

must organize itself so that it can best satisfy those needs, and give first priority in service to the individuals in that agency rather than to the more remote users in the rest of the country. From the other side, a library organized and responsible to serve the nation as a whole by augmenting what the local libraries can provide for their own communities of users cannot without conflict serve as the basic, primary, information source for one particular agency. This is even less possible than to expect a single federal library such as the Library of Congress adequately to serve all the information needs of the Department of Defense, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of State, and all the others, and for these to give up completely their own libraries.

This conflict between service to the nation as a whole and service to a particular local group is greatest with respect to the provision of physical access, and is substantially less, though far from insignificant, with respect to bibliographic access. In the latter case, bibliographic descriptions and analyses prepared by a library for its own use can be duplicated or in other ways made available to other libraries without interfering with local access or needs. This has in fact been the basis for the Library of Congress catalog card distribution service.

Since the "national group" versus "local group" problem is well illustrated by Library of Congress activity, some description will be useful. Under its program, the Library of Congress has prepared and printed catalog cards for its own use in accordance with its own needs as the Library of Congress, and then merely printed additional copies for purchase by libraries so that they could take advantage of this cataloguing. This was, and is, very valuable in making it unnecessary for other libraries to duplicate the intellectual work of the cataloguing done by the Library of Congress. But this was not a complete solution to the problem of cataloguing even monographs and serial titles in all libraries because in many cases the cataloguing priorities established at the Library of Congress which were intended to be those best satisfying the needs of the users it has primary responsibilities to serve—the Congress itself—were different from the needs of other users throughout the nation, and in a great many other cases the Library of Congress neither acquired nor catalogued the publication at all since it was of insufficient interest to the needs of the Congress. To have changed priorities to satisfy the needs of the nation as a whole would have been a disservice to the needs of Congress itself; while to have acquired and catalogued titles out of scope to the Congressional interest could have been done only by diverting funds from other Library of Congress services, thus handicapping its primary mission of service to Congress.

The only practicable way of avoiding this conflict of interest is the one finally arrived at in this particular case—that is by giving another agency the funds to pay for the additional cataloguing to be done in the national interest, with authority to transfer these funds to the Library of Congress, as the best available agency to do this additional work with assurance that it would be consistent with LC's own cataloguing. This responsibility of the Library of Congress for service to the nation as a whole, being thus separately funded and staffed, does not compete with its services to Congress for support or priority in performance and continuation.

The pattern represented in miniature by this program of cataloguing one particular group of publications in the national interest is thus similar to the one here recommended for implementation of a complete national library system. It separates federal funding and responsibility for library services to the nation as a whole from funding and responsibility for library services to the federal community itself so that they do not come into conflict and neither one is forced into a secondary position. At the same time it does not preclude making available for the national benefit those services that the federal libraries perform for their own purposes that can without conflict be utilized nationally, and indeed establishes an agency to coordinate these more effectively.

In addition to the requirements above, one other appears to us to be of primary importance if the National Library Agency is satisfactorily to meet the national needs. This is that responsibility for determination of the Agency's programs and policies be vested in a board, commission, or committee, of persons representing the communities of users to be served. The actual administrative officers will of course be qualified civil servants, ultimately responsible to the President and Congress, and undoubtedly will come to these positions with experience gained in the user communities. But the needs and problems of these communities vary in detail and with time, and only those persons continually