be available for use by other federal agencies, and public and private groups.

o In FY 1984 the Council on Library Resources agreed to fund an assessment of "The Role of Fees in Supporting Library and Information Services in Public and Academic Libraries." NCLIS will complete in FY 1985.

o In the past, we formed a partnership with IBM in which they loaned us personnel to conduct studies of technology and productivity.

We believe that one of our major accomplishments has been the bringing together of the public and private sector information-providers with the information-using communities to assure that quality information is delivered efficiently to the public at the lowest possible cost. This effort is carried out at all levels of government (Federal, State and local) and among library/in-

formation professional and trade associations. It has been a continuous effort and will continue during the life of the Commission.

March 1985