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IMPROVEMENT OF LIBRARY SERVICES
FOR STATE GOVERNMENT

A Plan Submitted to

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Department of Cultural Affairs
and
Shirley George, State Librarian

Prepared by
Committee on Library Services to State Government
Department of Cultural Affairs
State of Iowa
December 1987

INTRODUCTION

In today's complex decision making environment, access to information is vital to the effective operation of state government agencies. Libraries provide a formal structure for the systematic delivery of information to support state government decision making.

The organization and delivery of library services in Iowa state government has been a concern for a number of years. The General Assembly called for the development of a specific plan to address library services to state government in the 1986 Act which reorganized Iowa state government.

Sec. 2070. The department of cultural affairs shall submit to the governor and the legislature by January 1, 1988 a plan for the improvement of library services for state government. The plan shall consider, but not be limited to, coordinated collection development, acquisitions, library technical services, circulation, and reference and information services. (1986 Iowa Acts, Chapter 1245, Section 2070)

The Director of the Department of Cultural Affairs appointed a committee to inquire into the present state of library services to state government agencies, to identify problem areas and to recommend improvements. The committee members include:

* Mary Jo Bruett	Department of Education
Roger Chapman	Department of Public Health
* Michael Coveyou	Department of Public Safety
* Kay Elliott	Department of Human Services
* Ellen Holroyd	Department of Cultural Affairs
Gretchen Tegeler	Department of Management
* Hank Zaletel	Department of Transportation

This plan was drafted by the indicated committee members (*). The Committee and the Department of Cultural Affairs are aware that several significant issues related to the provision of library services to Iowa government agencies have not been addressed in this report. Among these are the organizational structure of libraries in state government, coordination of audio-visual services and use and availability of audio-visual equipment, accessibility and use of Iowa state documents and documents from other states, and awareness of available census data and related services. These issues all deserve further attention but could not be adequately addressed within the constraints faced by this committee.

SUMMARY

This plan for the improvement of library service for state government addresses the following areas of concern: absence of structure for interdepartmental cooperation, lack of inventory control and variations in the availability of library services to state employees.

The plan responds to these concerns by making four recommendations:

1. Enact legislation to authorize the creation of a centralized state government library services network with the State Library designated as coordinating agency.
2. Direct the network to plan and deliver coordinated library service to state government. Coordinated network activities should include collection development and maintenance, circulation, and reference and information services.
3. Centralize acquisition and cataloging of information resources and services in order to provide unified inventory control and subject access.
4. Improve communication between state government decision makers and information service providers.

BACKGROUND

In preparing this plan an examination was made of four earlier reports which dealt with improving state government. Three of these dealt briefly with libraries in the context of broader reviews of state government operations.

- . Governor's Economy Committee '79. Findings and Recommendations. December, 1979.
- . Governor's Task Force on Efficiency and Cost-Effectiveness. Organization Project. Library Organization Committee. [Report] October, 1983.
- . Governor's Task Force on Efficiencies and Cost-Effectiveness in Iowa State Government. Final Report. December, 1983.
- . Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co. A Report on the Restructuring and Downsizing of Iowa State Government. December, 1985.

These reports made specific recommendations for improving the operation of state government including the centralization of support functions to increase the efficiency of service delivery and to make effective use of available resources. These reports did not make specific recommendations for improving library service to state government. The Governor's Task Force on Efficiency and Cost-Effectiveness did recommend that a comprehensive management review of state agency libraries be conducted. The review was never undertaken.

A Report on the Restructuring and Downsizing of Iowa State Government called for a reorganization of the Executive Branch of state government along functional lines to eliminate duplication of effort, coordinate provision of service and centralize management and support services. Even though library services to state government employees were not directly addressed in this report, the bill implementing the report, Senate File 2175, contains the language which requires the Department of Cultural Affairs to submit a plan for improving these services.

CURRENT METHODS OF PROVIDING LIBRARY SERVICES TO STATE GOVERNMENT

State government officials and employees use a variety of organizations and methods to meet their information needs. The extent and type of library services available differ from agency to agency. The State Library is available to serve all state government. Specialized research libraries are available in some agencies.

The State Library is created by the Code of Iowa as a Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs. The Division is designated to fulfill the Departmental responsibility to: "meet the informational needs of the three branches of state government." (Iowa Code, chapter 303.1[2f]). The State Library furnishes reference and information services to state government and and to the legal and medical communities of the state. Services are provided provided to both individual employees and state agency libraries. In addition, state agency libraries receive technical and support services. The Bureau of Information is organized to accomplish this portion of the State Library's mission. Included within the Bureau are the Technical Services Section, Documents Depository Center and three separate collections: general, medical and law.

State agency libraries are those which have been established administratively to meet their agencies' specific information needs. Their collections consist of specialized reference materials. Use of these libraries by persons outside the host agencies is limited. There is great diversity in the size and scope of state agency library collections, the services which they offer and the staff assigned to the management of these libraries.

IDENTIFIED AREAS OF CONCERN

Three general areas of concern have been identified in the delivery and organization of library services in Iowa state government:

- (1) the absence of formal mechanisms for cooperation and resource sharing among various libraries and resource collections across departmental lines,
- (2) lack of inventory control of library materials in state government; and
- (3) variations in the availability and type of library services in different agencies.

(1) Absence of a formal structure for cooperation among the state agency Libraries and resource collections.

The need for communication and cooperation among state agency libraries was recognized almost ten years ago, when in 1978 representatives of nineteen state agencies and the State Library established the State Agency Library Association (SALA).

Its stated purpose was:

To improve communications, both formal and informal, between the libraries of the several state agencies so that the resources of these libraries can be most effectively utilized and their policies and procedures coordinated toward betterment of library service within state government, and

to work toward professional advancement of its members and the development of professionalism in state agency library service.

Since its inception, SALA has published a directory of its members, produced a union list of serials and publicized library service to state government. These efforts are the result of contributed staff time and resources. Consequently, the Association's success is dependent upon the personal commitment of its members.

Cooperative activities among the libraries of state government remain informal because no agency has the authority or resources to provide for these activities. Participation in cooperative efforts across departmental lines is voluntary.

(2) Lack of inventory control of publications owned by state government.

Access to books, periodicals and newspapers in state government is fragmented and duplication of materials is common. There is no comprehensive inventory of all publications owned by Iowa state government and no procedure for tracking these purchases through the State's central accounting process. Such an inventory would identify and locate these materials and would assist in avoiding unnecessary duplication.

Inventory control of collections can be accomplished by creating a catalog. A catalog for books is an author, title, subject and location index. For serial publications the catalog includes title, issues held and location. The task of creating these indexes is time consuming and requires specialized skills. Adequate staff and resources to perform this professional task are not available in all agencies. There is no centralized catalog of all library materials. There is also no known listing of publications held outside libraries.

Potential benefits of library materials are lost when state employees are unaware of the availability of needed materials. Knowledge of the location of these materials would reduce individual time and effort expended to search for them. Expenditures of staff time and funds could be reduced when unnecessary duplication of information resources is minimized.

(3) Variations in library services available to state government employees.

Obtaining needed information is often a haphazard process in state government.

The services and collections of the State Library are available to all state employees to assist in locating needed information. Some agencies have established their own libraries to meet their specialized needs. Use of agency libraries by persons outside the agency is restricted. Circulation and reference services may be limited. Information resources held outside of libraries are generally unavailable.

The reorganization of state government and the downsizing that accompanied it had a major impact on library service. State agency libraries experienced changes in personnel and responsibilities. The amount of staff time available to provide service was reduced. In some cases, positions were eliminated or staff were reassigned to other duties. New responsibilities were delegated to some state agency libraries that were unrelated to library service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A plan for the improvement of library service to state government should address each of these areas of concern: absence of cooperative structure, lack of inventory control and variation in the level of service. A centralized state government library services network and a centralized automated inventory control and access system is proposed.

The network would provide a structure for coordination, cooperation and resource sharing. Planning would be a network activity involving staff from all three branches of government. This activity would encourage agreement on a single set of network goals.

A centralized automated inventory control and access system would allow the construction of single file of library and information resources accessible to all state government. The benefits to be derived from this system include increased use of publications already in state possession, reduction of time spent by employees in locating necessary information and decreased purchases of duplicate titles.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Legislation should be enacted to authorize the creation of a network to provide improved information services to state officials and employees.

Implementation Strategy 1.1

The State Library would be designated as the coordinating agency with fiscal responsibility and rulemaking authority for the network.

The success of the network requires that a single agency be given the responsibility, authority and resources to develop and operate it. In view of its statutory responsibilities, the agency best suited to this task is the the State Library. It would have authority to receive and expend funds for the operation of the network and to enter into agreements for the purchase and use of library materials on behalf of the network.

Implementation Strategy 1.2

The network would be composed of the State Library, state agency libraries and other units of state government. It would provide access to library resources maintained by state government.

Maximum benefits would be derived from the network with the active participation of all state agencies from the executive, legislative and judicial branches. Participants in the network other than the State Library would be expected to maintain or increase funding of their library activities and to provide access to their materials.

Implementation Strategy 1.3

A coordinator would be appointed within the State Library to administer the proposed network.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The network through its members and coordinator should plan and deliver coordinated library service to state government.

Implementation Strategy 2.1

An assessment of state government library service needs would be conducted.

The study would survey collection strengths and weaknesses, expectations of library service users and the reasons for non-use. The information obtained from the assessment would be used to develop strategies for the effective delivery of library services to state agencies. The study would be periodically updated to enable the network and its members to respond to changes in state government information needs.

Implementation Strategy 2.2

The network coordinator would work with agency participants to develop goals, objectives and procedures to administer the ongoing activities of the network. These activities would be modified as necessary to meet changes in state government programs and policies.

Network activities could include the sharing of information resources within state government, coordination of collection development, processing of library materials and collection maintenance.

Implementation Strategy 2.3

The network would work to make information resources more available and accessible to state agency employees.

State employees engaged in agency business should have access to all state government information resources. Access is defined as the use of the collection on-site, availability of materials as appropriate and reference assistance as requested.

Agencies would provide access to their resources through the network. This would result in the increased use of information resources already owned by state government. Procedures for circulation and/or interlibrary loan would be developed by the network coordinator in consultation with the members.

Implementation Strategy 2.4

The network would encourage coordination of collection development among state agencies.

More efficient use of state resources would be achieved if each state agency participating in the network had a collection development policy which was coordinated with those of the other participants. This policy would serve as a guide to be used by the agency in selecting and maintaining collections that support the agency mission and meet the needs of its staff.

Coordination of collection development policies would facilitate agreement on purchasing policies, minimize duplication of effort and allow for identification of unfilled needs. The network coordinator would review and coordinate these policies so that collection weaknesses and other unmet needs would be identified. Appropriate, corrective measures would be recommended by the coordinator to the State Library or other agency.

Implementation Strategy 2.5

The network coordinator would facilitate the improvement of information services through the use of consultative services.

State government agencies would benefit from the availability of assistance in initiating, operating and improving their information services activities. One of the responsibilities of the network coordinator would be to locate the appropriate consultant after a specific need has been identified. The consultative services could be from existing state employees or outside the state government. If funding is needed for these activities it would be supplied by the agency requesting the service.

Agencies without libraries could benefit from guidance and direction in building and maintaining resource collections. Existing agency libraries would benefit from assistance in meeting identified needs and in developing new information and technological resources. Continuing education opportunities would increase the effectiveness of library staff and enable them to remain current in the field.

Information activities would also be enhanced by evaluations of the information resources within each agency. These evaluations would identify strengths and weaknesses of each library, make long and short-term recommendations for improvement and indicate areas that could be coordinated with other state agencies via the network.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The network should make available centralized acquisition and cataloging of information resources.

Implementation Strategy 3.1

The network would coordinate the acquisition of information resources and services by all state agencies.

The network would create an automated inventory control system to identify and locate purchases of information resources. This system would improve acquisition decisions and assist in avoiding unnecessary duplication.

The network would develop procedures for purchasing print and nonprint information materials and services for the most reasonable cost. The procedures would include discount contracts with library suppliers, multiple copy discounts from publishers and group contracts for on-line bibliographic searching.

Implementation Strategy 3.2

The network would provide automated cataloging by trained staff at a central location.

Cataloging is a specialized, time consuming and important activity. It is the mechanism by which subject access is provided. When performed centrally on an automated system, uniform records are generated and a computerized data base is created. This centralization would result in efficient use of staff, more complete and accurate bibliographic records and improved access to state government owned publications.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The network should be utilized to improve communications between state government decision makers and information service providers.

Implementation Strategy 4.1

The network coordinator would serve as a conduit for relaying the information needs of state officials and employees to the providers of information services.

To prevent excessive time delays in providing needed information, materials should be readily available on all subjects of current concern to state government. Information providers must be aware of potential legislative, judicial, and administration issues in order to anticipate future information needs.

The network coordinator would be expected to develop a variety of formal and informal mechanisms for keeping abreast of policy and program changes as they occur in state government and for anticipating new issue concerns.

Implementation Strategy 4.2

The network would promote increased awareness of information resources that are available to state government.

State government employees need to be made aware of information resources available to them. Greater knowledge of these resource would increase their use and reduce duplicate purchases. Public relations programs would be developed by the network and individual agencies so that state employees would be informed about the available resources.



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