

Inside Washington



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At the Dallas Conference many people asked me questions about what the ALA Washington Office does and how it operates. In essence, what we do is to maintain a constant information exchange between the federal establishment and the library community. On the one hand, we tell the library story to Congress and the Executive Branch. On the other hand, we try to keep members informed about federal policies and practices.

Our most formal and regular means of communicating with the library community is the *ALA Washington Newsletter*. The newsletter is sent to regular subscribers, state library agency heads, state library association presidents and federal relations coordinators, library school deans, state trustee association presidents, ALA Executive Board members, and ALA Council members. In all, it has a circulation of about 2,500 and is published at least twelve times annually.

Because of the diverse interests of the readers of the newsletter, the staff must try to stay abreast of nearly all federal activities that have library implications. Moreover, in order to maintain a sensitive watch on the status and future of library programs, we must also keep up to date on what is happening to nonlibrary programs of a similar character. We comb the daily issues of the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *Congressional Record*, and the *Federal Register*, looking for changes in the direction of federal policy or in the personnel carrying out policy. We also peruse countless other newsletters and documents highlighting activities on the Washington scene. These range from special-interest publications, perhaps on the needs of the handicapped, to those like the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* that cover a department or agency.

Like other Washington representatives, we rely heavily upon individual contacts with key congressional staff, agency employees, and colleagues in the education and information fields. Such loosely knit organizations as the Higher Education Group, the Information Policy Discussion Group, and others provide a regular forum for discussions of trends in government activity and policy relating to areas of mutual concern. And, of course, we maintain ties with the National

Commission on Libraries and Information Science, the Library of Congress, and the many other library associations.

All these information sources are brought to bear on one fundamental objective: to understand changes in federal policy or activity and their potential impact on the nation's libraries. Once we have the information, we can pass it on to you.

Up-to-date information is essential if librarians across the country are to make their voices heard in Washington. When a valuable program's funding level is threatened, or when a program such as the emergency temperature restriction plan is put into effect, it is important that librarians let the government know in a timely way how such action might affect them.

Up-to-date information also helps librarians plan. To the extent that librarians are aware of the status of federal library programs, postage costs, changes in the federal depository library law, or grant opportunities, they can do a better job of charting their future. ■■

COLLEGE LIBRARIES PROGRAM

A House-Senate conference committee has recommended a 50 percent cut in funds for the College Library Resources Program (Title II-A of the Higher Education Act). Last year the program, funded at \$9,975,000, provided basic grants averaging about \$3,900 to nearly every college and university in the United States. This year, the grants will fall to an amount under \$2,000 if, as seems likely, both houses of Congress follow the recommendation of the conference committee and reduce the appropriation for the program to \$4,987,500.

The conference committee's recommendation simply split the difference between the amounts allotted to the program by Senate and House appropriations bills. The House bill contained \$9,975,000 for the program; the Senate version contained none.

For the Research Libraries Program (Title II-C), the conference committee recommended a full \$6,000,000. Both the Senate and House bills had appropriated this amount for the program. ■■

ACRL Membership

ACRL membership was 8,593 as of June 30, 1979. Membership at the same time last year was 8,214.