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GENERAL COMMENTS

The Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) has been essential in supporting the efforts of Wisconsin libraries to provide citizens with access to the information and materials needed to meet the challenges of today’s world. Wisconsin citizens have benefitted greatly from the LSCA program and we support a reauthorized LSCA program that builds on that record of success.

A major value of LSCA has been to demonstrate effective library programs. This demonstration aspect of LSCA should be emphasized in the new act. The $11.5 million in state funds which Wisconsin spends on public library systems each year is the direct result of successful system demonstrations funded through LSCA over a period of many years. Many other LSCA demonstration projects also have led to increased local and state funding for improved services.

It has been proposed that the name of the act be changed. The word "library" should continue to be a part of the name of the act if this is done.

LSCA should have as few separate titles as possible to achieve its purposes. It should be possible to collapse the current eight titles into two or three titles. One possibility would be to have a Title I for Library Cooperation and Technology, a Title II for Public Library Services, and a Title III for Public Library Capital Improvements. It is confusing and unnecessary to have multiple titles, especially if there is duplication or overlap of purpose. The new act should provide a comparable level of funding for public library development and library cooperation and technology.

The new act should be a state-based program. Needs assessment, planning, and evaluation are functions best done at the state level. State level planning and evaluation will ensure that the federal priorities for the LSCA program are adhered to and that federal priorities are integrated into state and local-level planning and services. For example, library literacy projects should be funded in state-based programs to ensure the coordination of library literacy services within the state and the dissemination of information about these activities.

The reauthorization of LSCA provides an excellent opportunity to simplify and clarify the current act which has had numerous amendments and additions over the years. Clarity of language and intent is important.

SUGGESTED PRIORITIES FOR THE PROGRAM

The LSCA priorities should allow maximum flexibility among priorities and in activities designed to address those priorities. There is tremendous diversity among states in populations served, library service organizations and patterns of service, and in funding capabilities. Flexibility in priorities will allow states to design programs and services to address federal priorities, while taking local and state concerns into account.
The new act should include priorities which reflect the National Education Goals, recommendations of the WHCLIS, and the National Information Infrastructure. At the same time, it should build on existing LSCA strengths to improve public library services and encourage cooperative library activities and service delivery among all types of libraries.

The new act should not have a separate Major Urban Resource Library priority with a maintenance of effort provision. Public libraries in urban areas, however, would be eligible for funds in all titles and priority areas.

The new act should include the broad priorities listed below. States should have broad discretion to develop programs to address these priorities and to determine the best methods for implementing such programs. The focus should be on demonstrating new services, on coordinating services to maximize accessibility and achieve maximum effectiveness, and on providing incentives for increased local and state support of services.

Title I Library Cooperation and Technology

• Cooperation

Included in this priority could be programs for promoting cooperation among different types of libraries at the local, area, and state level. With the increased knowledge of resources available throughout states, and, indeed, throughout the country, there continues to be a need to provide the actual mechanisms for access to these materials. For example, Wisconsin is using LSCA funds to provide a demonstration delivery service throughout many areas of the state. Wisconsin's statewide database lists over twenty million volumes held in Wisconsin libraries. There is a need to develop mechanisms for getting those materials in a timely and efficient manner to the people who need them.

• Technology

Included below are suggestions for programs that could be included in this priority.

• promoting shared automated systems by different types of libraries at the local, area, and state level
• promoting library connections to the national information infrastructure
• supporting a state-level network for sharing resources among different types of libraries

LSCA funds have been key to the ability to plan for and develop a statewide database of the materials held by Wisconsin libraries. These funds will be critical to our continued ability to utilize new technology to improve and expand this data base and provide the necessary linkages to local, state and national networks.

• demonstrating new and innovative technology for library applications

In Wisconsin LSCA funds have been used to enable libraries to convert their bibliographic records to machine readable form, to implement automated circulation and catalog systems, to improve reference services through the use of technology (e.g., the purchase of reference databases, electronic community information resources, and implementation of local and wide area networks). These funds have enabled libraries in Wisconsin to move more rapidly than otherwise would have been possible in implementing information technology.
Title II Public Library Services

• Public Library Development and Improvement

Included below are suggestions for programs that could be included in this priority.

• bringing library services to areas without such services

While all residents of Wisconsin have legal access to free public library service, this is due in large measure to the incentive of LSCA funding which this state has received over the years. There are still approximately 6 million people in the United States without legal access to free public library service. In seeking universal access to the electronic "information highway", we should not forget that we still don't have universal access to public library service. While states have the primary role of ensuring access to public library service by the residents of their state, federal funding and requirements under the new act should be used to encourage states to confront this problem.

• improving inadequate public library services and access to public library service

Tens of millions of people in the United States have access to inadequate public library service. Many people cannot use the public library which is most convenient to them or best meets their information needs because of political borders. LSCA funds have been used in Wisconsin since 1987 to enable public libraries that do not meet minimum standards in terms of hours open, reference services, and collections to work toward meeting those standards. This program has been very popular and successful. For example, since 1987 ten public libraries have used LSCA funds, for a maximum of two years, to increase hours open. All ten of these public libraries continued increased open hours with local funds when the LSCA funds were no longer available. While this program has been a success, one out of seven Wisconsin public libraries still are not open even 20 hours per week. Much has been accomplished; much remains to be done.

• strengthening state library agencies

LSCA funds have been used in Wisconsin to strengthen the ability of the state library agency to provide leadership and services on a statewide basis. Among the types of projects funded have been state-level backup reference and interlibrary loan services, consultant services in library automation and service to users with special needs, major statewide studies and planning efforts, workshops, and publications.

• encouraging libraries to more effectively plan and evaluate library services
• encouraging libraries to be involved in community economic development efforts

• Special Populations

Included in this priority could be programs for a variety of persons with special needs. Wisconsin has given a high priority for the use of LSCA funds for library services to persons with special needs for many years. This priority would enable public libraries to participate in efforts to reach the National Education Goal that every adult will be literate and have the skills necessary to compete in a world economy. A possible definition is:
Individuals with special needs are persons of any age (children, young adults and adults) or ethnic background (including, but not limited to American Indian, Hispanic, African-American, and Southeast Asian peoples) from among the following groups:

- educationally disadvantaged persons;
- economically disadvantaged persons, including those living below the census-defined poverty level;
- functionally illiterate persons;
- persons with limited English-speaking ability;
- persons with physical and mental disabilities (including people with developmental disabilities and mentally ill persons);
- homebound persons; and
- residents of local, county, and state institutions/facilities such as jails, halfway houses, nursing homes, etc.

This definition is broad enough to include a wide variety of persons with special needs, including those in both rural and urban areas, and flexible enough to allow states and local communities to address particular concerns.

**Children and Youth**

Included below are suggestions for programs that could be included in this priority.

- enabling public libraries to be partners with other community agencies in ensuring that children and youth have access to the information and materials they need;
- enabling public libraries to be partners in National Education Goal efforts to see that all American children start school ready to learn and demonstrate competence in the core subjects;
- demonstrating services to children and youth;
- funding parent/family education projects for early childhood agencies;
- working in partnership with day care centers and other early childhood providers.

In Wisconsin, LSCA funds have been targeted since 1987-88 to enabling public libraries to demonstrate services to young children and their parents or care givers to encourage the development of reading readiness. The category was an attempt to help and encourage libraries to be partners with other appropriate community agencies in efforts to reduce illiteracy and promote reading. The results of these projects were so positive that LSCA funds are currently being used to produce a publication that will serve as a guideline for other public libraries wanting to initiate such services.

**Title III Library Capital Improvements**

Included in this title could be projects that are eligible under the current Title II program for Public Library Construction and Technology Enhancement. Wisconsin has used its Title II funds for public library construction and remodeling projects. These funds have been a powerful incentive to local communities to raise funds for construction projects.
ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

• General Administration

Funding needs to continue to be made available for state library agencies to administer the new act.

• Forward Funding

Forward funding of the LSCA program would make planning for the use of the funds easier and more timely because states would know several months in advance how much money would be available. The fact that LSCA currently is not forward funded creates problems in the smooth administration of the program. Recently announced proposed regulations resulting from the Cash Management Improvement Act of 1990, will further compound existing problems. In order to cope with the lack of forward funding, most states do not operate the LSCA program on the federal fiscal year. In Wisconsin, for example, we operate the LSCA year on a July - June cycle, with the grant year beginning nine months after the start of the federal fiscal year. By starting the LSCA year nine months after the start of the fiscal year, we know how much money has been appropriated and can plan for the use of those funds in a more logical and systematic way. By delaying the start of LSCA projects, however, we reduce from 24 months to 15 months the amount of time we have to spend the LSCA funds (Tidings Amendment regulations) and this leaves us vulnerable to the possibility that funds will not be spent in a timely fashion and will be lost. If the proposed regulations referred to above are adopted, plans for the use of LSCA will need to be submitted to the Department of Education on July 1st each year - three months before the start of the federal fiscal year and prior to the time Congress has even acted on the budget. In addition, the penalties for late submission of plans would be severe. It is essential that LSCA be forward funded to alleviate these problems.

• Maintenance of Effort

The Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements under the new act should be significantly revised. The current maintenance of effort requirements are an administrative quagmire. The vast differences in the ways state library agencies and services are organized and administered make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to come up with common definitions appropriate and fair to all states. Yet these definitions are critical in determining whether states are maintaining effort and are thus eligible to receive their LSCA allocations.

At a minimum the following should be accomplished:

• The MOE requirements relating to institutions and library services to the blind and physically handicapped should be eliminated.

The MOE requirement relating to institutions is especially difficult to administer, and there is the disparity in how states report MOE relating to institutions. MOE requirements do not make sense when the agency having to maintain effort has no control over the budgets/funding levels of the agencies providing the services. For example, state institutions in Wisconsin and many other states are not under the authority of the state library agency. Therefore, the state library agency has no control over the state institution budgets for library services. Indeed, in Wisconsin, budget control for state institutions is the responsibility of fifteen individual wardens. Yet, if Wisconsin does not maintain effort in terms of state and federal funds for institution library services, Wisconsin would lose its entire LSCA allocation.
The standards to which states are held for MOE requirements relating to the blind and physically handicapped are very uneven and, thus, unfair. For example, the Wisconsin Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped started with LSCA support and now receives nearly $500,000 annually in state funds. Wisconsin is proud of the support this program has received from the state, even though Wisconsin is not a wealthy state, and feel that LSCA was a tremendous boost to efforts to demonstrate the value of this service to state legislators. However, Wisconsin now finds itself in the uncomfortable position of having to maintain effort at this relatively high level, even under difficult economic conditions. Other states, even though they may have an ability to pay equal to Wisconsin’s, spend only a minimal amount of state funds per year for regional library services and have to maintain effort at that very low level.

- The MOE requirement relating to state agencies should either be eliminated or combined with a broader MOE requirement relating to state support for public library service. The current definition of what should be included in this MOE is unclear. State library agencies vary greatly in the programs they administer. Some state library agencies such as Wisconsin administer school library media programs, and others administer archival programs.

- Any penalty for failure to maintain effort should be based on proportionate reductions. Loss of all LSCA funding is too harsh a penalty.

- Any MOE requirement should be based on state appropriations or expenditures only.

3/14/94
PURPOSE OF THIS ACT

The purpose of this act is to provide stimulus funding, at the federal level, which will strengthen the public library's roles of providing and managing information into the next century. Specifically, federal funding is needed to:

(1) Continue the public library's tradition of public service, which involves providing special library and information assistance to particular groups of people in the society;

(2) Support the public library's commitment to collaborating in meeting the National Education Goals;

(3) Integrate libraries and their collections into the National Information Infrastructure because libraries can contribute to the design, provide access to others in the society, and are themselves consumers and producers of information as they process and distill information for the public;

(4) Encourage innovation and R&D among libraries by supporting primary and secondary research and pilot projects;

(5) Support the redesign of library and information science education, training, and recruitment; and

(6) Ensure that performance objectives are met and continuous improvements are made as a result of evaluation of the effectiveness of activities funded under this Act.

Title I

Title I focuses on improving information access for diverse populations in order to close the gap between the information haves and the information have nots; supporting lifelong learning and the NEG; and improving library and information services for children of all cultures living below the federal poverty level.

Title II

Title II focuses on integrating library services and facilities into the emerging national information infrastructure so that all citizens have convenient access to electronic information, to "virtual library collections" as well as to "physical" library collections, irrespective of location;

Title III

Title III focuses on special national and state-level initiatives to improve information management and information access through: the digitization of key library and research resources so that they can be accessed from any library in the country; the funding of library and information science R&D to encourage innovation in the field; the funding of innovative proposals to redesign library and information science education, training, and recruitment; and the evaluation of the effectiveness of activities funded under this Act.