

"The U. S. Office of Education and Libraries"

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The role of the Office of Education in promoting libraries and librarianship goes back to the second commissioner, General John Eaton, who first started including library statistics in his annual report eight (8) months after his appointment in 1870. For the next six years Eaton pushed education at all levels and pointed out the federal government's role in aid to education in a variety of ways, e.g. grants of public lands, Northwest Ordinance, territorial libraries, land grant colleges, aid to colored and Indian schools, etc.

Primarily, Eaton did this through the gathering and dissemination of data, chiefly through publication of his annual reports, but also through special circulars and his personal relationships with Con-

gressmen and Senators on Capitol Hill. He instituted a series of statistical reports not equalled since, for he had a passion for collecting the facts. General Eaton believed that intelligent men needed facts upon which to base decisions. In 1874 he wrote "This office is charged with the duty of collecting and disseminating this knowledge respecting the education and intelligence of the people. The results of its work depend upon the impression made upon the public mind by the information it presents." In that same document he also wrote:

In choosing our form of government our forefathers committed themselves to the task of building up a firm national character based on the intelligence of the whole people. It may be set down as a sign of peril whenever

our statesmen shall consider any official position they may hold as bearing no relation to the intelligence of the people or the education of the young.

Because Eaton saw libraries as a key factor in providing that kind of information which, in Thomas Jefferson's terms, would keep the citizen informed and the public free, he promoted libraries and made them one of his special studies. In 1876 he published a mammoth Special Report of 1187 pages on the status of libraries in America which is still a landmark volume. For years the 1876 Report served as a manual and guide book for librarians while its second part, Charles Ammi Cutter's *Rules for a Dictionary Catalog*, became the basis for standardizing bibliographic data for the country. Over the next twenty-five years the popular Cutter's *Rules* was published as a government document, the fourth edition appearing in 1904. General Eaton also supported the 1876 Conference of Librarians in Philadelphia at which the American Library Association was born. He did this with the very practical assistance of mailing out the conference call.

The road on which Eaton launched the Office of Education after the ineffectiveness of the first Commissioner, Henry Barnard, was one which would be successfully followed for a long time to come and USOE would become known as the "ball bearing at the center of the American educational enterprise," to use one educator's phrase. The scope of Eaton's mind was fantastic. His reports touched everything from the education of women to better education for the immigrant Chinese. His ideas are remarkably modern. But my point is that in subsequent decades libraries received attention from the USOE and were included in a variety of reports and data

collected by that office to promote their well being. To indicate the federal government's role in library activity let me cite only the World's Library Congress which took place at the Columbian Exposition in 1893 in Chicago, the various attempts to gather information on land-grant education early in this century, publication of a variety of catalogs, e.g. ALA Catalog in 1893 and 1942 Library of Congress Catalog, ALA's Library War Service in World War I, and various relationships with other agencies like the State Department, the national libraries, and USIA. I cite these only as instances of the consistent federal role in support of libraries and their expansion.

This movement came to formal recognition in 1936 when Ralph Dunbar was appointed to head a Library Division in USOE. In the next forty years we were to see federal support of library programs assume a more direct role, though that was merely an expansion of early efforts through a more indirect route. Operating upon the principle that the citizens of a democracy cannot be ignorant and free, the programs of the fifties and sixties were designed to expand library resources and services to the great mass of the unserved, first to rural areas, then to the urban areas, colleges, and elementary and secondary schools, and finally, through a variety of efforts, with networks of libraries making resources of research libraries available to all citizens.

How far we have come can be illustrated by a personal experience. I well remember going to Houston in 1962 and being surprised that the sixth largest city in the country lacked elementary libraries in a number of its schools. Thanks largely to ESEA Title II that is no longer true.

Many of the federal programs of the last 20 years have enriched the programs for local citizens through the provision of better resources at the local and state level and through emerging cooperative enterprises from the least sophisticated, such as common borrowing privileges, through the more advanced computerized services such as bibliographic data bases along the models of the Ohio College Library Center and the Southeastern Interlibrary Network. Lest we get carried away with the technology, though, I recall our publishing colleague, Dan Lacy's comment in his *Libraries and the Life of the Mind* in San Francisco this year. Dr. Lacy reminded us that sophisticated networks, enormously useful for that small percentage of the population interested in research, was no substitute for the small, well selected collection of books, periodicals, and other materials needed by the average citizen in his or her community. Through the various programs of the Library Services Act (subsequently the Library Services and Construction Act) many small communities throughout the country for the first time have had access to libraries. Recently I received an invitation to a ceremony dedicating a small public library in Comanche, Texas, where the combination of federal and local funds enabled that county to build its first library building. This story could be repeated many times as a testimony to the highly successful LSCA, first passed under President Eisenhower and subsequently renewed under Presidents Johnson and Nixon. I cite these instances to show the nonpartisan nature of library support and the popularity of these programs with the Congress.

As an academic librarian, whose library building addition at the University of Hous-

ton was funded in part by the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963, I am quite familiar with the programs for higher education. There has been a tendency to disparage these programs, especially the Higher Education Act of 1965 Title II-A for college library resources, but that title has enabled small colleges like Greensboro and Guilford in North Carolina to reach standards at a higher level of excellence than would have been possible without the \$5,000 grants. Likewise Title II-B has been just the stimulus needed for minority recruitment—a high priority item for all of us. Dr. Russell Bidlack in a study of doctorates in library science from 1931 through 1972 discovered only 12 to have been awarded to Blacks.

Later this morning others will discuss the many facets of these programs including the work of the National Advisory Commission on Libraries and the work of the more recent National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. All of these programs, at their peak of federal support, were funded at a relatively small cost. For example, at its peak ESEA Title II reached only about 100 million dollars while LSCA reached 85 million and HEA of 1965 not quite 35 million. These are modest sums indeed out of a total federal budget counted in the billions of dollars.

My message is a simple one. There is a need for continued federal role in library development. The past demonstration of success is evident to those who examine the record closely.

At the same time I would point out that there is not any question that the federal role has stressed books and buildings more than staff. My point is that a lot of good has been done with this money through the challenges to the states and

local governments to match the monies provided from the federal government and that the process of providing the citizen with the means to further his or her education has moved along well. This is entirely consistent with the premise upon which libraries have been based from the beginning: that a democracy requires an informed citizenry.

Now we are approaching the centennial of the organized library profession and the bicentennial of the country. We need to take a look at what resources and services are needed in our second century to keep the citizen informed. No one would doubt that twenty years of federal involvement in library programs is probably overdue for a reassessment. As Mrs. Martin noted, the library community is prepared to be a part of this reassessment. However, the place of libraries in USOE has been such a series of ups and downs, and demonstrated such lack of stability, that there is now an urgent need for some kind of continuity as well as leadership to help achieve this assessment and give focus to the federal programs. The Educational Amendments of 1974 created in USOE an Office of Library and Learning Resources. If this office is to provide the data gathering, the encouragement, and policy analysis which General Eaton and his colleagues did a hundred years ago, it needs your support and it needs to relate better to the general library community.

Librarians and their friends across the country and in Congress want to work with the administration to improve library service to the people. We can reassess, move ahead, and achieve our mutual goals of an informed citizenry or we can continue to battle it out every year in Congress for the meager sums needed. That doesn't

seem to us a very intelligent way to approach the matter. We need to mobilize all the talents we have to consider the library needs of the country in this centennial year of the American Library Association and bicentennial year of the country.

In my opinion this administration, and the country as a whole, would be well advised to let the citizens speak through the state conferences of the White House Conference on Libraries and Information Service about where we go from here. General Eaton enlisted the state education officers and the leading librarians in helping call attention to trends and developments needing public attention. After 100 years that's still not a bad idea.

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