

FINAL REPORT

LIBRARIES STUDY COMMITTEE

Presented to the Legislative Council
and the Iowa General Assembly
January 1999

Prepared by the Legislative Service Bureau



Legislative
Service
Bureau

FINAL REPORT

Libraries Study Committee

January 1999

MEMBERS

Senator Mary Kramer,
Co-chairperson
Senator Dennis Black
Senator Sheldon Rittmer

Representative Willard Jenkins,
Co-chairperson
Representative Marcella Frevert
Representative Henry Rayhons

Contents

Recommendations	p. 2
Adopted Recommendation.....	p. 2
Other Recommendations Proposed by Presenters and Committee Members	p. 2
Committee Proceedings.....	p. 3
November 9, 1998, Meeting.....	p. 3
December 11, 1998, Telephone Conference Call.....	p. 5
Written Materials on File With the Legislative Service Bureau	p. 5
.....	

Staff Contacts

Susan Crowley, Legal Counsel
(515) 281-3430

Nicole Haatvedt, Legal Counsel
(515) 281-6329

AUTHORIZATION AND APPOINTMENT

The Libraries Study Committee was created by the Legislative Council. The charge of the Study Committee was as follows:

"Review issues concerning libraries. The review shall include the issues surrounding changing regional library staff from regional board employees to state employees. In addition, review the funding for the State Library and its programs and consider local library funding issues."

The Study Committee was granted one meeting day. The meeting was held on Monday, November 9, 1998.



Libraries Study Committee

1. Recommendations.

a. **Adopted Recommendation.** The Libraries Study Committee adopted the following recommendation:

Regional libraries may be expected to have proportionately high administrative costs since their mission is to provide support services and training to local public libraries, their health benefit programs reflect the difficulties of small group risk sharing and the costs associated with such risk sharing. **Therefore, the Libraries Study Committee recommends that the General Assembly require the Iowa Department of Personnel to include Regional Library employees as eligible employees for the state employee health insurance plan if a Regional Library board of trustees chooses to join the plan.**

b. **Other Recommendations Proposed by Presenters and Committee Members.** The Libraries Study Committee agreed to include in its final report to the General Assembly other proposed recommendations which were proffered by Committee members during the telephone conference call and by presenters at the November 9 meeting. The following proposed recommendations were considered by the Committee in its deliberations, but were not adopted as Committee recommendations:

(1) Establish a libraries pilot program to explore the system of libraries within local communities and to encourage innovative collaboration among libraries, including resource and staff sharing.

(2) Enact the "Enrich Iowa" funding program for public libraries proposed in companion bills House File 598 and Senate File 400 in the 1998 Session of the General Assembly.

(3) Enact legislation providing direct state aid to public libraries to supplement local funding.

(4) Enact legislation providing direct state support of local public libraries at a level approximating that provided by other states (from Iowa's 2.8 percent to the national average of 12.5 percent).

(5) Increase funding for the Open Access and Access Plus programs.

(6) Provide funds for continuance and expansion of the SILO project.

(7) Enact legislation providing full funding for Open Access, Access Plus, SILO, and other programs comprising the integrated State Library system.

(8) Enact legislation providing additional funds to the Regional Library system, including funds to employ one more consultant in each of the seven regions to address technology issues.

(9) Enact legislation making Regional Library employees state employees for purposes of wages and health benefits.

(10) Enact legislation making Regional Library staff state employees rather than Regional board employees.



(11) Enact legislation minimizing the effect of the property tax assessment rollback for residential property, thus allowing local governments to capture more property tax revenue to make available to public libraries.

2. Committee Proceedings.

a. November 9, 1998, Meeting.

Overview. At its meeting, the Committee heard testimony from a variety of representatives of the integrated library system (State Library, Regional Libraries, and local public libraries).

Library System. Mr. Dale Ross, Iowa Commission of Libraries, made a presentation on the importance of the State Library and Regional Libraries in providing support to local public libraries. He also stated the importance of local libraries as centers of culture in the community. He urged the Committee to recommend state aid to the integrated library system.

State Library. Ms. Sharman Smith, State Librarian, described the responsibilities of the State Library in providing direct library services to the three branches of state government, the legal community, the health care community, and the general public. In regard to statewide library development, the Regional Library system works as a partner with the State Library in the delivery of State Library programs through continuing education for librarians, consulting, and training/retraining of local library staff. Ms. Smith recommended increased state funding for Open Access (a program which reimburses libraries for allowing library customers from other libraries to check out materials), Access Plus (a program which allows interlibrary loans of materials), and the State of Iowa Online (SILO) Program. She also recommended increased library partnerships on both the state and community levels.

Regional Libraries. Mr. Jim Larson, Regional Library Trustee, stated that the Regional Library system supports local libraries with consulting, continuing education, reference, and interlibrary loan services. Mr. Larson said the Regional Library system helps bridge the gaps in local funding for collections and technology. Mr. Larson recommended to the Committee that Regional Library staff should be considered state employees for the purposes of wages and health benefits. The staff should remain responsible to the Regional boards, however, which gives the boards the ability to hire staff quickly.

Ms. Emily Navarre, Regional Library Administrator, stated that in addition to the services of Regional Libraries listed by Mr. Larson, her Regional Library publishes a newsletter for member libraries and oversees the rotation of special library materials such as videotapes and compact discs. Ms. Navarre informed the Committee that the critical issues for libraries are dealing with the high turnover of library staff and the constant need for training and retraining of staff.



Libraries Study Committee

Iowa Library Association (ILA). Ms. Susan Kling, 1998 ILA President, and Ms. Mary Wegner, 1999 ILA President-elect, described the Iowa Library Association as a professional association of librarians, library staff, library friends, and library trustees. The presenters discussed funding issues at all levels of the integrated library system. They stated that the ILA supports changing Regional Library staff to state employees. The ILA also supports annual, direct state aid to public libraries through programs such as Enrich Iowa, to supplement, not replace, local funding. The ILA also supports full funding for the State, Regional, and Regents Libraries and their programs.

Assessment of Iowa's Library System. Dr. Herbert Safford, Dean of Library Services, University of Northern Iowa, made a presentation assessing Iowa's library system in comparison to other states. Direct state aid to Iowa's libraries is lower than in other states, he said. Despite the low funding level, however, the State Library has developed a coherent set of programs, technologies, and services to serve the public libraries. Dr. Safford outlined for the Committee the following "best practices" for libraries:

- Strong leadership from the State Library.
- Adequate state contribution to local public libraries.
- Predictable funding levels for library programs for planning purposes.
- Clear delineation of responsibility and authority among agencies involved in supporting and delivering library services.
- Cooperative relationships and programs among multiple types of libraries.
- Aggressive, comprehensive, and flexible strategic planning which takes into consideration different contingencies and environments.
- Emphasis on recruiting, training, and retaining qualified library staff at all levels.

Library Collaboration. Mr. Burton Varcoe, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Emmetsburg Public Library, outlined in detail for the Committee that community's efforts to construct a shared library with the local community college. Mr. Varcoe cited city government structure as a possible impediment to further library development on the local level.

Local Library Directors. Directors of local libraries in West Des Moines, Waterloo/Cedar Falls, Wellsburg, and Belmond made presentations to the Committee on the needs of local public libraries and on the services local public libraries receive from the State Library and the Regional Libraries. Mr. Ray Vignovich, West Des Moines Public Library Director, stated that state and local funds are currently not available in adequate amounts to allow libraries to make necessary improvements. Ms. Barbara Mennen and Ms. Carol Bailey, Library Directors in Wellsburg and Belmond, respectively, stated that local libraries lack funding to offer innovative programs and services and to keep pace with the technology revolution. Ms. Carol Johnson stated that libraries need to find more ways to share buildings and services.



b. December 11, 1998, Telephone Conference Call.

State Funding. The purpose of the telephone conference call was to give Committee members an opportunity to discuss and vote on proposed recommendations. The Committee members discussed increasing direct state funding to local libraries in a manner similar to that provided in the "Enrich Iowa" legislation introduced during the 1998 Legislative Session. However, Co-chairperson Kramer noted that, rather than requiring local public libraries to meet state standards as contained in the legislation, local libraries should be required to perform a library needs assessment for their communities that addresses the needs of all citizens and not just library users. Committee members also discussed Co-chairperson Jenkins' recommendation to establish a pilot program through which public libraries in an area would collaborate to meet their own support services needs.

Regional Library System. The Committee members discussed the role of the Regional Library system and the status of Regional Library employees in terms of salary and health benefits. Members agreed that while Regional Libraries should be expected to have high administrative costs since their mission is to provide support services and training to local public libraries, their health benefits programs reflect the difficulties of small group risk sharing and the costs associated with such risk sharing.

The Committee agreed to include in its final report to the General Assembly a list of proposed recommendations which were proffered by Committee members during the telephone conference call and by presenters at the November 9 meeting.

3. Written Materials on File With the Legislative Service Bureau.

- Written summary of remarks prepared by presenter Mr. Dale Ross, Chairperson, Iowa Commission of Libraries.
- Written comments prepared by presenter Ms. Sharman Smith, State Librarian.
- Written comments prepared by presenter Mr. Jim Larson, Regional Library Trustee, Northwest Region.
- Written summary of remarks prepared by Ms. Emily Navarre, Administrator, Southeastern Library Services.
- Written comments prepared by presenters Ms. Susan Kling, 1998 President, Iowa Library Association, and Ms. Mary Wegner, 1999 President-elect, Iowa Library Association.
- "An Iowa Library Success Story" distributed by Ms. Kling and Ms. Wegner.
- "Funding of Libraries in Iowa" distributed by Ms. Kling and Ms. Wegner.
- Written summary of testimony prepared by presenter Dr. Herbert D. Safford, Dean of Library Services, University of Northern Iowa.



Libraries Study Committee

- Written comments prepared by presenter Mr. Ray Vignovich, Library Director, West Des Moines Public Library.
- Written comments prepared by presenter Mr. Burton Varcoe, Trustee, Emmetsburg Public Library.
- Written comments prepared by presenter Ms. Barbara Mennen, Library Director, Wellsburg Public Library.
- Written comments prepared by presenter Ms. Carol Bailey, Library Director, Belmond Public Library.
- Legislative Service Bureau memorandum compiling recommendations offered by Committee members and others for discussion at December 11, 1998, telephone conference call.
- Proposed recommendations prepared by Co-chairperson Kramer for discussion at December 11, 1998, telephone conference call.

3258IC