

LIBRARY SERVICES AND CONSTRUCTION

PART I. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

1. Objectives

To extend and improve public library services and to aid in the construction of public libraries.

2. Operation

The Library Services and Construction Act program is a direct Federal operation, consisting of grants to the States, administered by the Library Services Branch at the Office of Education headquarters. Professionally trained and experienced librarians, in the position of library extension specialists, work out of Washington to provide the State library administrative agencies with guidance and technical assistance. State plans for the use of funds for services and for construction are submitted to the U.S. Commissioner of Education for approval.

Each State receives an allotment of Federal funds based on its population. This allotment must be matched by the State with funds from State or local sources. The required matching ratio is determined by the State's per capita income, with a maximum Federal share of total expenditures being 66 percent, the minimum being 33 percent. Allotted funds that are not required by any State may be reallocated by the Commissioner to States which require additional Federal funds.

3. History

State library extension agencies reported in 1956 that 75 percent of the U.S. population was considered to have either inadequate or no local public library service.¹ Although the need for greatly expanded and improved public library service existed at all population levels, the needs of rural areas were the greatest.

In recognition of this need, the Congress responded with the passage of the Library Services Act in 1956. This program authorized a maximum of \$7.5 million in Federal funds for each of 5 years to enable the States and territories to extend and improve public library services in areas under 10,000 population. The Library Services Act was extended through fiscal 1966, and between 1956 and 1964 \$50.6 million in Federal funds were made available. State and local expenditures for the same period totaled \$114.1 million.

During the 8-year Library Services Act program the intended goal of stimulating "the States and local communities to increase library services available to rural Americans"² was realized. All regions of the country reported increases in local and State funds, ranging from 99 percent in the Southeast to 156 percent in the North Atlantic.

Despite the substantial gains made by the rural grant programs, public libraries continued to lag behind the demands placed upon them. Even the large, well-established urban libraries were unable to cope with the new, heavier, and more complex demands on their resources.

¹ The U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Office of Education. "State Library Extension Services; A Survey of Resources and Activities of State Library Administrative Agencies, 1955-56." Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960 (OE-15009, miscellaneous No. 37) pp. 3, 23.

² President Eisenhower, at the signing of the library services bill, June 19, 1956;