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White House Conference on Library and  
Information Services: Early Stages (1979-1985)

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12-16-1986

## White House Conference on Library and Information Services: Early Stages (1979-1985): Correspondence 05

Mary Kit Dunn

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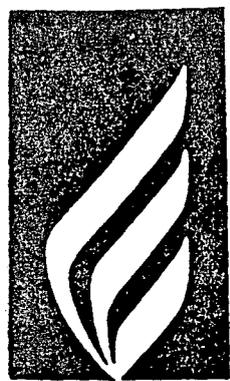
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# WHCLIST

16 December 1986

TO : Association Executive Directors and Other Supporters of  
the White House Conference on Library and Information  
Services

FROM: Mary Kit Dunn, Chair *Mary Kit Dunn*  
WHCLIST (White House Conference on Library & Information  
Services Taskforce)

RE : Establishment of an Association Network to Work Toward  
WHCLIS II

It appears probable that legislation authorizing the President to call a Second White House Conference on Library and Information Services will be reintroduced early in the 100th Congress, sometime after the first of the year. The goal is to get this bill passed so it can be on the President's desk for signature during National Library Week, April 5-11. WHCLIST, at its recent Phoenix meeting, agreed to become the catalyst for encouraging organizations to begin thinking about communication channels and activities within their groups.

Enclosed are two fact sheets prepared by Eileen Cooke, Director of the American Library Association's Washington Office, which describes 1) the impact of the first White House Conference in 1979, and 2) preliminary plans for WHCLIS II which were drawn up by a design group appointed by the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science and chaired by Bill Asp.

Please note that the recommended themes for the second conference are:

Library and Information Services for: productivity, for literacy and for democracy.

✓ It is important that the professional associations be involved in the White House Conference process from the "ground floor." We suggest that it would be helpful and timely for your association to now:

1. Appoint a person as liaison to receive information and communicate it to the appropriate members of your group.
2. Establish a special committee/taskforce to begin discussing possible programs, publications, etc., for your group to use in preparing for WHCLIS II. A suggested charge to this committee might be:

Monitor current information on the first White House Conference results and planning for the second conference; identify and promote activities and publications needed to prepare for the White House Conference, including statistics; cooperate with legislative efforts to secure passage of authorizing legislation, if desired by the group.

3. If you have not yet done so, pass a resolution of support for WHCLIS II and forward it immediately to WHCLIST. We are collecting all association resolutions.
4. Plan a future program to focus on what your members feel should be addressed by the White House Conference, and how your group's goals fit under one or more of the White House Conference themes. WHCLIST will provide speakers, if requested.

We have prepared this request for information on the enclosed form, which we ask you fill out as soon as possible and return to WHCLIST at:

1700 East Las Olas Boulevard  
Suite 100  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301

Enclosures:  
Impact of WHCLIS I  
Summary of Plans for WHCLIS II  
Response form

MAHR/cwr/001

ASSOCIATION RESPONSE FORM

Association: \_\_\_\_\_

Liaison to WHCLIST:            Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
                                      Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
                                      City: \_\_\_\_\_  
                                      Phone: (o) \_\_\_\_\_  
                                              (h) \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Taskforce Formed

Name of Taskforce: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Chair (if different from above): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Address of Chair (if different from above): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (o) \_\_\_\_\_ (h) \_\_\_\_\_

Members names and addresses: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Resolution Passed?    (enclose copy) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Willing to Help Legislative Effort? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Program Planned for:    (Date) \_\_\_\_\_  
                                      (Place) \_\_\_\_\_

WHCLIST Speaker(s) Needed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SUMMARY

### NCLIS White House Conference on Library and Information Services Preliminary Design Group Report

**LEGISLATION:** In April, 1985, identical resolutions (S.J. Res. 112 and H.J. Res. 244) were introduced in the House and Senate, calling for a second White House Conference on Library and Information Services (WHCLIS) in 1989 by Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-RI) and Rep. William Ford (D-MI). National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) Chair Eleanor Hashim then appointed the WHCLIS Preliminary Design Group. Members are: William G. Asp, Design Group Chairman; from NCLIS, Gordon M. Ambach, Charles Benton (Ex Officio), Daniel Carter, Byron Leeds, Margaret Phelan and Mary Alice Reszetar, White House Conference Program Officer; from COSLA, Wayne Johnson, Patricia Klinck, Bridget Lamont and Joseph F. Shubert; from WHCLIST, Barbara Cooper, Bruce Daniels, Jule Shipman, Lotsee Smith and Amanda Williams; from Library of Congress, Robert Chartrand (Ex Officio).

The Design Group's report, accepted by NCLIS December 3, 1985, makes the following recommendations.

**SCOPE AND FOCUS:** The Design Group proposed three overarching themes for the 1989 WHC: library and information services for productivity, for literacy, and for democracy. These themes will enable the Conference to identify unmet needs, examine issues, and develop recommendations as called for in the pending legislation.

**Productivity:** Productivity in the U.S. has slowed over the last decade. As a result, our advantage in world markets has been shaken and employment in many industries is affected. Knowledge, learning, information and skilled intelligence are the new raw materials of international commerce. Economists often cite two factors in productivity increases and decreases: investment in technology (equipment, facilities, process) and investment in human resources (knowledge and development of workers' skills and capabilities). Increased employment is a key part of economic growth and the stability of the economy.

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. Business, science and technology sections of public and university libraries every day provide technical reports, international trade information, economic data, federal standards and specifications, copies of patents, and other information needed for business and industrial purposes. Small businesses, an increasingly significant part of our economy, need library services because they cannot afford extensive in-house information resources or massive retraining programs.

**Literacy:** Illiteracy constitutes a national crisis. Some 27 million persons, or one-fifth of the adult population, are unable to read beyond a fifth grade level. These Americans are functionally illiterate---unable to complete an application form, write a check, address an envelope, help their children with homework, or read a warning sign. At the same time, the changing nature of many jobs and a more complex society demands higher levels of reading and writing ability. Young people join the ranks of the reading handicapped every day.

Libraries play a role in developing and expanding literacy. They provide materials and space, for educators, tutors and students. Literacy

programs can involve all types of libraries—school, academic, public, institution, special and Native American.

In a society that daily becomes more information-oriented and more economically dependent on the effective use of knowledge, the ability to find and use information is a fundamental skill. Productive, literate citizens must have the ability to sort through bodies of information, find what is needed and use it to solve problems.

Democracy: Like business, government at local, state and federal levels is part of today's complicated information society. More than ever before, information is a crucial resource in a democratic society. Information is the resource upon which electors make their decisions, and upon which elected and appointed officials and their staffs make decisions that affect those governed. Personnel and government decision making is being altered by technology, social change, and a rethinking of federal and state responsibilities. As changes take place in the federal government, more is expected of state and local governments. Government decision making is not the sole responsibility of elected or paid officials; a democratic society depends upon the informed participation of its people.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE: While the Conference is held under the auspices of NCLIS, the 30-person White House Conference Advisory Committee proposed in the legislation has responsibility for planning and conducting the Conference. Eight members are appointed by the NCLIS Chair, ten by the President, five by the Speaker of the House (no more than three Representatives), and five by the President pro tempore of the Senate (no more than three Senators). The Secretary of Education and the Librarian of Congress would be Advisory Committee members.

STATE PARTICIPATION: Based on the experience of WHCLIS I, the pending legislation should be amended to allow maximum flexibility in designing state and regional pre-conferences. Some areas may prefer to participate in multi-state activities. Timeliness is important; pre-WHC activities should be held as close in time as possible to the national event. Technology, especially teleconferencing and computer networking, should be utilized for cost-effective, pre-conference activities and as a medium for training delegates.

STAFFING: The Conference needs a core full-time staff but additional staff might be on detail or loan from other sources.

FINANCING: The Design Group identified three alternatives: 1) federal appropriations, 2) a combination of federal, state and private sources, or 3) funding entirely from the private sector. [Rep. Bill Ford (D-MI), Chairman of the House Postsecondary Education Subcommittee, asked at the library oversight hearing held April 8, 1986, what WHCLIS II would cost. The response was that it would not be much more than the '79 WHC (\$3.5 million), perhaps about \$5 million, with additional private and other support.]

SCHEDULING: The Design Group proposed a detailed timeline, from fall of 1985 through the post-conference formation of the Task Force to identify and plan implementation. [About one-fourth of the House and Senate have, so far, co-sponsored the pending legislation, but time is running short if the measures are to be passed in the 99th Congress.]

IMPACT OF FIRST  
WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES  
Washington, D.C., November 15-19, 1979

PARTICIPANTS: This historic conference brought together over 900 delegates representing more than 100,000 people who participated at the state and local level in 58 pre-conferences in the states, territories and the District of Columbia. By law, two-thirds of the delegates were interested citizens, while one-third were librarians and library trustees.

A formula reflecting each state's total representation in Congress was used to determine the number of delegates selected by each pre-conference. The delegates, a broad cross section of American society, were joined by an additional 3,000 observers. Consequently, WHCLIS had the largest attendance of any White House Conference in history.

ORIGINS: The original suggestion for such a conference was made in 1957 by Channing Bete, Sr., a library trustee from Greenfield, Massachusetts. He proposed the idea to a meeting of ALA's American Library Trustee Association in Kansas City, Kansas.

As a result of widespread public support, Congress passed a joint resolution authorizing the White House Conference in December 1974. This resolution was signed as PL 93-568 by President Ford on December 31, 1974. President Carter signed an appropriations bill in May 1977, which provided \$3.5 million to organize and conduct the conference under the direction of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science.

RESULTS: Public Awareness - The most important, though intangible result of the first White House Conference was an increase in public awareness of libraries, and their impact on individuals, the economy and the nation.

Education Department - The White House Conference influenced the internal organization of the Department of Education. When ED was established in 1980, an attempt to split the library programs among several departmental units was defeated, and a Deputy Assistant Secretary was appointed to direct an Office of Libraries and Learning Technologies. Under the 1985 reorganization of ED, Dr. Anne Mathews was named Director of Library Programs of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Federal Funding - As a direct result of the White House Conference recommendations on library networking and resource sharing, LSCA Title III (Inter-library Cooperation) was increased 140 percent in one year, from \$5 to \$12 million in 1981. Despite the budget recommendations of the Administration, LSCA III has continued to receive increased appropriations, indicating strong support for a federal role in this area.

WHCLIST - The White House Conference on Library and Information Services Taskforce, an independent non-profit association, was formed by delegates after the conference in 1979. Composed of about half volunteers and half professional library people from every state and territory, the goal is to work for implementation of the resolutions passed at the conference. Publications include WHCLIST Annual Report from the States (and territories) and the 1985 Five Year Review of Progress Made Toward Implementation of the Resolutions Adopted at the 1979 White House Conference.

Friends Groups - Friends of Libraries, U.S.A. (now an affiliate of ALA) was established following the White House Conference. 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 30. 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.

State and Local Support - Since 1979 there has been a marked increase in the number of states having "legislative days" and a related increase in state and local dollars for libraries and library buildings. The large number of citizen advocates involved surely has helped with this success. The 1984 WHCLIST Report of the States shows 43 states and territories with specific activities that heighten library visibility.

THEME: Although it took two decades to bring the conference to fruition, the timing proved to be fortunate. Computer and telecommunications technologies were bringing rapid changes in the ways the American people get and use information. The delegates considered the implications for libraries in the Information Age as they considered issues within the conference's five themes; library and information services for 1) personal needs; 2) lifelong learning; 3) organizations and the professions; 4) governing society; and 5) international cooperation and understanding.

RESOLUTIONS: The 64 resolutions approved recommended changes and improvements in various aspects of library and information services. Libraries were seen as community cultural, educational and information resources which needed greater support. The delegates wanted all citizens to have equal and free access to information. This is reflected in resolutions to strengthen services to Indians, the handicapped, children and youth, the elderly, home-bound, institutionalized, minorities, illiterate and other groups inadequately served.

The resolutions asked for a national information policy to guarantee equal access to all publicly held information and to encourage networks of shared resources. The federal government was urged to fully fund library-related legislation including the Library Services and Construction Act, Higher Education Act, and Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

The delegates endorsed enactment of a national library act and asked that an Assistant Secretary for Library and Information Services be appointed within the Department of Education.

Several resolutions dealt with improving library and information services through technology. Goals include the increased use of satellite communication, video techniques and cable television in the expansion of library and information services. Reduction of telecommunication and postal rates were called for. Other resolution topics included improved technology to preserve deteriorating collections, and education and training of librarians for the changing information needs of society.