

SUMMARY OF
THE DRAFT REPORT

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIES AND NETWORKS:
Prospective Roles and Responsibilities for Libraries in New Jersey

County and Municipal Government Study Commission
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*For Discussion Purpose Related to the Commission Hearing

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIES AND NETWORKS:
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Libraries have always been part of the fabric of American society. Today, libraries play an important role in the activities of business, government, hospitals, educational institutions and our local communities. What is this role? In general, libraries serve as clearinghouses for recorded knowledge. They are the major source of published materials that are available for educating our children, conducting research programs, making informed decisions and enriching our personal lives.

For publicly-supported libraries, the ability to perform this essential service role is being eroded by a number of national trends. Inflated prices, growth of information and technological change have all taken their toll upon the traditional practices of these libraries. Without the ability to respond to economic and institutional pressures, many publicly-supported libraries face an uncertain future.

The Commission concludes that a revision of library laws and aid programs in New Jersey is necessary in order to adequately address these pressures. Changing the legal framework for New Jersey's libraries must be combined with stronger State assistance for library services. The revised laws must also provide a flexible and up-to-date method for resource sharing among libraries on a statewide basis. In short, our libraries must be granted the means to fulfill their responsibilities to the citizens of New Jersey.

Issues Challenging New Jersey's Libraries

A number of key issues rise out of the economic and institutional pressures confronting libraries in the state. The most serious problem is

getting enough money to support the broad service role of libraries. Library budget requests are often given low priority in the allocation of available funds. In many cases, this situation is made worse by legal limitations on increased spending by government. Finding the financial resources to improve or even maintain the delivery of existing services has become an almost impossible task.

Structural problems are especially apparent among both public and school libraries. These difficulties stem from the piecemeal nature of library law. Local libraries are operating under an ambiguous and increasingly outmoded set of laws. The relationship between library governing boards and town officials, limited school library support, and conflicting service roles of county libraries all grow out of existing statutory provisions.

The central question concerning libraries is the role of the State in addressing financial and structural problems. Both the State's library assistance programs and the New Jersey Library Network were set up in response to these basic issues. However, the current aid and network programs have been in operation for more than 10 years and are beginning to show their age. The steps taken by the State to upgrade its longstanding support of libraries will be the key to maintaining a broad service role for libraries in the immediate years ahead.

The Commission's Findings

A number of specific conclusions were reached by the Commission that confirm the overall insufficiency of existing library laws. First of all, the backbone of library service to New Jersey's citizens is the local library. Most people desire nearby access to a community library and are looking for

basic up-to-date services. However, the purchasing power of local library budgets has been declining in recent years. This budget erosion is starting to limit services. Local public and school libraries have had an especially difficult time in their efforts to maintain services. Many libraries have been forced to purchase fewer new materials for their collections. Some public libraries have curtailed the operation of branch outlets. Overall, attempts to obtain increased local appropriations don't result in the level of funds needed to hold the line on new materials or hours of operation. In addition, limited accountability to local governing officials has often affected budget requests. Hence, a serious pattern of financial distress is emerging from the decline in the purchasing power of library budgets. In order to preserve the services of these libraries, local financial support will have to be stabilized quickly.

Through the assistance programs administered by the State Library, New Jersey has tried to offset the financial and service pressures on individual libraries. However, each of these programs has begun to fall short of its basic goal. For instance, the per capita aid program to public libraries is consistently underfunded by the State. This program is also losing its ability to act as an incentive for higher local library funding. At the same time, state assistance for school libraries has been limited to consultative services.

Resource sharing among different types of libraries through the New Jersey Library Network also suffers from underfunding as well as from limited participation because of outmoded statutory provisions. Networking can be the key to overcoming the practical limits to individual library resources. However, it is further frustrated by instability in county library systems and fragmented planning at the state level. Overall, the State

Library does not have sufficient developmental programs to offset local funding limitations, improve the provision of specific library services, or coordinate statewide resource sharing through a networking process.

In contrast, the Commission is encouraged by the proposed new State plan for library services in New Jersey. This plan is now being developed by the State Library and will subsequently become a part of the Department of Education's program to improve the process of education in New Jersey. The plan will seek to promote and improve library services to all of the state's citizens. To achieve this broad goal, the needs of all types of libraries and the concerns of the library profession are addressed in the plan. However, implementation of this proposed framework for library services will require new laws, improved State financial aid, and better intergovernmental cooperation. The Commission believes that its recommendations for libraries in New Jersey contribute to the fulfillment of this proposed statewide plan.

Improving the Development of Libraries and Networks

This report contains 30 recommendations to change the nature of New Jersey's library laws and assistance programs. A brief description of the Commission's major proposals is provided as follows:

- Overall financial support for public libraries should be improved by changing the legal minimum level of property tax support. Higher local government appropriations should also be encouraged by increasing the level of library aid received on the basis of tax effort.

- An educational mission for school libraries should be clearly established in state law. Specific responsibilities under the N.J. Public School Education Act of 1975 are necessary as a first step toward developing aid standards for school media services.
- The governance of public libraries should be made more accountable to local elected officials and their administrators. In addition, wider representation should be possible on county library governing boards.
- The organization of county library systems should be addressed by making several reorganization options available in law. A single county-wide study and referendum process would be used both to determine whether restructuring a county library's pattern of services is desirable and to adopt a selected option.
- The structure and functions of the New Jersey Library Network should be substantially revised in light of emerging national networks and new federal directions. The objectives of this revision would be to improve participation in the network and upgrade network services. Regional library cooperatives and a statewide bibliographic access center would be established to facilitate search and loan services.
- New library aid programs should be established to both offset rising costs of operation and improve the library development process in the state. Five programs of additional state aid to libraries are proposed, namely: collection development for public libraries, branch library assistance for hardship municipalities, preservation of valuable materials for qualifying libraries, assistance for regional audiovisual libraries and expanded assistance for a revised statewide library network.
- Coordination between the Departments' of Education and Higher Education planning for libraries should be established at the state level. Special funds would be made available to underwrite joint activities and insure compatibility with the New Jersey Library Network.

It has been more than 10 years since the statutes and programs to support libraries were substantially amended by the New Jersey Legislature. In summary, this report reviews the experience of libraries during this period, considers the need for change in existing governmental policies and concludes that a second major revision of the State's role in assisting libraries is necessary. The recommendations outlined above provide New Jersey's libraries with the means to continue their broad service role during the 1980s. The Commission urges both Executive and Legislative responses to these proposals. The State can do no less and still promote access to quality library services for all of its citizens.

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Many issues face publicly-supported libraries in New Jersey. These issues grow out of certain basic pressures for change that cannot be ignored. The way each of these issues is addressed will help shape the nature of library services during the 1980s. Libraries have always played a quiet yet essential service role in the educational, informational, recreational, and cultural affairs of the State's citizens. In order that they may continue to delivery quality services, the issues facing libraries must be resolved, and without delay.

The *County and Municipal Government Study Commission* believes that the State must provide the means -- the laws, the money and the leadership -- to help solve the problems of its libraries. *The Development of Libraries and Networks* presents the Commission's suggestions for dealing with many important library issues. It is the opinion of the Commission that its proposals would greatly improve the intergovernmental foundation for future library services in New Jersey. Accordingly, the conclusions and recommendations of this report are presented for consideration.

State Responsibility for the Library Function in New Jersey

Beginning in 1879, the State has increasingly encouraged the establishment of a wide range of libraries in New Jersey. The goal of all of these legislative actions remains the same -- to promote equal access to adequate library services for all citizens. As a result, the State has a moral obligation to its citizens to continue to provide both leadership and financial assistance

to the libraries it helped to create. It is therefore recommended that:

1. *The State Library should be provided with sufficient resources to advise, assist and coordinate all publicly-supported libraries in New Jersey -- in accordance with its statutory mandate prescribed in N.J.S.A. 18A:73-35.*

Today, the Division of the State Library, Archives and History in the Department of Education has the primary responsibility to carry out the State's objectives regarding libraries. This agency needs to have the tools to continue to promote equal access to library services for all citizens of the state. In recent years, the legal and financial basis for the State Library's programs has not been able to do the job.

Ability of Public Libraries to Gain Local Tax Support

The growth in local tax support to many public libraries is not sufficient to overcome the effects of inflation. On a statewide basis, public libraries have had their effective budgets shrink at a rate of 3 percent per year. Without some way to protect the purchasing power of library budgets, services will seriously decline in quality. It is therefore recommended that:

2. *The State should increase the authorized level of aid to public libraries provided in law.*

The present authorization of state aid to public libraries was set in 1967. It is simply out of touch with the cost of library services at this point in time.

Shrinking Financial Incentives: Millage Rates and Aids

The method for calculating the minimum level of local property tax support to municipal libraries should be changed. At present, the tax base

is measured on the basis of the local assessed valuation of property. This method is not uniform and cannot keep pace with inflated property values. It is therefore recommended that:

3. *The property valuation that is taxed in support of free public libraries should be changed from the assessed valuation to the equalized valuation as certified by the State's Division of Taxation. These equalized valuations should be the same as the valuations used in the calculation of per capita aid to libraries.*

Changing to an equalized basis of property valuation will provide municipal libraries with a more uniform, and flexible, means of local tax support. In addition, this change will insure a better level of support for any new municipal libraries in the future. This recommendation applies to N.J.S.A. 40:54-8, as amended.

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The burden of supporting public libraries has always been a partnership between state and local government. However, the State has not assumed its share of this burden during the last few years. It is time for the State to renew its role in the state-local partnership to support public libraries. It is therefore recommended that:

4. *The appropriation of state per capita aid to public libraries should be provided at the level authorized by statute. This level of aid should be considered as the minimum amount necessary to promote the goal of equal access to library services in New Jersey. In addition, state aids to public libraries should be a separate line item in the State Library's budget.*

It is essential that a "full funding" of public library aid programs be made in all future budget years. Public libraries cannot absorb further cuts in state assistance without endangering the availability of services. Local government budgets are restricted by law and their revenues are growing at a slower rate than state revenues. The State must assume its fair share of supporting public libraries.

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The formula for state per capita aid to public libraries needs to be modified in order to remain an incentive for better local tax support. The formula should also be automatically adjustable so that the incentive is not lost in future years. It is therefore recommended that:

5. *The state per capita aid program to libraries should be improved by adding a new capitation rate of \$1.50. This rate of aid should be provided to all municipalities and counties making an annual public library appropriation that is more than three-fifths (3/5) of a mill upon their equalized property valuations. The calculation of this new level of aid should save harmless all amounts of per capita aid distributed in the previous state fiscal year. In addition, additional per capita and millage rates should be made part of the aid law whenever 20 percent of all municipalities and counties are eligible for the highest existing capitation rate of aid.*

An adjustment in the per capita aid law recognizes the need to maintain an incentive for increased local tax support. This change also safeguards the amounts of aid distributed to all communities not qualifying for the new aid level. A safeguard is necessary in case there is not a full appropriation for state per capita aid. Finally, the proposal establishes a principle under which new rates of aid can be set into law. The recommendation applies to N.J.S.A.

Promoting Access to Nearby Libraries

The promotion of access to library services is the basis for the entire State interest in library development. One of the best methods of providing access to nearby library services is to establish branches of main libraries. The State already has an aid program to promote new branches of county libraries. This program should be expanded to also promote the continued operation of existing branches of municipal libraries. It is therefore recommended that:

6. *The incentive aid program for branch library development should include support for existing municipal branch libraries. Eligibility would be based upon having an average increase of less than 5 percent, over the last 3 budget years, in local appropriations to the municipal library. Each eligible municipal library would receive an amount of aid equal to 50 percent of the average budget of its branches or \$25,000., whichever is less. In return for such aid, participating libraries will be required to maintain all branches in operation during the following calendar year, unless an exception is granted by the State Library for sufficient cause. In addition, participating libraries should meet minimum standards for operation of branch libraries that may be established by the State Library, within three years of first receipt of branch library aid.*

A number of larger municipalities with extensive branch library systems have had financial problems in keeping certain branches open. The State has consistently sought to promote nearby, local library services. This program is designed to preserve branch library service in municipalities demonstrating financial need.

Pressures on the Provision of Library Services

The State Library has always recognized the vital link between a critical level of resources and the provision of quality services. However, there needs to be a greater emphasis at the state level to promote local investment in the basic services -- book-borrowing, reading, and reference. Hence, the State should initiate a voluntary program of developing local library collections. It is therefore recommended that:

7. *A new program of state library aid should be established to promote the assessment and development of public library collections of materials. The objectives of this new aid program would be: (1) provide a uniform method for evaluation of local library services and materials, (2) underwrite the cost of the evaluation process and (3) make state aid specifically available to help purchase materials needed for adequate local library service. This program for resource development should be optional and made available upon formal application by individual libraries. Approved applicants would agree to conduct an evaluation of community library service needs in a manner determined by the State Library. Participants would agree, again at their option, to pursue a three-year phased program of improvement based upon the resulting evaluation of community needs. In addition, the State Library may request such information as it requires to administer the program and assess statewide public library resource needs. This program should be made renewable after a period of years. Any distribution of aid under this program should save harmless the amount of per capita aid distributed in the previous state fiscal year.*

The purchase of new library materials is the lifeblood of libraries. This program recognizes the limits of existing per capita aid to libraries. It provides

additional aid dedicated to the improvement of public library collections in order to satisfy community needs.

8. A second new program of state library aid should be established to promote the preservation of unique or historical collections of materials in certain libraries. The objective of this program would be to recognize that a number of libraries are financially unable to maintain valuable and irreplaceable stores of knowledge and history without reducing the provision of basic services. Upon identifying such libraries, the State Library should make available aid monies, on a continuing basis, to define and maintain such materials in the form of special collections. No less than 75 percent of such aid monies should be reserved for publicly-supported libraries. In return for such aid, libraries would be required to maintain or develop special collections in accordance with regulations established by the State Library; including the locating, cataloging and conservation of these materials. In addition, each participating library would make listings of these special collections available for purposes of the statewide network, upon the advice of the State Library. The distribution of aid under this program should save harmless the amount of per capita aid distributed in the previous state fiscal year.

This "preservation of materials" aid program recognizes the need to help support certain libraries with specialized resources. There are a number of libraries that have developed their collections over a long period of time and now possess valuable materials on specific subjects or persons. These collections are often historical or ethnic in nature. The preservation program will assume some of the burden of maintaining and developing special collections. In addition, it will make these resources more generally accessible to citizens of the state.

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Another aspect to the issue of pressures on the provision of library services involves local *school* libraries. The traditional role of the State Library in assisting school libraries does not fit well in the context of the Public School Education Act of 1975 and its regulations. This situation has resulted in a serious erosion of the leadership role of the State Library in the further development of school library services. It is therefore recommended that:

9. A more clearly defined mission for both school library services and a State Library program of assistance to school media centers should be established in law. In addition, the Department of Education should establish minimum standards for school media programs as part of the "thorough and efficient" education approval process.

A clear State interest in school library services needs to be established in law. In addition, while the State Library has an administrative role in the development of public libraries, it has virtually none for school libraries. This proposal would address both problems.

Relationships Between Library Boards and Governing Bodies

A number of chronic problems have been identified concerning the relationship between library boards and local governing bodies. Provisions in library law dealing with this relationship have been a constant source of confusion and dissension. It is therefore recommended that:

10. The chief financial officer of all municipalities and counties, maintaining free public libraries according to statute, should be responsible for keeping all records of local library appropriations, other public revenues, state aids, expenditures, and year-end balances. This information should be reported according to local budgetary procedures established by the Division of

Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs and made available to the State Library. The library boards should retain responsibility for the manner in which expenditures are made in support of library service. Receipt and disbursal of "other public revenues" should remain in accordance with the provisions of existing library law.

The Commission has always supported the concept of uniform management of municipal and county service functions. The necessary autonomy of library boards to decide matters related to library service is agreed to be an exception to this rule. However, local governing bodies must be responsible to their constituent taxpayers. Therefore a uniform accounting of library revenues and expenditures should be established to provide an accurate financial picture of the library service function to local government officials.

11. *All references to the mayor or other chief executive officer should be clarified in statutes governing municipal libraries. Separate provisions designating the particular official in each form of municipal government should be made. Conforming amendments in various parts of Title 40 of the New Jersey Statutes should be made as required.*

The ambiguity of the phrase "mayor or other chief executive officer" has led to a number of conflicts regarding the membership and activities of library trustee boards. A direct clarification is the best remedy for these situations.

12. *The membership of the county library commission should be expanded to seven members. The two additional members should be residents of municipalities required by law to support the county library. Each of these two members should be appointed for a term of five years and serve in the same capacity, and with the same powers and duties, as present members of the library commission. In addition, four of the seven commissioners should be*

residents of member municipalities within five years from enactment of this provision. Any existing county board of library commissioners having at least three representatives from member municipalities may be waived from this provision upon State Library approval.

A county library system usually comprises a wide geographical area and contains many municipalities. In order to insure that the library service needs of all municipalities served by the county library are made known, the commission should be enlarged.

13. *Overall, the statutes in Chapters 33 and 54 of Title 40 governing county and municipal libraries should be redrafted. This revision should reflect necessary technical amendments and any additional policy changes adopted by the State Librarian, the State Library Advisory Council, and the Department of Education.*

The laws affecting public libraries have been adopted over a long period of time. A number of provisions no longer serve any purpose or relate to laws that have been superseded by new enactments. Consolidating and revising library laws would allow a more efficient administration of library matters.

Role of Associations

A typical association possesses less than 40 percent of the resources in an average municipal library, even when excluding the larger municipal libraries from the comparison. Hence, many associations cannot single-handedly supply adequate library services to their communities. At best, the role of associations should be to assist county libraries in the provision of local library services. It is therefore recommended that:

14. *Every municipal governing body desiring to provide library services or supplement county library services to the community by supporting an association, wholly or in part, should do so by contract with the association. Such contracts should specify what level of services the association will provide in accordance with the minimum standards for per capita aid in the respective municipalities. All contracts should be submitted to the State Library for approval and be a matter of public record.*

The county library has the statutory mandate to provide adequate library service in all municipalities without free public libraries. In order to fulfill this mandate, it is necessary to understand the nature of services being provided by associations. This is best accomplished by contract. The contract device will allow better service coordination, and avoid unnecessary duplication of services, among associations and county libraries.

Stability for County Library Systems

Alternatives are needed that could limit, if not solve, the many problems stemming from the present structure and service roles of county libraries. There are at least 5 major actions to consider, namely: (1) having county library systems cope with future withdrawals, (2) closer working relationships between associations and county libraries, (3) promoting the reorganization of county library systems to improve access to nearby services, (4) pooling financial resources in order to strengthen public library services throughout a county, and (5) reducing the burden on county libraries to provide network services. These objectives should be worked into any revision of library law. It is therefore recommended that:

15. All municipalities required by law to support a county library must give the appropriate board of freeholders a twelve month written notice of intent to withdraw from the county library system. The period of notification should take effect subsequent to the calendar year in which notice is first given. Failure to provide such notice should result in a requirement to continue to support the county library for a period of two years subsequent to the year withdrawal is made. In addition, notice of intended withdrawal should only be allowed upon completion of a municipal hearing on the proposed withdrawal as well as adoption of a municipal resolution supporting a withdrawal. Procedures for the process of withdrawal should also be made a part of library law.

Except in the case of Morris County, there is no established procedure for leaving a county library system. This proposal would provide the means to consider the question of withdrawal at the local level. It would also give the county library a period of time to adjust to the loss of any municipalities from the county system.

16. Three options should be provided in law to reorganize the structure of an existing county library. Any option may be adopted upon completion of a study and referendum process. A study of county-wide library service needs should be initiated either by the board of freeholders upon vote of the board or by written petition to the board from at least 10 percent of the residents served by the county library under N.J.S.A. 40:33-1 et seq. This study should be conducted by a temporary commission established by the freeholders for this purpose. The Commission should file a report within one year either recommending one of the options for referendum or recommending that no reorganization be made. The study and referendum process may be repeated after a period of years

in order to replace an approved option or reconsider the availability of options. The three optional service structures are as follows:

A. Branch Development Option

The county library would provide a process of branch library development for all present member municipalities desiring such facilities. The county library would guarantee to each municipality either the establishment of a branch library within its borders or a joint branch with an adjacent municipality wherever the library needs of one municipality are less than necessary to provide a separate branch in accordance with new state standards. For all eligible municipalities, branches would be in operation within the first 3 years of the minimum term of membership in the county library system. In return for the establishment of a branch library, eligible municipalities will remain members of the county system for a minimum of five years. All other municipal members (those with associations or free public libraries) should continue to participate in the system, subject to the 12 month withdrawal provision. Each of these municipalities may, by resolution, petition the county library commissioners to become a part of the process of branch development.

B. Service Contract Option

The county library would offer a common contract for local library services to all municipalities required by law to support the county system. This contract should guarantee the provision of staff and materials at a level to insure compliance with state standards for library service in each member municipality. These resources should be made available at a location determined by each municipality. In return for contractual services, municipalities would remain members of the county system for a minimum of five

years. Municipalities are to accept or reject the contract, as offered, by municipal resolution. All municipalities rejecting the contract should continue to participate in the county system, subject to the 12 month withdrawal provision.

C. Tax Base - Sharing Option.

The board of freeholders would determine a sum of library tax revenues that is raised and distributed in the following manner: (1) A tax revenue pool to support library services should be created from a county-wide tax upon the total county apportionment valuation. The tax rate used should not be less than one-fifteenth (1/15) of a mill nor greater than the millage rate presently applied on behalf of the county library; (2) The county library should receive annual funds from the total revenue pool at an amount equal to one-fifteenth of a mill on the total county-wide apportionment valuation plus 60 percent of the residual pool. The county library would no longer receive any sums from application of the dedicated library tax under N.J.S.A. 40:33-9 or from the tax procedure in N.J.S.A. 40:33-19 for area services; (3) Municipalities now exempt from the county library should receive the remaining 40 percent of the residual pool to be appropriated to their respective public libraries. The State Library may approve a different pattern of residual pool distribution to municipalities, upon request by the library study commission. The amount of revenue received by each municipality should be on the basis that each municipal apportionment valuation bears to the total valuation for all municipalities to receive revenue from the residual pool.

In return for adoption of the tax base-sharing option, the board of freeholders should direct the county library to make all of its services available to the residents of every municipality in the county.

In addition, the following provisions should become effective upon adoption of this option: (1) The study commission should continue to operate for an additional year in order to report on the progress of the plan and the possible need for an increase in the millage rate in future years; (2) Any municipality seeking to dissolve its municipal library by referendum must wait at least 2 years subsequent to the adoption of the plan; (3) All distribution of revenue under the plan should save harmless the amount of local appropriations made to municipal libraries in the previous calendar year.

Finally, any of the options to reorganize the service structure of the county library should be made recallable by referendum but no sooner than 3 years subsequent to the adoption of a particular option.

These proposals would provide the means for an adjustment in the provision of services by county libraries wherever there is a need to do so -- without involving the network process. Each proposal would also improve the access to nearby library services -- a basic State goal and a majority preference of its citizens.

Tools Available for Local Library Development

Earlier recommendations provided for a number of means to improve the development of local library services. New programs were proposed to upgrade library collections, assist branch libraries and preserve valuable library materials. The State Library has the central governmental role to manage the various programs, both existing and proposed, to develop local libraries. In order to accomplish its local development objectives, the State Library needs to have the administrative tools to carry out its programs. It is therefore recommended that:

17. *The State Library should promulgate minimum standards for branch and station outlets of local libraries. The application of these new standards should be adjusted in those cases where a library branch or station only serves a portion of a municipality. In addition, the State Library should request certain library statistics concerning these service outlets from libraries having them.*

Regulations prescribing the distribution of library resources are necessary to the provision of equal access to nearby library services. The resources of a library system cannot always be measured as a whole. The State Library needs to insure that resources allocated within a library system meet minimum standards for access to services.

18. *Per capita aid should be denied to any municipality or county that fails to have its public library meet all minimum standards for receipt of this aid. The denial of aid should be made a part of the aid law and enforceable after any consecutive 3 year period of noncompliance with per capita aid standards. In addition, the denial of aid should be made at the discretion of the State Library after consideration of a local appeal for a waiver from this provision.*

A number of libraries have persistently failed to meet certain standards for receipt of per capita aid. Present regulations allow for a partial penalty of reduction in aid because of noncompliance but without any time limit on the situation. This proposal provides a three year limit to noncompliance. Without such a time limit, a number of libraries will keep on failing to meet all standards and yet continue to receive some aid. Local library services can never be adequately provided if certain standards for service are consistently unmet.

State Responsibility for a Library Network

The State Library is directed by law to perform a number of duties on behalf of New Jersey's citizens. One of its major statutory duties is to coordinate a statewide system of libraries. This particular mandate is the foundation of the New Jersey library network. Through the process of networking any citizen, using any library in the network, potentially has the means to utilize the resources of the *whole* community of libraries in New Jersey. It is therefore recommended that:

19. *The legal and financial basis for the New Jersey library network should be strengthened as much as possible and without delay.*

A viable, statewide library network can be the best way for the State to improve library services to its citizens on a statewide basis. However, the current network needs additional statutory and financial support in order to achieve its service potential.

Overall Performance of the Network Process

The functions of the network process are not adequately expressed in library law. The lack of a firm basis in law has created a good deal of confusion among those libraries performing, and those libraries receiving, network services. One of the major problems in this regard is the limited availability of mechanisms to find information and materials throughout the network. It is therefore recommended that:

20. *An ongoing process to develop finding mechanisms that improve the networking process among libraries should be made a part of a revised network program in library law.*

The development of "tools" to locate information and materials is the forgotten element in the functions of the network. A new effort to create these devices is essential to improving the network process.

Distribution of Aid in Support of the Network

The current pattern of distribution of network financial aid illustrates the overlap between local library and network library activities. The overlap in services creates tensions among libraries and erodes the spirit of cooperation essential to an adequate network process. It is therefore recommended that:

21. *The fiscal accountability of network functions supported by state aid should be improved in accordance with a revised network program in library law.*

Without an improvement in network accountability, the willingness among many local libraries to cooperate in the network process will continue to decline.

22. *State aid for network purposes should be made a separate line item in the State Library's budget.*

It is time to recognize the importance of the statewide library network. Without a well-running network process, the ability of the State Library to improve statewide access to library services will be severely limited. The network needs to have its own financial base of support. In this way, it will be more accountable for activities designed to reach the goal of better access to services.

23. *Financial support for regional audiovisual services should be shifted from a temporary federal subsidy to a stable form of new state aid to film centers providing these services. Several changes in the organization of*

existing film centers should also be made a part of a revised network program in library law, namely: (1) the film centers should have fiscal and management autonomy from any public library in which they may be located; (2) the film centers should become an integral part of the network process under the direction of the State Library; and (3) service coordination with county audiovisual aid commissions should be made a requirement in law. In addition, these organizational changes should represent necessary preconditions to a State assumption of the costs for regional film services.

Audio visual materials are the modern supplement to printed forms of communication. Hence, film resources and services are an integral part of the contemporary library function. It follows that the State needs to think of film resources as a necessary part of the means to provide adequate library services in New Jersey.

Role of Public Libraries in a Network Process

There are two instances where the overlap in local and network services is severe enough to question the continued validity of the network itself. The first instance concerns the dual service role of county libraries. This dual role causes disruptions in the network process. The second instance deals with the existence of networking at the local level of the network structure. A significant amount of service activity is occurring at this level. It is therefore recommended that:

24. *Changes should be made in a revised network program that eliminate, as much as possible, the conflicting service roles of county libraries.*

The nature of existing library network law is at fault in this situation. It is simply too ambiguous concerning the structure and functions of the network.

25. *A new program of aid assistance to promote services at the local level of the network structure should be made a part of a revised network program.*

There is a lack of recognition and financial assistance to local network activities. The primary goal of the State is to promote access to nearby library services. Local networking can contribute to this goal if supported by the State.

Participation of Non-Public Types of Libraries in a Network

Broad participation among different types of libraries does not occur in the existing network process. In addition, many non-public types of libraries bypass the network in seeking back-up resources. It is therefore recommended that:

26. *The active participation of all types of libraries should be made an integral part of a revised network program.*

Outside of the larger public libraries, the resources of most libraries remain untapped by the current network process. Without the means to increase participation in the network, the State Library cannot meet its mandate -- coordination of a statewide system of libraries providing services to all citizens.

Joint Interests in Library Planning and Administration

A significant split in jurisdiction over the affairs of publicly-supported libraries exists at the state level. Hence, management of network activities

by the State Library and the Department of Higher Education are independent of each other. It is therefore recommended that:

27. An administrative mechanism should be established to link the networking arrangements among academic libraries with the New Jersey library network. This device should preserve the autonomy of each approach and be made a part of the revised network program. In addition, this mechanism should be supported with State funds in order to acquire the technical means to join the various networking operations.

The separate approaches of the two state agencies are a necessary reality. However, the basic State goal of promoting access to library services requires coordination of all networking activities.

New Approaches to Networking

A number of major improvements should be made in the existing network structure and process. The overall objective of a revised library network would be to promote a maximum exchange of information and materials among all types of libraries in New Jersey. In this way, the primary State goal to promote access to quality library services can best be achieved on a statewide basis. It is therefore recommended that:

28. The structure and programs of the New Jersey library network should be revised in library law as follows:

A. The first level of the network structure should be revised in library law as a program to establish Library Service Cooperatives (abbreviated as LSCs). All types of libraries would be eligible to participate in this program. To form an LSC, a group of libraries would make an application for designation to the State Library. The State Library would promulgate regulations regarding

the conditions of membership in the organization.

The services to be provided by the LSCs should be made a part of library law. Examples of potential services include: local interlibrary loan and reference services; borrowing privileges; promotion of newly acquired materials and special collections; local delivery services; user orientation programs, and mutual notice of new acquisitions to other member libraries.

The governance of the LSCs should also be made a part of library law. Each LSC would incorporate as a non-profit organization administered by a board of representatives from the member libraries and include written bylaws in accordance with State Library regulations. This organization would be legally responsible for the receipt of state funds and the provision of services. In addition, each LSC would operate under the administration of a regional network organization that may also be designated by the State Library.

Any federation or cooperative established under existing library law would be eligible to receive designation as an LSC upon conforming to the legal provisions for such designation. Finally, the State Library may request any reports or statistics necessary for the overall administration of this program.

B. The second level of the network structure should be revised in library law as a program to establish Regional Resource Associations (abbreviated as RRAs). All types of libraries would be eligible to participate in this program. To form an RRA, a group of libraries would make an application for

designation to the State Library. Certain conditions for designation should be made a part of library law, namely: (1) there should be no more than seven RRAs designated within the state; (2) a group of libraries seeking designation should identify at least two, and no more than seven, members of the group to act as central libraries for the organization; (3) each central library should meet minimum resources standards determined by the State Library; (4) there should be at least two types of libraries (e.g., public, school, community college, college, university, special, and association) acting as central libraries and (5) each RRA should be required to expend state funds, and provide services, through its central libraries.

The services to be provided by the RRAs should be made a part of library law. Examples of potential services include: regional interlibrary loan and reference services; special telecommunication services; development of resource listings to improve document identification and location, e.g., union lists; development of special bibliographies of materials; professional training seminars on the selection of library materials; professional orientation seminars on the use of extensive reference services; preservation of valuable materials, and both photocopy and delivery services to facilitate interlibrary loans.

The governance of the RRAs should also be made a part of library law. Each RRA would incorporate as a non-profit organization administered by an executive board of representatives from the member libraries. This organization would be legally responsible for the receipt of state funds and the provisions of services. The bylaws of each RRA should be in accordance with State Library

regulations and include specific provision for a council of all member libraries. These councils would have the authority to approve or reject the operating budget of the RRAs as proposed by the executive board. In addition, the councils should advise the boards concerning the nature of services to be provided to member libraries.

The funding of operational RRAs should be determined in library law as the sum of a fixed annual grant and a capitation rate in terms of dollars. The authorization of state funds for the purposes of RRAs should be sufficient to support the provision of services required by the State Library. Additional funds should be made available for distribution to any local service cooperatives administered by an RRA. Funds not allocated to local service cooperatives should be carried over to the following budget year for any purposes approved by the regional council.

The procedures of an operational RRA should allow for member libraries to request services from any central library in the RRA or from central libraries in other RRAs as well. However, each central library should respond to service requests from its respective RRA as a first priority.

The transition from the existing statewide library network to a revised network program should be made according to State Library regulations. In addition, the provision of a new network library law should repeal or amend as necessary all existing statutes concerning network programs administered by the State Library. Each library contracting with the State Library for network services under existing law should be offered a role as a central library in the second service level of a revised network program.

C. The third level of the network structure should be revised in library law as a program to establish a single Bibliographic Access Center (abbreviated as BAC) in New Jersey under the direction of the State Library. One library should be designated by the State Library to perform the services required of this center. Ideally, this library would possess certain qualifications established by State Library regulation including: (1) a commitment to serve all citizens of the state; (2) a long-standing record of service as a public institution; (3) recognition as a major research library; (4) demonstrated technical expertise in library automation including the use and programming of computers; (5) previous experience in providing services related to the objectives of the center, and (6) a willingness to assume a portion of the operating costs for the center. The overall objective of the BAC should be to provide the means for networking among all central libraries in the various RRAs and to any other libraries desiring assistance. Overall, the center should provide the foundation for a state bibliographic data base that can be linked to interstate networking arrangements among libraries.

The services to be provided by the BAC should be made a part of library law. Examples of potential services include: computerization of all cooperative holdings of the various central libraries, e.g., an expanded union list of serials; an automated location file of New Jersey state documents; an automated numerical register to facilitate interlibrary loans; an on-line computer service to all central libraries within 3 years of designation as the BAC; reference within 3 years of designation as the BAC; reference search services to all central libraries and to any other library upon request; and incorporation of other cooperative holdings (of any autonomous network within or outside of the state) into the center's data base.

The funding for the BAC should be determined in library law as the sum of a fixed annual grant and a fixed fee for services to libraries other than the central libraries. In addition, certain one-time costs to establish the center should be supported by state funds upon negotiation with the State Library. The BAC should perform all services by contract with the State Library. This contract should be approved by majority vote of the RRA councils before execution.

29. *The overall level of State financial assistance to support the revised network structure and programs should be no less than 50 percent above the authorized level of aid for network services provided in N.J.S.A. 18A:74-1 et seq. In addition, no less than 75 percent of the total network funds should be reserved for the purposes of the library service cooperatives and the regional resource associations.*

30. *State aid for regional film library purposes should be made a separate line item in the State Library's budget.*

The proposal to revise the New Jersey library network is a comprehensive one. A new network prescribed in law will act to significantly improve the existing situation in accordance with Tables III-3 and III-4. In accepting these proposals, the State will have taken a major step toward providing statewide access to library services for all of its citizens.

ACHIEVING EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY LIBRARY SERVICES IN NEW JERSEY

Libraries affect each and every one of us in some way during the course of our lives. Often without people realizing it, library services are woven into the conduct of their daily affairs - assisting the process of education, the making of business decisions, the pursuit of scientific and policy research and the enrichment of cultural activities. In short, libraries are an integral part of the basic fabric of our society.

Unfortunately, libraries blend in so well with our daily activities that they often disappear from view. We tend to take libraries, and their services, for granted without always considering their needs. They often get lost in the shuffle of priorities and the battle for scarce funds. As a result, library operations are usually stretched very thin in the provision of services.

Publicly-supported libraries have always had to rely upon the willingness of government to recognize their financial point of no return. That time has come again. Libraries cannot meet the impending realities of the 1980s under the present framework of federal, state, and local support. The price of maintaining the status quo would be the most costly price of all -- weakening the broad service role of libraries. This kind of situation should not be allowed to occur. Libraries contribute significantly to the quality of our society. Government must act on behalf of its citizens and, in doing so, preserve the broad service role of libraries in the coming years.

Supporting Libraries in New Jersey

Historically, State government has long promoted the establishment of libraries and the development of improved library services throughout New

Jersey. The goal of all of these efforts has remained the same -- *equal access to quality library services for all citizens*. Most library laws and regulations adopted over the years have contributed to this basic goal. However, time has a way of eroding the best of intentions. The most recent passage of major state legislation for libraries occurred in the late 1960s. A solid basis was established for a state-local partnership in the provision of local library services and statewide interlibrary cooperation. At the time, these laws placed New Jersey in the forefront of state-level efforts to promote quality library services for all citizens. Today, this statement is no longer true.

New Jersey's existing library laws cannot suffice as the basis for adequate library services in the coming decade. After a dozen years of service, the State's library aid program is out of touch with the costs of present-day services. Consequently, there is too much pressure on local government to make up the difference in library support -- especially in the face of spending limitations and rising costs in other service areas.

At the same time, a number of library activities promoted by these laws are also out of date. New priorities for library development, technological changes, and better approaches to library networking have taken place in recent years. Many of these innovations have already proven themselves in other states. In contrast, New Jersey's provisions to develop better services are locked into the past. The State's library policies and programs of the 1960s are not capable of dealing with either the financial needs or the service opportunities that are emerging for the 1980s. It is time for New Jersey to once again renew its role in promoting statewide access to library services.

Toward Equal Access to Quality Library Services

New Jersey must continue to move toward this fundamental library service goal. Further progress will mean building upon the best aspects of existing laws and programs without necessarily remaining locked into them. Past accomplishments in obtaining aid, meeting standards, and establishing a library network have certainly not been in vain. Taken together, they have been an important step toward achieving the goal of equal access to library services. In many respects, existing library laws have provided the foundation for future activities. Yet changes must be made if libraries are to avoid sliding away from this most basic goal.

The proposed new state plan for library services articulates the types of change needed in New Jersey. This plan, when completed, will provide a broad framework of financial, legal, professional, and service objectives designed to ultimately reach the equal access goal. Obviously, not all objectives can be addressed at once. In seeking to implement this plan for library services, the Department of Education will have to set doable priorities given the limitation -- financial and otherwise -- in state and local resources.

The first thing that needs to be done is to preserve the present level of services in New Jersey. Safeguarding the foundation for quality library services will mean that several basic objectives will have to be achieved as soon as possible, namely; (1) better state and local government financial support for libraries; (2) additional development programs to maintain local services; and (3) revision of the network structure to increase the participation of libraries as well as broaden citizen access to statewide library resources. Without these measures, New Jersey's libraries will be unable to

sustain their broad service role in the years ahead. The key to this challenge remains continued State support for the longstanding goal of equal access to quality library services.

The Next Step: Legislation

This has become a time of decision for libraries across the nation. The passage of Public Law 93-568 in 1974 marked the beginning of a federally-funded, public review of existing library services and future library needs in every state of the union. During the past 2 years, citizen conferences on libraries have been held around the country. These conferences have resulted in broad proposals for future development of libraries in their respective states. This kind of library review is also underway at the national level. Recently, a White House Conference on Libraries was held to evaluate federal policies for library development in the various states.

New Jersey has actively participated in this nationwide evaluation of libraries and library services. Under the direction of the State Library, the course charted by the New Jersey Conference on Libraries is being carried forward -- in the development of the new state plan for library services. In short, the process of change has begun for libraries in New Jersey. The need for new directions cannot be denied any longer. Goals and objectives to improve services are emerging from the new state plan. Generally, better funding, improved development of services and a revised network program appear to be the immediate priorities. The next step is new state legislation.

The Commission believes that its recommendations for libraries in New Jersey offer the means to reach these objectives. Each proposal is a balanced

approach -- somewhere between the extremes of total statutory revision and maintaining the status quo -- to recurring problems facing libraries in the state. Taken together, the Commission's recommendations provide the framework for legislative action to renew the State's historical role in supporting the development of its libraries. With improved laws and better funding, New Jersey will continue to progress toward the goal of equal access to quality library services for all citizens.

