

1985

## White House Conference on Library and Information Services: Early Stages (1979-1985): Speech 03

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National Commission  
on Libraries  
and Information Science

# NEWS RELEASE

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## WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE PROPOSED TO IMPROVE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES TO MEET CHANGING NEEDS

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Recognizing the role libraries and information services play in combatting illiteracy, in assisting the disadvantaged and in improving the growth and stability of the American economy, at its quarterly meeting this week the United States National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) approved a preliminary design for a 1989 White House Conference on Library and Information Services.

"Now that our preliminary design is ready we are eager to promote a second White House Conference which will have three principal themes. It will emphasize the critical role of libraries and information services in literacy, productivity and democracy," said Barbara Harris Taylor, NCLIS commissioner from Potomac, Maryland.

The first White House Conference on Library and Information Services, held in 1979, was the culmination of 57 state, territorial and theme conferences and other meetings that involved more than 100,000 persons in grass roots discussion of critical issues affecting library and information services.

Since 1980 the Commission has continued to work to implement the recommendations and has worked closely with the White House Conference on Library and Information Services Taskforce (WHCLIST) which has documented increases in state appropriations for library and information services, the formation of many statewide Friends of Libraries organizations, expanded continuing education opportunities and many other significant changes.

At the meeting the commissioners accepted the White House Conference Preliminary Design Group (WHCPDG) proposal for the second conference and will present it to the Administration and Congress in support of resolutions introduced by Senator Claiborne Pell (D-RI) and Representative William Ford (D-MI).

These resolutions call for grass roots involvement in the 1989 conference by the American public, including library users, civic leaders, lawmakers, librarians and others in identifying unmet library service needs, examining library and information service issues and developing recommendations for future library and information services.

Endorsed by the American Library Association (ALA), the American Society for Information Science (ASIS), the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) and others, the 1989 White House conference would consider how libraries can increase literacy by promoting the recognition that the ability to find and use information is a fundamental skill in today's society.

Another goal of the conference, as outlined in the WHCPDG proposal, is to promote human resource development in order to increase productivity in American business. "As the workforce changes to reflect the increased use of elderly and disadvantaged workers, as more businesses become international and as most workers today will be required to master five different jobs in the course of their working life, libraries play an increasingly important role in retraining, research and job information counseling," said Taylor.

"Our third goal for the White House Conference is probably the most critical -- using library and information services to promote democracy. We need to serve as information centers for all citizens and government officials because a democratic society depends upon the informed participation of its people and leaders." Taylor concluded.

The commissioners also considered the recommendations that followed from the April 1985 NCLIS report on the role of fees in supporting library and information services in public and academic libraries. The fee study, distributed widely to the library and information science community, concluded that there is little data available about who is charging fees and even less about the effect of fees on access to information. NCLIS enthusiastically agreed therefore to accept the offer from the American Library Association (ALA) and the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) to assist in gathering needed data. The three groups will meet January 1986.

NCLIS  
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The NCLIS commissioners also discussed the issue of censorship in public and school libraries. At the request of Congress, NCLIS is preparing a study and report on the extent of censorship in American libraries and how society is responding to such censorship.

The United States National Commission on Libraries and Information Science was chartered by Congress in 1970 to ensure the library and information needs of the people of the United States. NCLIS cooperates with state and local governments and local, private and public agencies to achieve effective use of the nation's information resources. NCLIS commissioners are appointed by the President for five year terms.

NCLIS, a permanent independent agency of the federal government, advises the President and Congress on national library and information policies and plans, including those dealing with the needs of special groups, such as the elderly, cultural minorities and rural residents.

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Photos of Commissioner Taylor available

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