

facing these in their daily work can remain fully familiar with them. Unless policies are guided and programs determined by those whom the agency serves there is grave danger of its becoming, despite the best will in the world, out of touch with current needs and too slowly responsive to new problems and new solutions. For this reason the agency and its director must be continually guided by a group representing the users.

Whether this body is a board or commission, legally responsible for program and policy guidance, or a committee charged merely with advising the actual administrators, perhaps practically makes little difference, though legal responsibility is more certain of effectiveness and is therefore recommended. But in any case such a group of experts in a position where its voice must be heard and heeded, without its having to hunt for a channel of communication and fight for an audience, is essential to keep the system continually and most effectively responsive to the national need and interest. This group must represent the ultimate individual users, major types of libraries, and the various agencies concerned with support of research.

There are several possible places within the federal structure where the National Library Agency might be placed, and several possible forms it might take. It might, for example, be established:

1. As a bureau of division within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.
2. As an independent commission, similar in form to the Atomic Energy Commission, or as a foundation similar to the National Science Foundation and the National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities.
3. As an independent division of the Library of Congress.

1. If the responsibility for this function of assuring ready access to information by all elements of the economy is to be assigned to an existing executive department, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare is a more logical choice than any other, and indeed it has already been charged for some time with administering various programs of library aid. It is important to note, though, that no such National Library Agency is here recommended, and as is required adequately to solve the problem, now exists within the Department, and in fact the administration of even existing library legislation is now diffused through the Department so that there is no unified direction of all efforts toward the same goal. But only a single agency competently staffed with men and women of expert knowledge in the fields of librarianship and information handling, with the assigned responsibility to assure that all elements of the economy have ready access to all information, and with authority not limited to just one way of accomplishing this, or to only some aspects of the problem, can hope to insure a solution that avoids both unnecessary duplication and gaps in coverage.

2. The operational functions required of the Agency in fulfillment of its responsibility, and particularly its need to have the freedom to initiate research and to act dynamically and promptly in an environment of rapidly changing technology, might be better satisfied through the establishment of an independent commission, similar in form to the Atomic Energy Commission, or a Library Foundation similar in form to the National Science Foundation, reporting directly to the President and Congress. Either one would undoubtedly make the complete centralization of responsibility and administration, and thus the unified approach that is essential to an economically practical solution to the information problem, easier than inclusion of the agency within the already complex bureaucratic environment of a large executive department such as Health, Education, and Welfare. But despite these advantages, there are also disadvantages from the point of view of public administration in adding still another agency budgeted outside of a cabinet department.

3. Locating the National Library Agency under the Library of Congress would have the advantage of placing it more closely in connection with the largest single library within the federal establishment, and one that, although intended primarily to serve a federal agency (the Congress), is now also serving in some ways the library/information needs of the nation as a whole. But it has already been pointed out that the same agency cannot without disservice to one or the other serve the nationwide need when it also must satisfy the primary information need of a federal agency. This conflict could be avoided only by establishing the National Library Agency as a wholly separate agency from the Library of Congress itself, and with a wholly separate budget, the only connection being that both would be administered by the Librarian of Congress.