FEDERAL LIBRARY GRANT PROGRAMS

Aid to Public Libraries Under the Library Services and Construction Act

The Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) was the first, and continues to be the largest, Federal program of assistance specifically to libraries. As most recently amended in 1984 (P.L. 98-480) and 1988 (P.L. 100-569), the LSCA contains six titles that authorize aid to public libraries. The LSCA programs are currently authorized through FY 1989, and will therefore be considered for reauthorization by the 101st Congress. With the exception of title V, funds have been appropriated for all titles of the LSCA for each of fiscal years 1986 through 1989. Grants are allocated by statutory formula to the States under titles I-III of the LSCA, while titles V and VI are smaller, discretionary grant programs, where awards are based on national competition among applicants.

Title I, Library Services

Title I of the LSCA is the largest Federal assistance program specifically for libraries, with an FY 1989 appropriation of $81 million. While LSCA title I is also the most broad and general of the Federal library programs, the legislative intent is that title I funds not be used for general operations, but to expand the range of library services offered in the States, either by serving previously unserved or underserved populations especially the elderly, the handicapped, or those living in residential institutions or by providing new types of services to the public at large. To help assure that Federal funds are supplementary, LSCA title I includes a series of maintenance-of-effort requirements. As is discussed later in this report, in the section on program issues, there have been mixed findings regarding the extent to which LSCA title I funds have been used for service expansion versus maintenance of existing services.

---

2 As will be described further below, title IV of the LSCA is not funded as a separate program. Title IV provides that 1.5 percent of the appropriations for each of titles I-III be used for grants to serve American Indians, and that 0.5 percent be used for grants to serve Native Hawaiians.

3 In order to receive title I grants, States must assure that State and local expenditures for title I purposes will equal or exceed such State and local expenditures for the second preceding year; and that expenditures from all sources for library services to institutionalized and handicapped persons will equal or exceed such expenditures for the second preceding year.
Title I grants are allocated to the States on the basis of a formula that includes a State/local matching requirement. Two percent of total title I appropriations are set-aside for grants to agencies providing library services to American Indians and Native Hawaiians (under title IV). From the remaining funds, each State first receives a flat grant of $200,000 ($40,000 for each Outlying Area⁴), while additional funds are allocated among the States on the basis of their total population. The State matching requirement varies from 33 to 66 percent of the total (Federal plus State match) program costs, depending on the State's personal income per capita. The lower the State's personal income per capita, the lower the required matching percentage.

The distribution of LSCA title I funds among public libraries within States is conducted largely at the discretion of the State library agencies. One limitation is that in years when title I appropriations exceed $60 million, a portion of the title I grant in most States must be reserved for libraries serving cities with a population of 100,000 or more.⁵

The appropriations authorization level for LSCA title I is $95 million for FY 1989. The FY 1989 appropriation is $81,009,000.

Issues

The primary issues with respect to LSCA title I, and the LSCA in general, are whether the Act's purposes have been met, and whether the program has substantial impact on the availability and quality of library services. The primary original purpose of the Library Services Act of 1956 was to extend public library services to rural and other areas that had no public libraries. This basic goal would appear to have been met; the Department of Education estimates that 96 percent of the U.S. population has access to public library services, and that the remaining 4 percent live in such isolated circumstances that extension of services to them would be uneconomical. However, there is no general consensus on standards for "adequate," as opposed to minimal, public library services, nor any claim that 96 percent or more of the American population has access to "adequate" public library services.

In comparison to total revenues for public libraries from all sources, LSCA title I funds, or even all LSCA grants, would be relatively insignificant. An estimated 5 percent of all public library revenues come from Federal

⁴The Outlying Areas are American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and the Virgin Islands.

⁵The required proportion of grants, made from appropriations in excess of $60 million, that must be reserved for libraries serving cities with a population of 100,000 or more varies by State, depending on whether the State contains any such cities and, if so, whether 50 percent or more of the total State population resides in such cities.
sources. However, LSCA title I funds are not intended to be used for general operations, but for innovative services or services to special populations, such as the elderly or those in institutions. Unfortunately, the most recent evaluation of actual use of LSCA title I funds was published in 1981, and is based on data from 1978. According to that study, the use of LSCA title I funds was almost evenly split between ongoing services to the general public, versus innovative programs or services to special populations—e.g., handicapped, limited-English proficient, Indian, institutionalized, or other disadvantaged persons. However, many of the "ongoing services to the general public" appear to have been services initiated earlier with LSCA title I funds. Further, the distinction between "innovative" versus "ongoing" services is not clearly defined in the LSCA, and may be subject to debate. Therefore, the fact that an LSCA title I-supported service was not found in this study to be "innovative" does not necessarily mean that Federal funds simply supplanted State and local revenues for basic library services. The authors of the 1981 evaluation recommended modifications to the legislation and to oversight activities by the Department of Education to reduce the extent to which title I funds were used to maintain existing services, although this would have the disadvantage of reducing the large degree of flexibility that States now have to determine the uses and distribution of funds.

The 1981 study also found that LSCA title I funds represented 25 percent of all funds specifically devoted to State-sponsored, innovative, public library projects. Such projects involved the introduction of new technologies, community outreach services, continuing education for librarians, provision of services to the blind and physically handicapped, establishment of regional library systems, and improving the capacities of State library agencies. Thus, the potential significance and effect of LSCA title I funds depends primarily on whether they are viewed as a relatively small part of the total revenues of libraries, or as a relatively substantial share of "seed money" for expanded and innovative services.

Title II, Public Library Construction

Assistance for public library construction projects is authorized under title II of the LSCA. Authorized uses of title II funds include, but are not limited to, construction to remove barriers to access by handicapped persons, to conserve energy, to accommodate new information technologies, or to renovate historic buildings for use as public libraries.

LSCA title II funds are allocated to States using the same allocation formula and matching requirements as for title I, with two exceptions. First, the flat grant amount is $100,000 for each State ($20,000 for each Outlying Area). Second, the Federal share of total construction costs for each individual project assisted under title II may not exceed 50 percent. Grants

---

for individual projects within each State are made at the discretion of the State library agency. Funds were not appropriated for LSCA title II throughout most of the 1970s and early 1980s. However, Federal support for this program was revived in FY 1983, and it has been funded in each of FY 1985-1989.

The appropriations authorization level for LSCA title II is $50 million for FY 1989. The FY 1989 appropriation is $22,324,000.

**Issues**

In general, Federal programs in the areas of education, arts, and humanities provide few funds for construction, other than minor remodelling. This is at least partially because construction is usually considered to be a "basic" cost of providing education and related services, while Federal aid tends to be limited to the "supplementary" costs of providing "special" services. Similarly, no funds were appropriated for LSCA title II between fiscal years 1974 and 1982. However, funds have been provided under title II in FY 1983, as part of an "anti-recession" supplemental appropriations act, and in each year since 1985. The primary issues with respect to this assistance is whether it is an appropriate Federal role, and whether the aid is necessary.

While States are given substantial discretion in awarding LSCA title II funds, projects to be assisted include but are not limited to those to increase access to libraries by the handicapped, to conserve energy, to accommodate new technologies, or to convert historic buildings for use as libraries. Further, States and localities are required to match the Federal funds for each construction project, on at least a one-to-one basis. Thus, title II funds provide only partial support of construction projects, which are intended to help meet a Federal mandate (with respect to accessibility for the handicapped) or national legislative goals (of energy conservation, preservation of historic buildings, or adoption of new information technologies) under the LSCA or other statutes. Nevertheless, there is no requirement that title II funds be used to meet any of the above purposes, and the legislation contains no test or measure of need. As a result, it might be argued that title II funds largely supplant State or local funds that might otherwise be used for construction of public libraries.

Finally, in contrast to LSCA title I, title II grants may represent a substantial share of total expenditures for public library construction in the United States. The annual average of total public library construction and renovation expenditures in FY 1983-1986 is reported as having been $120.5 million. The FY 1989 appropriation for title II of $22,324,000 would represent approximately 19 percent of such an expenditure level.

---

Title III, Interlibrary Cooperation and Resource Sharing

Title III of the LSCA authorizes grants to the States for planning, developing, and implementing cooperative library resource-sharing networks. Historically, such resource-sharing primarily has taken the form of interlibrary loan programs, under which books not available at one library could be provided through other cooperating libraries in the region or State. While such interlibrary loan networks are still supported under title III, the program currently assists a variety of new forms of information technology, such as computer bibliographic systems that are communicated through telephone lines.

LSCA title III funds are allocated to States using the same allocation formula as for title I, with two exceptions. First, the flat grant amount is $40,000 for each State ($10,000 for each Outlying Area). Second, there are no matching or maintenance-of-effort requirements for title III.

The appropriations authorization level for LSCA title III is $30 million for FY 1989. The FY 1989 appropriation is $19,102,000.

Issues

It is highly probable that LSCA title III funds helped to stimulate the development and rapid growth of interlibrary loan programs and regional library consortia in the early years of the program, and of computerized bibliographic information transfer networks more recently. The major current issue for this program is whether the title III funds any longer significantly stimulate the development and expansion of these services, or the initiation of newer information and communications technologies, such as optical laser disks or satellite information retrieval.

Unfortunately, the lack of any significant or recent evaluations of this program make it impossible to provide reliable answers to such questions. While it is possible that title III funds are now largely used to maintain services that were initiated with previous title III grants, and that might be continued with State or local funds if title III aid were no longer available, there is no way to confirm such a hypothesis. Alternatively, title III funds might continue to be focused primarily on "cutting edge" information sharing techniques, that are undoubtedly rapidly developing. While these newer information technologies are generally more cost efficient over time—that is usually a primary rationale for their development—they usually involve substantial "up front" costs that libraries typically find it difficult to meet.

As noted elsewhere in this report, certain other Federal agencies—particularly the Library of Congress and the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science—conduct research, development, and dissemination activities related to library technologies. Therefore, a secondary issue related to LSCA title III is whether the Federal Government can best aid libraries in this area through continued—and perhaps expanded—research
and development, or through the financial assistance for implementation under title III. It might also be asked whether these related activities are sufficiently coordinated to be efficiently conducted and the results widely disseminated.

Title IV, Library Services for Indian Tribes

Title IV of the LSCA is not a separate authorization of appropriations; rather, it provides that certain funds from appropriations for titles I through III be set-aside to support services to American Indians and Native Hawaiians. The amount of each of title I through III's appropriations to be set-aside is 1.5 percent for American Indian tribes, and 0.5 percent for Native Hawaiians. The funds available to serve American Indians are to be allocated in equal portions to each applicant Indian tribe. Each program for which funds are so granted must be administered by a librarian. The grants for services to Native Hawaiians are to be distributed to organizations representing such persons that are recognized by the Governor of Hawaii. The provisions of title IV were added to the LSCA by the 1984 amendments to that Act (P.L. 98-480, as amended by P.L. 95-159). For FY 1989, a total appropriation of $2,448,000 was set aside for LSCA title IV.

Issues

Since this is a relatively new program, involving set-asides of funds from the existing LSCA titles I through III, there have been no evaluations, and no major issues have arisen. However, a survey of planned uses of FY 1987 LSCA title IV funds was published by the Department of Education (ED) in 1988. According to this report, for FY 1987 ED first used the title IV set-aside funds to award basic grants of $3,572 to each of 191 Indian tribes and Alaskan Native villages, and $602,500 to Hawaiian Natives. The remaining title IV funds—$1,145,184—were used for 17 special project grants to Indian Tribes and Alaskan Native villages.

As this program develops, issues might arise regarding the distribution of these funds, and the efficiency with which the funds are used to provide library services to Indians and Native Hawaiians. It might be questioned whether the ED practice of providing small basic grants to each of several Indian tribes and Alaskan Native villages is an effective use of funds, although the provision of equal grants per applicant tribe is required by the authorizing legislation. Another title IV issue is whether ED has statutory justification for using almost one-half of title IV funds for discretionary special project grants, even though this might be a more effective use of funds than the small basic grants. Finally, it might be questioned whether the grant for services to Native Hawaiians is disproportionately large in

---

comparison to the number of such individuals. According to the 1988 ED report on uses of title IV funds, the Native Hawaiian grants have been used for a wide variety of purposes, including needs assessment, recording and cataloging of oral chants, support of a genealogy resource center, dissemination of a collection of slides of Hawaiian plants, preparation of a database on Hawaiian cultural and historical sites, and indexing of documents related to Hawaii.

**Title V, Foreign Language Materials Acquisition**

Under title V of the LSCA, grants are authorized for the acquisition of foreign language materials. Grants are to be made on a nationally competitive basis, and no annual grant shall be for more than $15,000. The appropriations authorization level for title V is $1 million for FY 1989. Through FY 1989, no funds have been appropriated for this title, which was added to the LSCA in 1984 (P.L. 98-480).

**Issues**

As this program has not been funded or implemented, no issues have arisen with respect to it. If funds are appropriated for LSCA title V in the future, it might be questioned whether a program with such a low authorization level could have a significant impact on the foreign language collections of more than a very small number of public libraries. Alternatively, it might be argued that increased congressional interest in foreign language education as evidenced 1988 legislative activity⁹--might justify renewed attention to LSCA title V, and perhaps a higher appropriations authorization level for the program.

**Title VI, Library Literacy Programs**

The final title of the LSCA authorizes grants for adult literacy programs in public libraries, to be made on the basis of National competition. No annual grant may exceed $25,000. The grants may be used for coordinating, planning, promoting, or conducting literacy programs in public libraries. Grants may also be used for training librarians and volunteers to participate in such programs.

The appropriations authorization level for LSCA title VI, which was added to the LSCA in 1984 (P.L. 98-480), is $5 million for FY 1989. The FY 1989 appropriation for this program is $4,730,000.

⁹In 1988, the Congress authorized a new program of aid to foreign language education in elementary and secondary schools (title II, part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by P.L. 100-297 and P.L. 100-418), and expanded the authorization for the postsecondary foreign language/international studies programs of title II of the Higher Education Act (under P.L. 100-418).
Issues

The primary issues for LSCA title VI are whether such a relatively small program, with a relatively low grant size limit ($25,000), can significantly reduce the extent of adult illiteracy; whether this program complements—or duplicates—the programs of the Adult Education Act; and whether grants under this program will significantly add to the number of library literacy activities being conducted without Federal assistance.

Since 1981, a Coalition for Literacy has been sponsored by the American Library Association and a number of other organizations, such as the International Reading Association and the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education. Using funds provided by private foundations and other sources, the Coalition provides technical assistance, advertising, and other services to libraries conducting literacy programs throughout the Nation. The existence of this privately sponsored and funded network might help to increase the efficiency with which LSCA title VI grants are utilized; alternatively, with library literacy activities already being stimulated and assisted by this network, LSCA title VI grants might have little net impact.

As yet, there have been no evaluations that might indicate which of these hypotheses would more accurately portray the effects of this program. However, the ED did publish in 1987 a descriptive survey of projects funded by LSCA title VI in fiscal year 1986. In that year, ED granted LSCA title VI funds to 239 library literacy projects, with a wide variety of approaches and target populations.

---