

***Information Needs  
of the 80s***

*Edited by:* **ROBERT D. STUEART**

# ***Information Needs of the 80s***

*Libraries and Information Services  
Role in "Bringing Information to  
People" Based on the Deliberations  
of the White House Conference on  
Library and Information Services*

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## FOREWORD

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Linking the needs of users and potential users of all types of library and information centers with the information that will enable them to function in post-industrial society, both as private citizens and as individuals or groups working in organizations, is a major challenge for librarians and other information specialists in the fast-changing decade of the 1980s.

The White House Conference on Library and Information Services-1979 provided a long-awaited forum for citizens from all walks of life, trustees and members of other governing bodies of libraries and information centers, librarians and information scientists, and library and information-science educators to discuss issues facing the information management profession.

The Association of American Library Schools, concerned with the impact those challenges would have, particularly on the education of information professionals, resolved to have educators who were delegates

to that Conference and other experts who attended the Conference identify some of those challenges and present them in monograph form for further consideration and discussion. The writers of the resulting volume had a number of different readers in mind while writing the chapters. Obviously, all faculty teaching “issues” courses and library and information-science education programs concerned with curriculum planning will find this vital reading. But other audiences will find it equally relevant to their desires for a succinct statement, divorced from the technical requirements of a final report, of the issues identified at the White House Conference. These chapters should provide a framework for discussing issues facing the information profession; it should provide a common understanding of the issues to be presented to governing bodies of libraries and other information centers; and it should provide a framework for deliberations of librarians. These essays are intended to provide a basis for that continued discussion.

On behalf of AALS, thanks must be expressed to those who wrote the individual chapters, to Charles Patterson, Chair of the Publications Committee of AALS, and to Jan Phillips, the Executive Secretary of AALS.

Robert D. Stueart  
*Series Editor*

## PREFACE

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The discussions at the White House Conference on Library and Information Services should provide the catalytic force for information professionals and for the educators of information professionals who are responsible for designing, implementing, and evaluating information systems to meet the needs of citizens. The President, in accepting the final report of the White House Conference, stated that libraries can be community resources for information for the consumer and small business on such matters as energy, marketing, and technological innovations, and that libraries must be strengthened and the public made aware of their potential since they can do much to meet people's needs in coping with the problems being faced in the eighties. The purpose of this volume is to provide a more penetrating discussion of citizens' information needs as they were identified and magnified at the White House Conference, and

to lay further groundwork for discussions and considerations of a topic which has national importance.

Recently, greater attention has been paid to the needs of individual citizens for information to help them cope with their daily personal circumstances and to aid them in work-related matters, rather than to the demands of information-providing institutions, such as libraries, which were created to serve citizen needs. Early in its existence, the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science sponsored a 1973 Conference on the Needs of Occupational, Ethnic and Other Groups in the United States. Sensitivity to such needs is best expressed by the citizens, themselves, from all segments of the population.

The White House Conference, with its two-thirds lay delegates and one-third professional delegates, provided a needed forum for identifying and discussing those needs. The resolutions which came out of that Conference express the most pressing needs, and in almost every case, relate directly to citizen needs rather than to organizational ones. These issues, in the form of resolutions, relate to the needs of both users and nonusers of libraries and other information services. It is maintained that information access is "indispensable to the development of human potential, the advancement of civilization and the continuance of enlightened self-government." Further, the United States Domestic Council Committee on the Right of Privacy views this access as a basic principle in the design of a national policy "to meet the basic needs of people, to improve the quality of life and to enable the responsibilities of citizenship to be met."

The implications of that Conference and those statements are significant, especially in light of economic realities facing individual citizens and local, regional and national governments.

People want accurate information to guide them in making intelligent decisions about issues that concern them. They want to know how to find the government services they need to solve their problems. They want information on how to adapt to the rapid changes taking place in their environment. They want to expand their knowledge and range of choices through education. These issues are addressed here.

The organization of this volume follows the five basic themes of the White House Conference with certain additions. The introductory chapter, written by Marilyn K. Gell, Executive Director of the White House Conference, gives a brief historical overview of the process leading up to and including the Conference. (The titles used with each contributor re-

flect positions occupied by those individuals at the time of the Conference.)

Chapter I on "Meeting Personal Needs" was written by Dr. Margaret Knox Goggin, Dean and Professor of the Graduate School of Librarianship and Information Management at the University of Denver. Dr. Goggin was an at-large associations delegate representing the Association of American Library Schools. Her discussion recognizes that an individual's personal needs cover the whole hierarchy, identified by Maslow, which ranges from the basic needs of survival to the more sophisticated ones of self-actualization. Within the context of the Conference, needs are identified, alternatives are discussed, and problems are posed.

Chapter II on "Enhancing Lifelong Learning" was written by Dr. Annette L. Hoage Phinazee, Dean and Professor of the School of Library Science at North Carolina Central University, and herself a delegate from North Carolina. The discussion concentrates on the need for lifelong learning, starting with prebirth and extending through the golden age of life. It focuses on the role of libraries in this process—their role in literacy—and on the expectations that citizens have of librarians—their education and knowledge—which will aid in this continuing education process.

Dr. Donald R. King, Acting Dean of the Rutgers University's Graduate School of Library and Information Studies and a delegate from New Jersey, has written the chapter on "Improving Organizations and the Professions." Dr. King addresses the issue of providing library and information services to a wide range of businesses, societies, farms, civic and labor organizations as well as other associations, and to the professions, including, among others, medical and legal. The chapter attempts to characterize organizations and professions, to examine services which might lead to their improvement, and to enumerate some unresolved policy issues which face them.

Dr. Richard L. Darling, Dean and Professor of the School of Library Service at Columbia University and a delegate from the state of New York, has written Chapter IV on "Effectively Governing our Society," which looks at the role of libraries, government, and the private sector in providing information needed to effectively govern society. The writer questions whether it is possible to create a national information policy.

Dr. Jean E. Lowrie, Director and Professor of the Western Michigan University's School of Librarianship, and the leader of the delegation from Michigan, has written the chapter on "Increasing International



Understanding." Her experience, global in nature, prepares her well to comment on the challenges facing the United States and all other nations in making ready access to information a human right.

Mrs. Ann Heidbreder Eastman, Director of Public Affairs Programs of the College of Arts and Sciences at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and a lay delegate from Virginia who was also a resource person for several state conferences leading up to the White House Conference, has written a provocative analysis, from a citizen's point of view, of the conference, its resolutions and its possible impact on the future of library service.

The final chapter, written by Dr. Ching-chih Chen, Associate Dean and Professor at Simmons College, Graduate School of Library and Information Science and one of the facilitators at the White House Conference, is a preliminary report of a study, funded by the United States Office of Education, to identify citizen information-seeking patterns. It is included here because the Summary Report was presented to the delegates at the White House Conference and because the findings of that study directly affect the "potentials" which are identified in some of the other chapters. This study is referred to several times in these other chapters. As an appendix (Appendix I) the astute observations of Dr. Daniel Boorstein, the Librarian of Congress, are included because they have direct relevance to the theme areas discussed in this volume.

Finally, the epilogue, written by Mr. Charles Benton, Chairman of the National Commission on Library and Information Science and Chairman of the White House Conference, takes the activities of the White House Conferences and projects their impact during the 1980s. He discusses some of the activities which have developed as direct results of the White House Conference on Library and Information Services.

This volume is offered to practitioners, educators, students, and especially to users of libraries, with confidence that the White House Conference, as encapsulated in these brief discussions, has set a new dimension for information flow in the 1980s.

Robert D. Stuart  
Simmons College

# INTRODUCTION

Marilyn K. Gell

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On November 15, 1979 the first White House Conference on Library and Information Services was convened in Washington, D. C. It was a landmark event, the result of two decades of dedicated effort on the part of librarians, trustees, and concerned citizens.

This conference was the largest White House Conference ever held at one location, with a total of 806 delegates and alternates among the 3,600 persons from the United States and abroad who participated. These delegates considered basic and fundamental issues concerning information collection, distribution and access. Underlying their efforts was the firm belief that "a free, democratic society depends on a fully informed citizenry," and that "public libraries can play a vital role in providing information services both to citizens and to government officials."

Repeatedly, Conference delegates affirmed their belief that the primary function of library and information services is to fulfill the information needs of citizens as efficiently and effectively as possible. Discussions concerning use of technology, development of organizational structures, and concerns of special constituencies all flowed from this fundamental principle.

In the words of the delegates:

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the White House Conference on Library and Information Services affirms its support for the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America which guarantees freedom of inquiry, freedom to read, freedom to publish, and free and full access to information, especially information about public processes, and that these freedoms are essential to the maintenance of free libraries and informational services, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that libraries should promote and make available information services on public issues for all segments of the community:

1. By acquisition of materials that present various sides of controversial issues.
2. By supporting discussions and forums on issues.
3. By publicizing widely that these opportunities for community discussions are available.
4. By educating public officials on the availability and use of information resources.

Although there is a certain elegance in this basic proposition, many of the specific issues debated were less straightforward. In approving the sixty four resolutions passed at the Conference, delegates grappled with such difficult problems as: Do libraries, the traditional storehouses of information and knowledge, have a place in this fast-moving "Information Age?" If so, what should it be? When should information be private and when should it be without cost? How should freedom of information principles be applied? Is there a need for a national information policy? If so, what elements should it include? Can the principles of public access be applied to increase the free flow of information across national borders and through the barriers of conflicting governmental philosophies?

## HISTORY

The long story of how these issues came to be discussed began in 1957 when Channing Bete, Sr., a library trustee from Greenfield, Massachusetts, proposed a White House Conference on Library and Information Services at a meeting of the American Library Trustee Association, a division of the American Library Association. As the idea gained acceptance, four presidents supported actions that moved it forward. In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed the National Commission on Libraries. In 1970, President Richard M. Nixon signed Public Law 91-345 establishing the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science as a permanent, independent federal agency. On December 31, 1974, President Gerald R. Ford signed Public Law 93-568, authorizing the White House Conference. President Jimmy Carter declared support for the Conference during his presidential campaign and on May 4,

1977, he signed an appropriations bill which set aside \$3.5 million to plan and conduct the Conference under the direction of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science.

As enunciated in Public Law 93-568 the purpose of the White House Conference on Library and Information Services was "to develop recommendations for the further improvement of the Nation's libraries and information centers and their use by the public." The law further stated that the Conference should set goals consistent with the following statements:

- Access to information and ideas is indispensable to the development of human potential, the advancement of civilization, and the continuance of enlightened self-government.
- The primary purpose and function of libraries and information centers is the preservation and dissemination of information and ideas.
- The growth and augmentation of the Nation's libraries and information centers is essential if all Americans are to have reasonable access to adequate library and information center services.
- New achievements in technology offer the potential to enable libraries and information centers to serve the public more fully, expeditiously, and economically.
- Maximum realization of the potential inherent in the use of advanced technology by library and information centers requires cooperation in planning for, and coordination of, the services of these centers.
- The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science is developing plans for meeting national needs for library and information services, and for coordinating activities to meet those needs.
- Productive recommendations for expanding access to libraries and information centers will require government understanding and support as well as that of public and private libraries and information centers.

In order to ensure maximum participation by all citizens, fifty eight pre-Conferences were held in forty nine states (all except South Dakota), six United States territories, and the District of Columbia, within the federal library community, and among American Indians living on or near reservations. At these meetings more than 100,000 citizens discussed the

issues, voted on resolutions, and elected delegates to the National Conference.

Congressional hearings on the legislation authorizing the White House Conference indicated that Congress wanted the meeting to be more than a gathering of professional librarians. As a result, two-thirds of the selected delegates were consumers of library and information services, while only one-third were information professionals.

Both the wording of the legislation and the composition of the delegates suggested an emphasis on the information needs of citizens. As the 3,000 resolutions passed at the pre-White House Conference were forwarded to the National Office, this emphasis was verified and the theme of the White House Conference became "Bringing Information to People."

The suggestions and recommendations passed at the fifty eight pre-Conference were augmented by additional suggestions from professional associations, government agencies, and private groups with an interest in library and information services. To define some of these suggestions and to provide a forum for additional debate and discussion, meetings were held on Federal Funding Alternatives, the Structure and Governance of Library Networks, Libraries and Literacy, International Information Exchange, and New Communication and Information Technology. In addition, several meetings brought together leaders of more than sixty associations and organizations concerned with library and information services.

## CONFERENCE STRUCTURE

The recommendations described above and those generated at pre-Conference meetings were varied and far-reaching. The challenge to White House Conference planners, then, became one of providing a structure which would accommodate the many issues that had been raised. Thus, resolutions were grouped in five broad user-oriented categories for consideration by Conference delegates. These categories were chosen to reflect the most basic and fundamental themes that ran throughout the resolutions. In addition, these themes were consistent with both Congressional interest and the composition of the delegates. They reflect the fundamental perception that individuals needing information, need it to function in a variety of capacities. This thematic approach to Conference resolutions reveals some major issues which are summarized below:

### Library and Information Services to Meet Personal Needs:

- Should libraries and information providers offer new services to meet personal needs?
- What national policy issues must be addressed if libraries and information services are to meet personal needs effectively?
- How should library and information services be expanded or redesigned to meet the needs of special constituencies?
- What legislative and funding initiatives are required to foster effective use of limited resources in the Nation's libraries?
- What measures will encourage maximum use of the Nation's information resources?

### Library and Information Services for Enhancing Lifelong Learning:

- How could the present federal legislative program supporting libraries and information services (school, public and academic) be administered more effectively?
- What are the respective roles and areas of cooperation between school and public libraries in meeting the needs of school-age children?
- How best can a national network be implemented to support the Nation's educational goals?
- How can libraries and information services improve and enhance the lifelong learning opportunities of the Nation's citizens?
- How can libraries and information services best be used to promote literacy?
- Should there be a greater percentage of state support in the total funding of public libraries and what are the dimensions of the federal role?
- Should those academic and research libraries with collections of regional and national significance be accorded a special status by the federal government?
- How can local community, public school and academic libraries and information services that support our national educational programs adapt to the changing social and technological environment?

### Library and Information Services for Improving Organizations and the Professions:

- What new roles and services should libraries and other information providers assume in serving organizations and professions?
- What kinds of information-delivery services should be used to meet the needs of organizations and professions?
- How can libraries and information providers best serve the needs of special constituencies such as professional groups and nonprofit organizations?
- What should be the roles of the federal government and the private sector in providing information services and systems that serve organizations and professions?
- To what extent should information be made available to individual and organizational users?

#### Library and Information Services for Effectively Governing Society:

- How best can we distribute information needed for governing society?
- Should government share its legislative information system developed by the Congressional Research Service?
- What new services can libraries offer?
- What are the issues in freedom of information?
- How do we ensure the preservation of information sources necessary for governing society?
- Do we need a national information policy?

#### Library and Information Services for Increasing International Cooperation:

- In a pluralistic world, do Americans need more information from abroad? Do other peoples need new types of United States information? If so, how can these needs be met?
- How can comprehensive and well-articulated policies and procedures for sharing United States information best be developed?
- As technology advances, how can the goal of broader information flow be balanced with the rights of private corporations and nation states to control the information they generate?
- Why should the underlying international imbalance and the ability to create and disseminate information be reduced?
- How can the United States help the developing countries meet their information and communication needs?

The above enumeration of the thematic structure and the major issues raised under that structure formed the basis for the organization of the White House Conference on Library and Information Services. However, the actual content of the Conference and, therefore, its results, were determined primarily by the delegates themselves, working in their various sessions.

Within this framework delegates discussed, debated, deliberated, and approved a total of sixty four resolutions—twenty five by voice vote and thirty nine by paper ballot (see Appendix II). The resolutions originated in thirty four small working groups, but were each voted upon by all Conference delegates in plenary session. The resolutions call for many changes and clearly set several major goals: to reshape library and information services to meet the information needs of individuals more effectively, to maintain local community control of public agencies, and to provide for more economy and accountability from institutions providing these services.

## CONCLUSION

Issues outlined above are discussed in greater detail in other parts of this volume. They have not been resolved and their importance will continue to grow as society moves relentlessly into what has been called the "Information Age."

Just as countless people helped make the Conference itself a reality, countless people are now and will continue to be engaged in seeking implementation of the resolutions flowing from the Conference. As information professionals, librarians and information scientists will take part in those efforts by working together and with those needing to be served.

It is in the implementation efforts that the goal of the White House Conference will ultimately be realized, and some "improvement of the Nation's libraries and information centers and their use by the public," can be achieved.



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