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# Linking Informational Needs

*Massachusetts  
Long Range  
Program  
for  
Library  
Development  
1978*

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# MEETING INFORMATION NEEDS

## The Massachusetts Goal . . .

To provide every resident of Massachusetts with equal opportunity of access to that part of the total information resource which will satisfy the individual's educational, working, cultural, and leisure-time needs and interests, regardless of the individual's location, social, or physical condition, or level of intellectual achievement.

It is the purpose of the *Massachusetts Long Range Program* to draw upon the ideas and expertise of both professional and laypersons in developing a library and information services program designed to address this overall goal.

# LIBRARIES, USERS, AND POTENTIAL USERS

## Potential Users of Massachusetts Libraries

The potential user population in Massachusetts consists of almost 6-million residents that includes:

- 1,344,650 students in elementary and secondary schools;*
- 370,000 adults in colleges, universities, and technical schools;*
- 560,000 adults whose work in professions, business, or government requires specialized information;*
- 18,500 residents of state-supported institutions such as correctional or mental health facilities;*
- 310,000 disadvantaged persons whose income is below poverty level;*
- 671,000 residents who are 65 or older, and who, in many cases, live at reduced fixed incomes;*
- 207,000 physically handicapped persons who are unable to use conventional library materials;*
- 220,000 rural residents who are geographically remote from all but their local information resources; and*
- 300,000 residents who have limited or no English speaking ability.*

The above figures are estimates based upon the best information available.

# Massachusetts Library Services



Massachusetts' library services are provided directly to users through:

- *380 separately constituted Public Libraries with their own governing board, in 346 of the state's 351 cities and towns. Each is financed through local monies, and supplemented through the Direct State Aid Program, and the services of the Regional Public Library Systems.*
- *Libraries in 124 Institutions of Higher Education which confer degrees at or above the associate degree level. Of these, 32 are public and 92 are privately supported.*
- *1,882 schools which maintain central Library Media Facilities, out of the 2,972 public and private elementary and secondary schools in Massachusetts.*
- *283 Special Libraries maintained by an individual cooperative, association, government agency or other group, for the purpose of collection, organization, and dissemination of information, and devoted primarily to a special subject with provision for individualized service to a specialized clientele.*
- *27 Institution Libraries in 46 state-supported mental hospitals, correctional agencies, and other institutions.*

# IDENTIFYING USER NEEDS



## Categories

Categories of informational needs do not differ among potential users, but merely take on various orders of priority or depth, by virtue of the individual's age, location, activities, or interests. All persons need information that is:

- *Life Supportive*
- *Developmental*
- *Occupational*
- *Recreational*
- *Social*
- *Educational*

The satisfaction of informational needs is often complicated by special circumstances that may be geographical, economic, or ethnic. Low income, institutionalization, physical handicaps, cultural diversity, lack of transportation, or language barriers often frustrate attempts to satisfy needs.

# SATISFYING USER NEEDS

To satisfy the informational needs of all potential users, qualified staff, appropriate and sufficient materials, and adequate facilities are essential.

## Personnel

The broad scope of library activities and informational services calls for an extensive and varied array of talents, capabilities and educational preparation among those many individuals who work in libraries.

Duties of those who work in libraries, media centers, or informational centers include:

- *The provision of information resources, programs and services to groups, and individuals within the library's community of potential users.*
- *The selection, acquisition, preservation, organization, dissemination, and supervision of recordable knowledge and information.*
- *The care of special collections, rare books, serials, films and filmstrips, slides, records, tapes, maps, cassettes, microforms, etc.*
- *The administration and management of libraries, the leadership of personnel, the preparation of the budget, the establishment of public relations.*

## Materials

Adequate resources are needed in order to satisfy the informational needs of all potential users. The provision of such materials includes:

- *The use of a selection process which accounts for the varying abilities, handicapping conditions, social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of the community, the problems posed by sexist, racist, materialistic, and ethnocentric biases, and the need for developing positive attitudes toward cultural pluralism, the handicapped and the institutionalized.*
- *The development of accessible collections whose subject content encompasses the developmental, educational, life supportive, occupational, and recreational needs of the community.*
- *The provision of materials in a variety of formats which allows access to information for those unable to use traditional printed formats, and for those whose informational needs may best be met by non-print resources. This includes, where applicable, the use of on-line computer systems, microforms, audiovisual formats such as cassettes, films, videotapes, and television, reading machines, talking books, teletypewriters, and others.*
- *The provision of appropriate equipment for the use of materials, including special equipment for persons unable to use traditional printed formats.*

# Facilities

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To satisfy informational needs, using a variety of formats and qualified staff it is necessary to provide facilities which are physically and psychologically accessible and conducive to the delivery of information services.

Such provisions should include:

- *Adequate housing for a diversity of materials and equipment.*
- *A comfortable and informal environment and visually appealing space which is adaptable for quiet activities, as well as group activities, for displays and for programs of varied nature.*
- *Adequate work space and telephones for staff.*
- *Security in keeping with the nature of the institution.*

# LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE AGENCIES

## Board of Library Commissioners

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, established by law in 1890, was the first state library board in the United States. The BLC consists of nine residents of the Commonwealth appointed for staggered five year terms. Each serves without compensation.

The BLC, through its staff:

- *Encourages the development and extension of library services.*
- *Systematizes and plans for the establishment and maintenance of a cooperative network of libraries at local, regional, state, and interstate levels for the effective coordination of the resources of public, school, academic, and special libraries, and information centers.*
- *Administers for the Commonwealth: state, federal and private funds for the promotion, improvement, and extension of library services.*
- *Provides consultative and advisory services, and a resource collection to trustees, librarians and public officials.*
- *Enters contractual agreements to provide improved library services.*
- *Administers legislation providing for the certification of librarians as authorized by Chapter 78, Sections 22-31, of the General Laws.*
- *Maintains a placement/referral service with an active registration file of position openings in libraries in Massachusetts and of persons interested in seeking library positions.*

## Board Of Education

The Massachusetts Board of Education, under legislation passed in 1977, has the responsibility to provide for the establishment of school library and non-print media services including:

- *The acquisition or rental of library and non-print media materials, resources, and appropriate equipment.*
- *Supplementary library and non-print subprofessional personnel.*
- *Consultative services.*

## State Library

The State Library of Massachusetts was organized in 1826 to provide information and research services for the executive and legislative branches of state government.

The library's collection of Massachusetts government publications includes executive agency publications, reports of cities and towns, selected federal publications, and items from other states related to the interests or problems of Massachusetts. It also maintains a legal collection which emphasizes public law, the making of law, and Massachusetts law.

The library offers reference service, and loans materials directly to permanent non-institutional state employees and to area libraries through interlibrary loan.

# Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind has legislative charge to handle the distribution of special format library materials and equipment to blind and physically handicapped persons under the Library of Congress Talking Books Program. The commission contracts with the Library of Congress to be the machine lending agency, which includes the registration of users, the distribution/repair of special playback equipment and maintenance of related files. The commission contracts with the Perkins School for the Blind, to serve as the Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Through this arrangement, Perkins handles the materials distribution segment of the Talking Books Program. A Subregional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped operates under the central Massachusetts Regional Public Library System for the distribution of talking books to residents of the area.

## Regional System of Public Libraries

A regional System of Public Libraries was established by the Board of Library Commissioners under legislation enacted in 1960. Regional services are provided from 13 contracting libraries. Three of these libraries — Boston, Worcester, and Springfield — serve as headquarters for the Eastern, Central, and Western Regions respectively. The three regional systems are supported by state funds, and each region has an advisory council.

Services provided include:

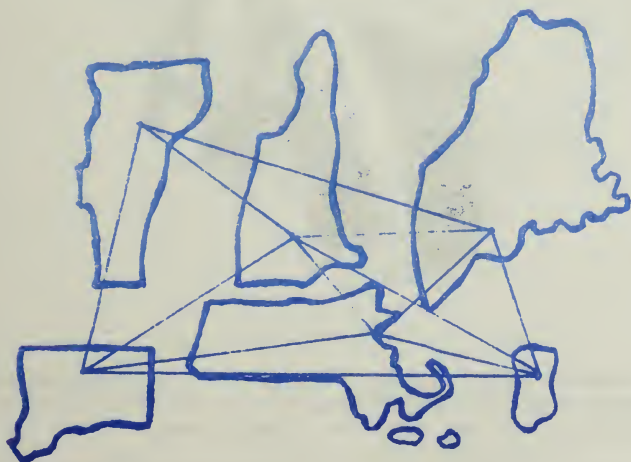
- *Interlibrary Loan*
- *Films*
- *Reference and Telephone Information*
- *Advisory Services*
- *Bookmobile Deliveries*
- *Delivery Services*

## Cooperative Groups of Libraries

In addition to the state supported services, informational needs are met through cooperative groups of libraries which have joined together on the basis of geographical subject, or other common interest. Each group has some kind of central point (be it a person or location) that coordinates internal activities and serves as the group's outlet to, and inlet from, the centers of other such groups.

In Massachusetts, cooperating groups are largely based upon types of libraries — academic, school, public — or around subject specialization — medicine, music, health. Geographic proximity often gives rise to intertype library groups which allow for the sharing of resources characteristic of various types of libraries.

Massachusetts libraries are also able to satisfy user needs through interstate library services provided by networks such as the New England Library Board (NELB), the New England Library Information Network (NELINET), and the New England Regional Medical Library Service (NERMLS).



# COORDINATING LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Today's and tomorrow's library and information services must be planned from the vantage point of the library user who cares little about the type of library but much about the ability of that library to supply his or her needs.

The solution to the increasing library and information needs of Massachusetts residents is based on the concept of cooperation and coordination.


Currently, affiliation with a statewide system of coordinated library service is limited to public libraries. Still to be coordinated are the services and resources of all types of libraries — school, public, academic, special, and research libraries.

Coordination and cooperation necessitates a structure upon which network operations must be based. The design of a structure capable of supporting a statewide network for library and information services is a major goal of the *Massachusetts Long Range Program*.



*This brochure has been prepared by the staff of the Board of Library Commissioners to aid the conferees to the Governor's Conference on Libraries and Information Services, by familiarizing them with the Massachusetts Long Range Program.*

*This brochure was produced through funds under Title I of the federal Library Services and Construction Act.*



... the needs of people  
... can be so easily confused  
with the needs of the  
institutions intended to serve  
them... it is easier to be explicit  
about what an institution needs  
than about what users and  
potentials users need.

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