

The library associations represented at this meeting have long recognized that stronger and more unified systems organized on a national basis are essential to significantly improved library and information services. They have already been instrumental in establishing a number of programs directed toward improving the nation-wide access to information through such systems as inter-library loan, union catalogs, the Farmington Plan, and most recently the centralized cataloguing scheme at the Library of Congress. It has also been recognized that further significant advances must be dependent upon substantial participation by the Federal Government.

Accordingly, the representatives at this meeting recommended the establishment of a joint committee to be called the Ad Hoc Joint Committee on National Library/Information Systems (CONLIS), to have several functions:

With due regard for all types and levels of library service to:

1. Be responsible for drafting a program directed toward improvement of the access to and availability of information through national systems of libraries and information centers;
2. Be responsible for continuing advice to and liaison with appropriate federal and other bodies on behalf of the library associations represented;
3. Through its members, keep the associations fully and regularly informed of committee activity and the recommendations formulated by the committee.

Representatives on the committee have been designated by the following six major national library associations: American Association of Law Libraries, American Documentation Institute, American Library Association, Association of Research Libraries, Council of National Library Associations, Medical Library Association, and Special Libraries Association.

In accordance with its charter the committee presents the following as its report and recommendation for the first essential step toward the establishment of an effective national library-information system.

WILLIAM K. BEATTY,
Medical Library Association.

WILLIAM S. BUDDINGTON,
Special Libraries Association.

LAURENCE B. HEILPRIN,
American Documentation Institute.

WILLIAM D. MURPHY,
American Association of Law Libraries.

JAMES E. SKIPPER,
Association of Research Libraries.

BILL M. WOODS,
Council of National Library Association.

GORDEN R. WILLIAMS,
American Library Association.

ASSURED ACCESS TO INFORMATION¹

The basic hypothesis proposed by the Committee is that the national interest requires assured and ready access by all citizens to all unrestricted information. In simplest terms, information as a commodity is essential to our development as individuals, to optimization of our activities, to the strength of our nation and to the progress and survival of mankind. To have access, difficult, slow, or restricted only to a few, is to limit utilization, which thus diminishes our total national accomplishment and welfare; it is in everyone's interest that all that is known to be readily available to all so that it can be used. No one—doctor, scientist, lawyer, engineer, teacher, public official, or plain citizen—should have less access to information merely because he is not located in a major center of

¹The reader must guard against misunderstanding the term "information" as it is used here, and throughout this report. Commonly, most people tend to use the word "information" to mean specific facts and data; to mean what scientists are concerned with as opposed to what the humanist, the philosopher, the novelist, and the poet are concerned with. But as used here the term is to be understood in its more general sense as the meaningful content of any communication as opposed to the random, meaningless, interfering, "noise" or "static" that may also be present. In this sense the text of a poem, a novel, a history, and an engineering handbook, are all equally "information." We know of no other simple term that covers the content of any communication regardless of its subject matter, and so have used this one, but caution again that it must not be understood as meaning only "scientific information."