



Footnotes

¹ The Official Newsletter of the State Library of Iowa

VOLUME 26, NO. 9/10

September/October 2002

State Data Center makes sense of census

By Beth Henning, State Data Center Coordinator
State Library

“Now that we have the Internet, why do we need the library?”

Have you ever been asked that question? I’m sometimes asked why we need a State Data Center when every piece of census data from the last two censuses for every state down to the census block level is already on the Internet at the Census Bureau’s American FactFinder web site.

My answer to the question is to give a test: Go to the American FactFinder web site at <http://factfinder.census.gov> and look up the family poverty rate for your census tract.

Finding the answer to that exercise takes most people a long time, if they find the answer at all. It’s not because the answer isn’t there. It’s there all right—and so are millions of other pieces of information for millions of other pieces of geography. The problem for data users looking for information on the Internet is to find just the one piece of information they need for the one piece of geography they want.

In the state data center we’ve decided that less is more when it comes to census information. Paradoxically, we’re adding value to census data by taking away data. The most recent 2000 census release for Iowa was 1.6 gigabytes of data in 484 population tables and 329 housing tables contained in 76 zipped files. Each file had 37,397 rows and up to 250 columns of data when converted to an Excel spreadsheet. With so much information it’s easy for even the most enthusiastic data user to be overwhelmed. Yet this is exactly what’s on the Census Bureau’s American FactFinder web site—for each of the fifty states!

The goal of the state data center is to make it easier for Iowans to find the demographic information they need by creating a web site that features just Iowa census data. We think of it as a collection management decision—we’re limiting our web-based “collection” to Iowa data. We also limit our collection to just those subjects that we most often get requests for. Data users can find family poverty rates for census tracts on our site but not “aggregate household income by tenure by age of householder by year structure built” (yes, that’s a real table on the American FactFinder!).

To create the data tables on the state data center web site, we take the raw data files provided by the Census Bureau, strip away all of the unnecessary information, re-format the data to improve readability, create new, more succinct tables, then assign them to subject headings using common English terms rather than census jargon, for example, “home ownership” instead of “tenure”.

We do add information to some tables when our reference experience indicates customers will ask for it. For example, the raw census files report the number of families in poverty but not the percentage of families in poverty. In these cases we calculate rates and percentages and add them to our tables. Sometimes we combine separate data items into one table to make it easier for data users to make comparisons, for example, combining household, family, and per capita income into one table or putting both 1990 and 2000 data into one table.

(Cont. on Pg. 2)



Gary Krob and Beth Henning, State Data Center

FOOTNOTES

State Data Center makes sense of census

(Cont. from Pg. 1)

Sometimes we tailor the data on our site for particular users. We provided customized data files and maps for cities considering challenges to their 2000 census counts. We're now adding tables to help local officials identify areas that meet the criteria for enterprise zones. And we've created customized tables for other organizations' web sites, such as a series of tables for the Governor's Asian-Pacific Islander Advisory Council.

Having Iowa demographic data on our web site has changed the way we do business in the state data center. We receive fewer basic questions like, "What is the population of Bedford Falls?". However, we spend more time in consultation with data users, explaining terminology, interpreting data, and helping users decide which type of information is most appropriate for their particular needs. Obviously, we spend more time maintaining and updating the web site.

We also get more questions about what's *not* on our site. Data users who can't find what they need use the e-mail link or toll-free telephone number on our site to inquire about what's missing. Often these are requests for more detailed data, such as the employment status of disabled persons by race in Iowa, or for information not available from the census, such as teen pregnancies or crime rates or the consumer price index. We can usually answer these questions by e-mailing unpublished or custom census tables to the requesters or by guiding them to non-census web sites.

The mission of the state data center is to increase the availability of census data and improve the effectiveness of its use. In our case, extracting information from an overload of data is a way of increasing the availability of information. We want to make it easier for people to find the demographic information they need. Requests to the state data center web site have doubled over the past year to more than 50,000 requests each month. Our goal is to provide Iowans the high quality demographic information they need, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

What Can You Find on the State Data Center Web Site?

- Population and housing data from the 2000 census for Iowa and its counties, incorporated places, townships, census tracts, block groups, metropolitan areas, and urban areas
- Demographic profiles for each Iowa county and incorporated place
- Population of Iowa counties and places from 1850 to 2000
- Land area and population density for Iowa counties and places
- Selected characteristics from the 1990 census
- Annual estimates of population, income, and poverty
- Economic data for the state and counties, including county business patterns, building permits issued, and federal expenditures by county

Contact the State Data Center of Iowa

- Coordinator: Beth Henning, (515) 281-4350, beth.henning@lib.state.ia.us
- Census Librarian: Gary Krob (515) 281-6618, gary.krob@lib.state.ia.us
- Toll-free: 1-800-248-4483
- E-mail: census@lib.state.ia.us
- Web site: http://www.silo.lib.ia.us/specialized_services/datacenter

FOOTNOTES

State Library and Library Service Area Town Meetings: “A Great Day!”

One enthusiastic librarian plans to “promote the library more ...and at all times!”



Staff of the State Library and Library Service Areas hit the road for two weeks again this year to provide learning opportunities for Iowa’s librarians. “Telling the Library Story - Now More Than Ever!” focused on the many ways and places library staff can have a positive influence on their customers and in their communities. As State Librarian Mary Wegner told attendees, “Everything we say and do tells the library story.”



This year, 425 librarians and trustees attended one of eight sessions held in Mason City, Waterloo, Kalona, Urbandale, Council Bluffs, Storm Lake, Ft. Dodge, and Ames. In addition to the mornings’



humorous yet educational skits, attendees were able to participate in two of three afternoon break out sessions, including “Telling the Library Story through the Written Word,” “Making the Most of Measure 13,” and “Certification, Continuing Education and You.”

Attendees said the meetings were well worth their time. “I really enjoy the skits and the messages they send,” wrote one librarian in an evaluation. “It’s something we need to hear over and over.” Another wrote, “The afternoon breakout sessions were most useful, in a practical way.”

Participants included Mary Wegner, State Librarian; Gina Millsap, director, Ames Public Library and Iowa Library Association President; Sandy Dixon, Gerry Rowland and Annette Wetteland, State Library; Beth Marie Quanbeck, Central Iowa Library Service Area; Barb Shultz, North Central Library Service Area; and Karen Burns, Southwest Iowa Library Service Area.

Photos: Top, Gina Millsap, ILA President; above right, Beth Marie and Annette (Mrs. Dusty’s Mom and Skwiggy); above left, Barb and Gerry (Louella the Librarian and Raving Rob); below left, Sandy and Beth Marie (Thelma and Louise); Mary Wegner, State Librarian/narrator; Gerry (Frank Lee Mydear).



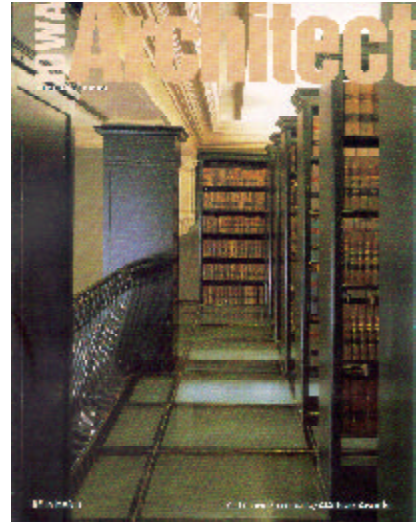
FOOTNOTES

State Library featured in professional journal

The Ola Babcock Miller Building and the State Library are featured in the latest edition of *Iowa Architect* magazine.

Clare Cardinal-Pett, an associate professor of architecture at Iowa State University, noted that "Accommodating the Library's present and future needs became an early goal and required extensive updating of lighting and communication equipment.... The design challenge was to reconcile what it looks like with how it works. The result is nothing short of brilliant."

Copies of *Iowa Architect* (Issue No. 02:241) are available for \$5.30 (tax and shipping included) from The American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter, 1000 Walnut St., Suite 101, Des Moines, IA 50309.



Attending ILA Conference? Visit the State Library!

A fantastic line-up of speakers and programs is planned for this year's Iowa Library Association Conference, Oct. 9-11 at the downtown Marriott, Des Moines. If time allows, stop by the State Library and tour the beautifully restored Ola Babcock Miller Building at E. 12th and Grand. The library is open from 8 to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information, call 1-800-248-4483 or (515) 281-4105; e-mail is@lib.state.ia.us.

Certification update

Congratulations to the following public library staff certified for the first time through the State Library's Iowa Certification Program for Public Librarians.

Laurie Chapman, Columbus Junction

Monica Rohde-Fulton, Marshalltown

Tina Twito, Lehigh

Arlene Wheaton, Hedrick

Important Dates - 2002

October 9-11 - Iowa Library Association Fall Conference, Des Moines

October 13-19 - Teen Read Week

October 22 - Iowa Commission of Libraries Meeting, State Library, Des Moines

October 31 - Annual Survey Due at State Library and Library Service Area

November 11 - Veteran's Day Observed; State Library Closed

November 18-24 - Children's Book Week

November 28-29 - Thanksgiving Day Holiday Observed; State Library Closed

FOOTNOTES

Sign up for federal e-rate program and save on telephone and Internet costs

Iowa public libraries can now sign up for year 2003 e-rate discounts by filling out a 470 form online at <http://www.sl.universalservice.org>.

Libraries can save 50 to 70 percent on monthly telephone and Internet costs. About sixty percent of Iowa public libraries signed up for e-rate discounts in 2002 and so far commitments of nearly \$600,000 have been made. According to State Library Consultant, Judy Jones, many of the problems that discouraged participation early on have been corrected.

"Online forms have expedited and simplified the process," said Jones.

For help with filling out the form, or for more information, contact your Library Service Area or Jones at 1-800-248-4483 (judy.jones@lib.state.ia.us). Information about the e-rate process is also available on the State Library's web site at www.silo.lib.ia.us.

Iowa Center for the Book receives \$10,000 for new web site

Humanities Iowa, a member of the Iowa Center for the Book (ICFB) coalition, presented a check for \$10,000 to State Librarian Mary Wegner on September 27 for the development of an ICFB web-based literary calendar, map and directory .

ICFB, which is located at the State Library, met in Ames with Gregory Geoffroy, president of Iowa State University, John Cole, director of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, First Lady Christie Vilsack and other ICFB members. The web site will contain information about book related events in Iowa, links to ICFB members' web pages, and more.

"Voices from the Prairie: The Third Annual Iowa Writers' Celebration," sponsored by Humanities Iowa took place in the afternoon and featured Cole and Pulitzer Prize-winning author and essayist Jane Smiley.



Attending the ICFB meeting on Sept. 27 in Ames were I.S.U. President Dr. Gregory Geoffroy, First Lady Christie Vilsack, John Cole, director of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, State Librarian Mary Wegner, and Katherine Von Wald, ICFB Coordinator



ISU President Dr. Gregory Geoffroy joined members of the Humanities Iowa Board of Directors in presenting the ICFB with a \$10,000 check from Humanities Iowa.

FOOTNOTES

Iowa Commission of Libraries - Minutes August 27 2002 - State Library, Des Moines (These minutes are considered draft until approved by the Iowa Commission of Libraries)

Present: Pam Bradley, Dwight Carlson, Monica Gohlinghorst, Eldon Huston, Dale Ross and Berta Van Ekeren
Guests: Beth Marie Quanbeck, Central Iowa Library Service Area
Staff: Steve Cox, Sandy Dixon, Carol Simmons, Mary Wegner and Annette Wetteland

1.0 Set Agenda

Ross asked to add E. 2004 Budget to 6.0 Action Items. Approved.

2.0 Approve Minutes

Carlson moved to approve minutes, Gohlinghorst seconded. Motion carried.

3.0 Financial Report

Cox reported that the State Library has not had such large reductions in its budget since 1992. He reported that the State Library's gift account has a balance of \$4280. The Westgate account, which is to be used to improve library services for children, currently has \$10,000 in interest (principal of \$154,000). The State Library has used \$50,000 from the account. Ross asked if a gift could be earmarked. Cox said yes, but no one has offered. Ross noted that budget problems are occurring nationally. Dixon said Colorado lost all direct state aid to libraries. Cox reported that total funds from the State Library's operating budget which had to be reverted to the general fund were \$93,000 last fiscal year. He also explained that the majority of funding for SILO is now federal. Wegner said most state agencies were cut 3.17% while the State Library was cut 25% last fiscal year. She further explained that, because of this budget cut, the State Library was no longer able to use state money to purchase databases, even though most states pay for these resources out of state money. The State Library's contract with Electric Library, a database provider, ended June 30. Major cuts have been made to State Library collections – by as much as two thirds the last three years – but this cannot continue. Wegner also said that two open positions (a reference librarian II, and a position in the law library) were eliminated because of the budget cuts. The two positions represent 10% of the state-funded State Library staff. She hopes to fill two additional open positions in the next few months. Ross said the Library Service and Technology Act (LSTA) reauthorization bill has been drafted and is waiting for passage by both houses of Congress. He said the President is likely to sign the Senate version. Ross said that the federal money may not be appropriated until after the first of the year. Carlson inquired about whether the budget cuts will affect the required match of federal funds with state funds. Wegner said that problems had not yet developed but are possible in the future. Huston moved to accept the financial report, Bradley seconded. Motion carried.

4.0 Communications

A. Special Reports

State Library continuing education and certification programs

Dixon presented an overview of the State Library's Iowa Certification Program for Public Librarians. The voluntary program, designed by an advisory committee consisting of members of the library community, began in 1986. It addressed the need for education and training for the 86% of public library directors who did not have formal education in library science. The program goals are: 1) improve library service in Iowa, 2) encourage public librarians to acquire, maintain, and develop their skills through basic and continuing education, 3) recognize public librarians who update their knowledge and skills to provide better library services to their customers; 4) improve the public image of librarians and libraries, and 5) provide guidelines for public library boards to use in developing policies for hiring staff. According to a 1988 study, the program improved job performance, improved service to customers and resulted in staff having a more positive attitude about their jobs and libraries. The basic requirements for the six certification levels have not changed since 1986. Levels I through IV require completion of Public Library Management 1 and 2 and there are currently five classes offered a year. Direct state aid and accreditation requirements have boosted the certification participation rate among public library directors from 65% to 90%. Barriers to taking the classes are 1) time and travel, 2) some boards not willing to give paid time off to attend classes and reimburse for expenses. Dixon estimated that between travel expenses and the cost of the class, librarians spend around \$300 to attend. Dixon extended an invitation to the Commissioners to sit in on one or more classes. She also encouraged them to promote this among librarians and their boards. Van Ekeren suggested that they approach boards through trustee workshops. Ross asked if the State Library could work with the community colleges or other states in which Iowa has reciprocity agreements to provide certification programs. An issue is the cost effectiveness of paying tuition to obtain a low paying library position. He also asked if Iowa could provide academic degrees online, and if other states offered this opportunity. Dixon said a number of universities offer ALA accredited master's degrees in library science Iowa has been asked to provide an online option. Bradley reported that Southeast Iowa Community College has just offered its first degree online. Wegner reported that she was researching the possibility of membership with the Western Council of State Libraries, in part because of the work of this group in the area of library education. Ross asked that she provide more information and report to the Commission at the October meeting.

Dixon also reported on a meeting she attended of continuing education coordinators from other state library agencies.

B. Commission Reports

Huston reported that Panora is trying to raise one million dollars to build a new library. The Lake Panorama Association has donated \$50,000 towards the project.

Bradley said that Keokuk Public Library plans to partner with the local community college to develop a catalog, and will fund the project with gift monies.

Ross reported on a situation involving a challenged book in an Iowa public library. He noted that the Iowa Library Association's Intellec-

FOOTNOTES

Iowa Commission of Libraries - Minutes August 27, 2002 - State Library, Des Moines (Cont. from Pg. 6)

tual Freedom Committee is planning to revise their information kit for libraries in similar situations.

C. State Librarian's Report

1. The Iowa Library Association's annual conference is Oct 9-11 in Des Moines.
2. Applications for Gates Foundation grants are underway. Initial applications were due August 26.
3. A meeting to begin planning the FY04 Plan of Service will be held Friday, 8/30. The group will include Mary Wegner, Dale Ross, the seven Library Service Area (LSA) Administrators, one trustee from each LSA, and two AEA representatives.
4. Wegner attempted to get advocate memberships in the American Library Trustee Association for each Commission member, but the state did not approve. Ross is the national president of this association. Huston will also become a member.
5. Sign-up for EBSCOhost databases is progressing well. 292 (53.8%) public libraries have signed up as of August 26, in addition to 47 academic and 8 special libraries. A news release was distributed to local newspapers and radio stations announcing the availability of EBSCOhost in Iowa communities.
6. The State Library is working with AEA media directors on a school library survey that will go out in September to building principals and school librarians. Gerry Rowland has led this project and is now providing training on completion of the survey. Iowa is the only state currently collecting school library data annually for individual school buildings.
7. Mary Cameron will represent Iowa in the National Book Festival in Washington DC on October 12. The event is designed to promote reading and the nation's libraries, and will include a "Pavilion of the States." Iowa's will have information on Iowa Stories 2000 and cultural/literary maps of Iowa that were produced by the Department of Cultural Affairs. The Institute of Museum and Library Services is covering travel and lodging expenses.
8. Mary Wegner has selected Katherine Von Wald as the new coordinator for the Iowa Center for the Book, which is housed at the State Library.
9. Eight Town Meetings will be held during the weeks of Sept. 9 and 16. The theme is "Telling the Library Story – Now More than Ever". Gina Millsap, president of the Iowa Library Association, will travel with State Library staffers Wegner, Dixon, Rowland and Wetteland. Three LSA staff will also be part of the morning skits over the two weeks: Karen Burns, Barb Shultz, and Beth Marie Quanbeck.
10. The Program Elimination Commission will examine the State Medical Library. The commission consists of five voting members and three non-voting members. Wegner has been asked to present at a commission meeting on September 5.

D. Library Service Areas Report - Central Iowa Library Service Area

Beth Marie Quanbeck said she taught two sessions on EBSCOhost to librarians in the last few weeks and that responses to the new databases have been very positive. She reported that librarians like the State Library's website and find HealthInIowa very helpful. She also said more training will be conducted in partnership with Heartland AEA 11.

5.0 Public Comment

None

6.0 Action Items

A. Appointment of Trustee for Northeast Library Service Area

The Commission will act on this at the next meeting.

B. Appointment of Commission Member to ILA Foundation Board

Ross said he is currently the Commission's representative for the ILA Foundation Board and that he would continue in the position if asked. Huston moved that Ross remain their representative; Bradley seconded. Motion carried.

C. LSTA Plan FY 03-07

Wegner gave an overview of the draft of the new LSTA plan. She noted that the document is on the State Library's web page, that the library community has been asked to comment on it, and that feedback has been sought from LSA staff and board members. Bradley moved to approve the draft; Carlson seconded. Motion carried.

D. Report from appraiser

Wegner reported that the person hired to appraise some of the books in the State Library collection has identified some volumes of potential value, including the Curtis Indian series. Cox said any money received by selling the collection would remain in the State Library's budget. The commission asked Wegner to make certain that, if sold, the Curtis Indian volumes stayed within the state of Iowa.

E. 2004 Budget

Wegner reported that it is time to submit the request for the State Library's FY2004 budget. The Commission suggested caution in requesting anything above 100% of the FY03 budget, because of the state's continuing economic difficulties.

7.0 Discussion Items

A. Evaluation of State Librarian

Ross said he conducted a six-month evaluation of Wegner's performance and is pleased with her accomplishments. He will appoint two Commissioners to conduct a one-year evaluation which will be due in May.

8.0 Adjournment

Ross moved to adjourn at 1:40 p.m.; Bradley seconded, meeting adjourned.

NEXT MEETING: October 22, 2002, State Library of Iowa