

BACKGROUND

In 1957, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania commissioned a study of public library service. The list of those involved in the study reads like a veritable Who's Who in Libraries for that period of time. The Pennsylvania State Librarian was Ralph Blasingame, Jr. The chairman of the study committee was Emerson Greenaway, then Director of the Free Library of Philadelphia. The Director of the study was Lowell A. Martin.

The findings and recommendations from the study were published in 1958 as ***Library Service in Pennsylvania: Present and Proposed***. The study declared that public library service in the State was “deficient” and recommended standards for three tiers of libraries. They were:

- Local Libraries
- District Library Centers (DLCs), and,
- State-Level Regional Resource Centers

The three tiered model was designed to ensure that all Pennsylvania residents would have reasonable access to quality library services. Specifically, district library centers (DLCs) were intended to be within one hour's drive of all residents. The regional resource centers were planned to allow most Pennsylvanians to drive to and from the center and still have time for “consultation of resources” within the span of a single day.

The DLCs were, at least in part, intended to make up for the deficiencies of local libraries. Martin said of the numerous small libraries, “They may be grandly independent, but they are also grossly inadequate.” In addition to providing a strong library in reasonably close proximity to all Pennsylvanians, the DLCs were also designed to fulfill a “developmental” role: strengthening libraries. Martin envisioned each district center having “professional staff including a specialist for children, another for teen-agers, (and) another for adults.” He also suggested that the district centers would serve as “a guide and leader for all service in its district.” The state-level regional

resource centers and the DLCs were subsequently established in 1961.

In the intervening years, county-level library systems, and particularly federated library systems, have emerged as an important “fourth level” entity. A number of factors have contributed to this development. First, and in no small part due to Lowell Martin’s encouragement of “larger units of service,” cooperatives began to develop throughout the nation. A focus on cooperative efforts under the federal Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA), federated systems added to this movement.

The emergence of automated systems for library circulation and cataloging also drove cooperative efforts as libraries looked for ways to share costs. In addition, the 1960s and 1970s saw an expansion of the traditional role of county governments and renewed interest in regional cooperation.

Furthermore, the Office of Commonwealth Libraries actively encouraged the development of county systems. Grants for cooperative efforts and for planning, as well as the advent of County Coordination Aid, contributed to the development of county-based systems.

INTRODUCTION

Pennsylvania is arguably the birthplace of the American public library. From Benjamin Franklin's experiment in the subscription library concept that was embodied in the Library Company of Philadelphia to Andrew Carnegie's widespread philanthropy that enabled hundreds of communities to start public libraries, Pennsylvania clearly has a proud history of achievement related to public library service.

Ironically, this long history of providing local public library service along with the Commonwealth's large number of local governments has, in some ways, hindered the ongoing development of modern public library services. Compared to other states, Pennsylvania lags behind in most commonly applied measures. The most recent comparable data available for all states covers the 2002 Fiscal Year. Chart I on the next page shows Pennsylvania's performance and ranking on a series of twenty measures computed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The data presented is submitted by the individual state library agencies (including the Office of Commonwealth Libraries) through a program known as the Federal-State Cooperative System for public libraries.

If Pennsylvania's rankings on the 20 measures are averaged, the Commonwealth's aggregate rank is 28th. Moreover, the Keystone State's performance ranking on two of the most critical measures, library visits per capita and circulation per capita are 42nd and 40th respectively. This relatively poor showing is not new. The 1958 study by Lowell Martin that resulted in the establishment of the district library centers made the following statement:

"There is no escaping the conclusion that must be drawn from all this data. Pennsylvania library service is seriously deficient for meeting the needs of the State, and seriously lagging behind developments in other states."¹

¹ Martin, Lowell A. *Library Service in Pennsylvania Present and Proposed*. Pennsylvania State Library. Harrisburg, PA. 1958. p. 12

Pennsylvania District Library Center Study – Final Report
Himmel & Wilson, Library Consultants

Measure	Pennsylvania Performance	Pennsylvania Rank*	National Mean	National Median
Visits per capita	3.43	42	4.49	4.56
Reference transactions per capita	0.77	35	1.09	4.56
Circulation per capita	5.08	40	6.85	6.78
ILLs received per 1,000 population	88.73	13	84.14	33.73
Book and serial volumes per capita	2.38	36	2.83	2.95
Audio materials per 1,000 population	174.4	8	128.94	124.66
Video materials per 1,000 population	80.49	32	103.58	102.14
Current serial subscriptions per 1,000 population	6.72	28	7.02	7.02
Paid FTE staff per 25,000 population	10.99	32	12.28	12.44
Paid FTE librarians per 25,000 population	3.63	36	4.05	4.49
Paid FTE librarians with ALA-MLS per 25,000 population	2.53	22	2.74	2.27
Other paid FTE staff per 25,000 population	7.36	27	8.23	7.48
Total per capita operating income of public libraries	\$24.41	32	\$30.97	\$27.90
State per capita operating income of public libraries	\$7.04	3	\$3.61	\$1.07
Local per capita operating income of public libraries	\$13.73	44	\$24.49	\$23.41
Other per capita operating income of public libraries	\$3.37	13	\$2.69	\$2.21
Total operating expenditures per capita of public libraries	\$24.18	31	\$28.94	\$25.51
Total collection expenditures per capita of public libraries	\$3.61	27	\$4.18	\$3.84
Total staff expenditures per capita of public libraries	\$14.52	32	\$18.72	\$16.50
Salaries and wages expenditures per capita of public libraries	\$11.62	33	\$15.10	\$13.49

* A ranking of as high as 51 is possible because the District of Columbia is treated as a State.

Unfortunately, Martin's statement of forty-seven years ago is still true today. Furthermore, Pennsylvania's highest ranking shown on the chart above, "State per capita operating income of public libraries," is no longer true. The fact that the compilation of state statistics lags behind several years means that the Keystone State's 3rd place ranking is based on the funding levels that existed before State aid to libraries and to DLCs was substantially reduced, and then only partially restored.

During site visits to libraries and interviews with members of the library community, the consultants were often told that the increased State funding for public libraries in the late 1990s and at the beginning of the new century were just starting to have a positive impact on local services. In fact, the statistics validate this opinion. A comparison between

Pennsylvania's Fiscal Year 1995 (FY 1995) ranking and the FY 2002 rankings reveals that performance in comparison to other states had improved in 15 of the 20 categories shown on the earlier chart and that the rankings were the same on two other measures.

Gains between 1995 and 2002 were particularly dramatic in categories related to library materials. Pennsylvania had jumped from 45th to 28th in periodical subscriptions, from 13th to 8th in audio materials, from 39th to 32nd in video materials, and from 38th to 36th in books and serial volumes per capita. While the FY 2002 rankings are still mediocre at best, they have been even lower in the recent past. It is rational to believe that when FY 2003 and FY 2004 rankings are available, the rankings will head downward once again. As the partial restoration of State aid works its way through local library budgets, one might anticipate a modest improvement once again. However, the restoration signals a return to the middle of the pack, not a significant move toward the upper echelons.

One of the root causes that Martin identified as being responsible for Pennsylvania's poor performance also remains in place. Martin's statement that Pennsylvania's many small libraries "...may be grandly independent, but they are also grossly inadequate" was made at a time when a total of 367 public libraries were known to exist in Pennsylvania. Today, that number has swelled to over 450 libraries, many of which are *still* grossly inadequate.

Was Martin's vision for a three tiered system of libraries that would provide enhanced public access to improved resources *and* would serve to develop inadequate libraries misguided? Is the district library center concept completely inadequate to meet the library and information service needs of the 21st Century? Is a completely new model needed? Are there portions of the existing model that should be retained? These are some of the questions that this study of Pennsylvania's District Library Centers is trying to answer.

METHODOLOGIES

The RFP that was issued to solicit qualified consultants to carry out this study describes a number of objectives to be accomplished. They are:

- A. To evaluate the collective and individual performances of district library centers in providing relevant services, support and leadership to Pennsylvania's public libraries in the context of technological and demographic change.
- B. To evaluate the role of district library centers compared to library systems.
- C. To recommend a practical, statewide coordinated system that takes into account existing libraries, structures, and strengths and that will provide the Office of Commonwealth Libraries with a needed intermediate level of support for public library service.
- D. To recommend a practical, statewide coordinated system that will provide public libraries in all different parts of a very diverse state with the support they need to develop services for the twenty-first century.

A number of methodologies were employed in an effort to gather the information needed to meet the objectives of the study. Every effort was made to make the study as inclusive as possible.

The major methods that were used were:

- Site visits to each of the 29 district library centers
- Site visits to each of the 33 federated library systems
- Personal interviews with the directors of each of the DLCs, directors/administrators of each of the federated library systems, and with 13 other individuals identified by the Office of

Commonwealth Libraries or by the project Steering Committee.

- Eight web surveys: library directors, general library staff, children's/youth services librarians, reference librarians, cataloging/technical services librarians, technology specialists, interlibrary loan librarians, and district consultants (676 responses).
- Focus groups with library directors in ten locations throughout the Commonwealth (110 participants).

Volume II of this report contains five appendices that provide reports from each of these data/information gathering methods.

During the course of the project, the four consultants on the team traveled more than 3,000 miles in Pennsylvania, visited more than 60 libraries, and talked to more than 200 members of the Pennsylvania library community.

THE OVERARCHING CHALLENGE

The introduction raised a number of questions about district library centers. The basic challenge posed by this study is, “Is Pennsylvania’s three-tiered system of state-level regional resource centers, district library centers (DLCs), and local libraries the most effective model to meet the needs of the 21st Century?”

Part of the challenge of answering this important question revolves around the many stakeholders that have already been mentioned in the “Methodologies” section. There is a great temptation to look for and to accept a majority opinion in this matter. One might ask, “Who better to decide whether the DLC concept is working than those stakeholders who are most directly impacted by the three-tiered system of state-level regional resource centers, district library centers (DLCs), and local libraries?”

These stakeholders are, in fact, very important in determining the appropriate future course for Pennsylvania’s library structure. However, most would agree that another stakeholder, in fact the ultimate stakeholder – the public, must also be factored into the picture. The library community, while vital in crafting a solution that will work, is also very heavily invested in the status quo. To properly assess the situation, one must first look at the impact of the current structure on the public.

In fact, Lowell Martin’s 1958 model was based first and foremost on public need and on public access to high quality resources and services. The three tiered approach was based on the recognition that Pennsylvania’s highly fragmented system of independent libraries was not delivering a quality product to the public. As was noted earlier, Martin saw his model as addressing two different needs. The first was reasonable access to quality resources. The second was developmental in nature: the improvement of small inadequate libraries by, in Martin’s words, “providing a structure of central strong points to which many local libraries could affiliate themselves.”

Our assessment of the District Library Centers in Pennsylvania leads us to the conclusion that Martin's three tiered approach has been quite successful in reaching its first objective – the improved access objective, and that it has failed, and in some instances has failed rather dramatically, in meeting the second – the developmental objective.

Lowell Martin is well known for his advocacy of the concept of “larger units of service.” His criticism of Pennsylvania's “grandly independent” yet “grossly inadequate” libraries identifies a core problem in Pennsylvania that cannot be ignored. The Keystone State's pursuit of excellence in library service is unlikely to be achieved as long as services are so fragmented and resources are so diluted. Martin recognized this in 1958 and we wish to emphasize the same point in 2005.

It is clear from a careful reading of ***Library Services in Pennsylvania: Present and Proposed*** that Martin considered this problem and even entertained a recommendation that would have called for a reduction in the number of small independent libraries and their replacement with county-based service units. His rejection of the county model for Pennsylvania was based on a political reality. In 1958, Pennsylvania's county governments were relatively weak and attempts at establishing county libraries had usually resulted in “additional weak libraries².”

Instead, Martin chose to recommend a compromise approach to library development. He suggested that libraries had a “responsibility to seek to do together what they cannot do alone.³” By this, he meant that smaller, weaker libraries should affiliate with larger, stronger libraries; if not through a merger of governance, at least through the sharing of services and resources.

² Ibid., p. 82

³ Ibid., p. 82

Libraries are by no means the only public service organizations in Pennsylvania that are plagued by fragmentation and duplication of effort. Pennsylvania's "structural problem," the existence of an enormous number of local governmental units, has been cited as a causal factor in poor performance in numerous reports.

The three-tiered approach has managed to create a network of stronger libraries across the Commonwealth. The four state-level resource libraries do provide in-depth resources that are not accessible to the public through other libraries. Libraries serving as DLCs generally do have collection strengths that are a step above most other libraries in their areas. The degree of this strength is uneven, but clearly, libraries that serve as DLCs are far stronger, and offer a higher level of service, than would be the case if the DLC aid program was not put in place.

We believe that the challenge presented by this study is to preserve the portion of the current model that is working, while at the same time, reinventing the portion of the three-tiered system that has proven to be ineffective.

THE LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE

The Brookings Institution's 2003 publication entitled ***Back to Prosperity: A Competitive Agenda for Renewing Pennsylvania***⁴ makes the following statement:

“Currently, Pennsylvanians are justifiably proud of their profusion of accessible, small-scale governments. However, the intense localism of the state's 2,566 municipalities... has often caused Pennsylvania's jurisdictions to compete against each other rather than act together on tough problems...”⁵

The United States Census of Governments reports that Pennsylvania, with 5,031 local units of governments (including school districts, special purpose districts, etc., in addition to boroughs and townships), is second only to Illinois among the states in terms of the number of local units of government. Local pride and identity are extremely strong in the Keystone State.

With over 450 public library governance entities, Pennsylvania ranks 5th among the states. Unfortunately, this exceptionally high number of local libraries **has not** translated into local funding for libraries. You will recall that the chart of Pennsylvania's rankings showed that the Keystone State ranked 44th in local per capita operating income for FY 2002.

While often established and/or identified as a local service, public library service is actually delivered on a regional basis. Initiatives such as the Access PA Statewide Library Card System Program are specifically designed to provide regional access. Many, if not most, of Pennsylvania's public libraries

⁴ Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy. ***Back to Prosperity: A Competitive Agenda for Renewing Pennsylvania***. The Brookings Institution. Washington, DC. 2003. <http://www.brook.edu/es/urban/publications/pa.htm>

⁵ Ibid., p. 12

serve a regional audience even though they are typically seen as a local service.

Furthermore, one of the reasons that Pennsylvania's performance on local funding is so poor is that a large number of libraries are organized not as governmental services, but as non-profit agencies. This too often means that local units of government feel little or no responsibility for funding the libraries in their communities.

Another key issue that impacts library development is equity. Some Pennsylvania libraries are doing very well; they have the local financial support to provide the services needed by their communities and the trained staff and leadership able to take advantage of new technologies and programs in providing modern library services. Others, including some DLCs, are struggling to keep their doors open and to add new books and other materials to their collections. That struggle, however, does not diminish the expectation of Commonwealth residents that they will have access to quality library services.

As with the problems caused by the fragmentation of services due to the large number of local governments, the equity challenge also extends well beyond the realm of public library services. Inequity is a major problem in the Keystone State in regard to public education and a wide array of other public services.

The Brookings ***Back to Prosperity*** report characterized the problem in this way. "Current (economic and demographic) trends are... isolating the state's growing numbers of low income and minority residents from opportunity⁶". The public library has often been referred to as "the people's university." It has been seen as a place where everyone, regardless of socio-economic status, race, or any other eligibility test, has an opportunity to learn. Equitable access to *quality* library services is also part of the library development challenge.

⁶ Ibid., p. 11

In the course of conducting the DLC study, the consultants found almost universal agreement that some intermediary level of assistance was needed between the State level and the local library level if library services were going to improve. It is widely accepted that the Office of Commonwealth Libraries, at least with its current staffing levels, cannot effectively coordinate the development of over 450 libraries from Harrisburg.

The library development question then is not *if* there should be an entity providing development services, but rather, whether that entity should be district library centers, library systems, some entirely new entity, or an enhanced state library agency with a corps of regionally based consultants. The consultants believe that the third option, an expanded state library agency, is unlikely in a period when most states, not just Pennsylvania, are seeking to reduce the size of state government.

LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT VS. LIBRARY SUPPORT

The consultants draw a distinction between activities that “support” public libraries and actions that “develop” public libraries. It is not our intent to discount the value of activities that support public libraries. These activities usually improve services available to the public. Examples of support services are so called “deposit” or “rotating” collections that are used to supplement existing library collections. In fact, some extremely important, highly valued services such as Interlibrary Loan and delivery services can be categorized as support services.

Some of the services that are traditionally associated with library development include continuing education, consulting assistance, and advocacy. In fact, depending on the content of the continuing education or the consulting assistance and the nature of the advocacy, these services can represent either library support or library development.

The major difference between library support and library development relates to two factors: time and results. Support activities take care of today’s needs. Library development activities attempt to increase the long-term capacity of libraries to serve their public. The proverbial, “Give a man a fish and he eats for a day; teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime.” captures the distinction well. Library support activities are about meeting immediate needs – giving a man a fish. Library development services are about long-term improvement and self-sufficiency – teaching a man to fish.

Pennsylvania can honestly argue that the magnitude of needs in many of its public libraries warrants the “give a man a fish” approach.” However, it has already been intimated that the Commonwealth’s situation of having a large number of small, often non-viable libraries that was identified by Lowell Martin in 1958 has actually grown worse over the course of nearly fifty years. The continuous “giving of fish” without providing adequate fishing lessons has

resulted in the persistence of too many dependent, inadequate libraries.

Pennsylvania may or may not need fewer public library facilities than currently exist. While the consultants' charge in this study did not include making recommendations in this regard, our other experiences working with Pennsylvania libraries would lead us to suggest that fewer, larger facilities would result in better service. However, regardless of whether there are too many library facilities in the State, there is no question that Pennsylvania needs fewer library administrative units.

True library development would entail the creation of individual library development plans for each and every library in the Commonwealth. In many cases, that development plan would lead to stronger, more self-sufficient libraries with improved local support and funding. In other instances, the assessment of multiple libraries in an area may lead to the conclusion that the most sensible approach to achieving quality library and information services might be a merging of independent libraries into a larger governance unit.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

FINDING 1

Pennsylvania's current three-tiered structure of library services has grown into a four-tiered structure with the advent of county-based library systems.

FINDING 2

The four state-level regional resource center libraries serve a valid purpose and are operating in accordance with the vision for them spelled out in 1958.

FINDING 3

The 29 district library centers in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania differ significantly from each other in quality, scope of services, and usefulness.

FINDING 4

The library systems in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania differ significantly from each other in quality, scope of services, and usefulness.

FINDING 5

The more than 450 public libraries in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania differ significantly from each other in quality and scope of services offered.

FINDING 6

The relationships between and among district library centers, library systems, and local libraries in various areas of the State range from excellent to totally dysfunctional.

FINDING 7

The consultants found no evidence that any of the State funding provided in support of library services through the district library center program has been wasted; however, the focus of expenditures in individual DLCs has varied widely.

FINDING 8

The majority of DLCs and library systems provide far more “library support” than “library development.”

FINDING 9

It is extremely difficult to accurately describe Pennsylvania’s public library service framework to the public or to elected officials.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

FINDING 1

Pennsylvania's current three-tiered structure of library services has grown into a four-tiered structure with the advent of county-based library systems.

The advent of library systems in the State has, in general, been very positive. While some of the county-based organizations are little more than a conduit for county funding, others are highly functional organizations that are fulfilling many of the library development roles originally envisioned for DLCs. Some of the best public library service available in Pennsylvania is being offered by the libraries that participate in what might be referred to as “mature” federated library systems.

FINDING 2

The four state-level regional resource center libraries serve a valid purpose and are operating in accordance with the vision for them spelled out in 1958.

The top tier of libraries, the state-level regional resource centers, has served Pennsylvania well. The money that has been spent on this portion of the implementation of Martin's ***Library Service in Pennsylvania: Present and Proposed*** has helped the State maintain four in-depth reference and research collections. While it can be argued that access to electronic resources has diminished the importance of the physical proximity argument made in 1958, the consultants believe that the objective of maintaining four substantial reference and research collections in a State the size of Pennsylvania is not excessive.

Greater coordination of collection development and joint efforts on State-level “virtual reference” activities should be encouraged; however, the consultants believe ongoing funding for this top tier of service

should continue. It should be noted that the 1958 Martin report identified strengths that still have great relevance. The Free Library of Philadelphia was identified as the center that would concentrate on the Humanities; the State Library on public affairs and Pennsylvania history; Penn State on Applied Sciences including Agriculture, Forestry, and Biology, and Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh on Science and Technology. These traditional strengths and others that have emerged over the decades should form the basis of new efforts to make information more accessible to the public through electronic delivery mechanisms.

FINDING 3

The 29 district library centers in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania differ significantly from each other in quality, scope of services, and usefulness.

Some of the libraries that serve as district library centers are fine libraries and offer high quality services to the residents of their primary service area, to residents of their district, and to the other libraries in their territories. However, other district centers are inadequate libraries to begin with; libraries that are barely able to meet the needs of local residents and consequently, have little or nothing to offer to regional audiences or to other libraries in their districts.

In a relatively small number of instances, communication between DLCs and other libraries in their districts is extremely poor. Suspicion and animosity prevail. In a few cases, true library development is nearly non-existent, and even library support services offered by the DLC are sadly lacking.

The original vision for DLCs was that they would play two roles. The first was opening “high-level resources to all readers in a large district.” The second was coordinating “all existing library units into a cooperative system.” While there are clearly exceptions, Pennsylvania’s DLCs have succeeded in

fulfilling the first objective and have failed at the second.

The “close proximity” argument made for DLCs when they were originally formed has diminished because of the availability of electronic resources in much the same way as it has for the four state-level regional resource centers. However, the consultants believe that there is a good rationale for continuing to fund, and restoring, some of the funding lost in recent years in support of the regional resource library function of DLCs.

Pennsylvania needs “flagship” libraries that can serve as exemplars of good service across the State. Through a continuation of funding for the resource function and a reduction or removal of library development responsibilities, the current DLCs and a few other strategically placed libraries can serve as models of good service. At the same time, separating the funding for the resource function from funding for the development function will greatly clarify responsibilities and will significantly reduce tensions between the DLCs and libraries in their current district areas.

Finally, support for the current DLCs (and for a few other strategically placed libraries) serves to implement an important strategy identified in the Brookings Institution’s ***Back to Prosperity*** document which calls for a reinvestment in older, established communities.

FINDING 4

The library systems in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania differ significantly from each other in quality, scope of services, and usefulness.

The advent of library systems in Pennsylvania has been a positive addition to the Pennsylvania library landscape. The areas of the State that have made the most progress in both funding and in true library development have been areas served by effective

county-based systems that have been able to secure increased levels of local funding (county tax dollars) for their member libraries.

Library systems have typically taken the lead on the establishment of shared library automation systems and have, in some instances, assumed responsibility for activities once associated with DLCs.

Unfortunately, in other instances, county systems are little more than conduits for meager county funding. These systems perform little in the way of support or development services.

The key to success has not been the mere existence of a system, but the existence of a system coupled with a reasonable level of county funding support. Systems that might be considered to be “mature” systems, such as the Cumberland County Library System and the Allegheny County Library Association (to name only two), have achieved much and have greatly advanced both the quality of library services in their counties and the visibility of libraries.

FINDING 5

The more than 450 public libraries in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania differ significantly from each other in quality and scope of services offered.

The 1958 Lowell Martin report identified great disparities between Pennsylvania’s libraries. Given “out-migration” and the uneven growth and economic development across the Commonwealth since the Martin report was published, these disparities have increased. Pennsylvania has truly become a State of “haves” and “have-nots” in regard to library services. All too often these disparities appear to be related to socio-economic conditions.

More affluent areas of the State tend to have more advanced library services than poorer regions. While the Keystone State’s two major urban areas,

Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, certainly have what must be considered reasonably well developed library services, even they struggle to match the services and amenities offered by well-to-do suburban libraries. The disparities are even more striking when services in areas with strong economies are compared with poor rural areas and with many of Pennsylvania's older industrial areas.

These inequities fly in the face of the basic tenets of public library service that were key to the visions that motivated Benjamin Franklin and Andrew Carnegie to establish libraries. Mechanisms must be found to encourage and sustain library services in areas lacking wealth.

FINDING 6

The relationships between and among district library centers, library systems, and local libraries in various areas of the State range from excellent to totally dysfunctional.

A number of highly publicized law suits illustrate the depth of the animosity that exists between and among some of the organizations that exist to further the same ideals. Suspicion and distrust rather than cooperation and collaboration are the reality in a few situations. Fortunately, these extreme situations are the exception rather than the norm; however, the relationships between DLCs, systems, and local libraries are strained in many more cases.

The sources of the contention between and among the parties vary from place to place; however, the root cause is usually disagreement regarding the ways in which State funds to DLCs are allocated and/or distributed. The consultants wish to make it clear that there is no clear right or wrong side in most of the disagreements. Local libraries are as likely to lack an understanding of the challenges faced by DLCs as the DLCs are to fully comprehend the challenges of the smaller libraries in their districts.

We believe that the surest way to decrease this counterproductive tension is to clarify the appropriate use of State funding by separating the funds to be used for acting as a regional resource from funds intended for the support and development of libraries on a regional basis.

FINDING 7

The consultants found no evidence that any of the State funding provided in support of library services through the district library center program has been wasted; however, the focus of expenditures in individual DLCs has varied widely.

As nearly as the consultants can determine, State funding for DLCs is all being spent for legitimate purposes. Library resources, library staff, interlibrary loan, consulting, and continuing education are all perfectly acceptable expenditures. The contentiousness arises when what some perceive as too much or too little is being spent in one or another category.

One of the reasons that Martin's vision for library development has never materialized is that major components of the vision have been inadequately funded. ***Library Services in Pennsylvania: Present and Proposed*** envisioned that local libraries would have access to "professional staff including a specialist for children, another for teen-agers, another for adults." The Martin report also assumed regular and frequent visits to local libraries by these specialists.

One of the harsh realities of the situation is that funding has never been entirely adequate to allow Martin's full vision to be realized. However, another harsh reality is that some DLCs have concentrated more on building up "their" libraries to the exclusion of other libraries. Again, we believe that the only way to rectify this situation is to clarify the appropriate use of State Aid by separating it into two pots; one to support strengthening the collections and services of the

district center library and another for library development.

FINDING 8

The majority of DLCs and library systems provide far more “library support” than “library development.”

Library support in the form of services and assistance designed to meet today’s needs is necessary and should continue to receive State support. However, more attention needs to be given to library development. Encouragement, both in the form of policies and administrative rules, as well as in the form of financial incentives, needs to be provided if Pennsylvania is ever going to significantly improve its standing in relation to other States.

Larger units of service, county library systems where there are none, stronger systems where only weak ones exist and stronger, more self-sufficient local libraries are all part of the development challenge.

FINDING 9

It is extremely difficult to accurately describe Pennsylvania’s public library service framework to the public or to elected officials.

The current framework for providing public library services is extremely complex, differs substantially from area to area, and stands in the way of securing the funding needed to offer high quality library and information services. While the diversity of the State of Pennsylvania dictates that one-size fits all approaches are doomed to failure, attempts must be made to streamline the structure to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

Funding for the four State-Level Regional Resource Centers should continue to enable the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, the Free Library of Philadelphia, the State Library, and Penn State to fulfill their role as in-depth resources for all Pennsylvania residents. The designation of these four libraries should be changed to “Statewide Resource Libraries” to distinguish their role from that of the thirty-three “Regional Resource Libraries” recommended later in this report.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Additional annual funding in the base amount of approximately \$ 500,000 should be provided to allow the four Statewide Resource Libraries to work together to begin the development of a state level virtual information network.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The 29 libraries currently serving as District Library Centers should no longer have this designation; however these libraries and four additional libraries (The Cleve J. Fredricksen Library in Camp Hill, the Schlow Memorial Library in State College, the Gettysburg Library of the Adams County Library System in Gettysburg, and the Eastern Monroe Public Library in Stroudsburg) should receive a new designation as Regional Resource Libraries.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The calculation of Regional Resource Library Aid should be county-based, i.e., a specific amount should be identified for each county based on population. Funding generated by the formula for counties that do not have a Regional Resource

Library within their boundaries should be used to help the libraries that are designated as Regional Resource Libraries jointly develop a shared virtual information network in cooperation with the four Statewide Resource Libraries. The virtual information network will serve all residents of the Commonwealth.

RECOMMENDATION 5

*Aid to the 33 Regional Resource Libraries should be for the purpose of strengthening these libraries and for enabling them to serve a regional audience. The 33 Regional Resource Libraries should have specific Interlibrary Loan responsibilities but **SHOULD NOT** have the “library development” responsibilities such as consulting service, continuing education, and Commonwealth Libraries liaison duties now required of DLCs.*

RECOMMENDATION 6

A new category of State Aid entitled “Library Advancement Agency Aid” should be created. The calculation of this aid should be county-based, i.e., a specific amount should be identified for each county based on population and land area.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Library Advancement Agency Aid should be for the purpose of providing the following services:

- *Consulting services*
- *Planning services (including individual library development plans)*
- *Continuing education*
- *Public relations/public awareness*
- *Grant writing/fund development assistance*
- *Technology support*
- *Delivery service*
- *Liaison with the Office of Commonwealth Libraries*

RECOMMENDATION 8

Library Advancement Agency Aid should be distributed to library systems in counties that have systems in place that meet specific criteria. (The Office of Commonwealth Libraries would certify library systems as being “qualified” systems.) If no library system exists, or if an existing library system does not meet the established criteria, the Library Advancement Agency aid should be distributed to the library designated as a Regional Resource Library that is in closest proximity to the county or the Regional Resource Library deemed most capable of providing library development activities in the county lacking a “qualified” system. (Again, the Office of Commonwealth Libraries would make the decision.)

RECOMMENDATION 9

The primary criteria for measuring a “qualified” system should be financial support from county government of not less than \$ 6.00 per capita (indexed to 2005 dollars).

Other criteria for certification as a “qualified” system should include:

- *Director/Administrator of system is full-time and holds a Master’s degree in Library Science from an ALA accredited library school.*
- *A current long-range/strategic plan for library services in the county (plan no older than five years).*
- *A current technology plan for technology implementation and support (plan no older than three years).*
- *A current marketing plan for increasing public awareness of library services in the county (plan no older than five years).*
- *Availability of an automated integrated library system (ILS) that serves all State-aided libraries in the county. (The system does not need to be the operator of the ILS. In fact, small counties should be encouraged to join the system being offered through the Office of*

Commonwealth Libraries or to join with other counties in multi-county automation consortia).

- *Centralized processing of at least 75% of the library materials purchased by the libraries in the county.*
- *Extension/outreach services that address the library and information needs of underserved residents of the county and/or the needs of individuals with special needs.*
- *County funding equal to or in excess of \$ 6.00 per capita (indexed to 2005 dollars).*

All systems should be required to meet the funding criteria to be certified as a “qualified” system. However, in addition to the funding criteria, systems should also be required to meet most of the criteria outlined above. Systems should be certified as being “qualified” if they meet 4 of the 8 criteria by the first and second years of their participation in the funding program. Systems should be certified as being “qualified” if they meet 5 of the 8 criteria in the third and fourth years of funding. Systems should be certified as “qualified” if they meet 6 of the 8 criteria in the fifth and sixth years of funding. Systems should be certified as “qualified” if they meet 7 of the 8 criteria in all years thereafter.

RECOMMENDATION 10

Individual libraries should be held to a higher standard as additional money and effort is put into the development of libraries.

DISCUSSION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

Funding for the four State-Level Regional Resource Centers should continue to enable the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, the Free Library of Philadelphia, the State Library, and Penn State to fulfill their role as in-depth resources for all Pennsylvania residents. The designation of these four libraries should be changed to “Statewide Resource Libraries” to distinguish their role from that of the thirty-three “Regional Resource Libraries” recommended later in this report.

The collections of the four Statewide Resource Libraries are state treasures that need to be preserved and enhanced. They represent irreplaceable cultural assets that directly or indirectly benefit every Pennsylvania resident.

This portion of the Lowell Martin three tiered system has been successful and deserves to be preserved.

RECOMMENDATION 2

***Additional** annual funding in the base amount of approximately \$ 500,000 should be provided to allow the four Statewide Resource Libraries to work together to begin the development of a state level virtual information network.*

The establishment of a separate funding stream to enable the development of a statewide virtual information network is a modest investment in transforming the way in which Pennsylvanians access information. This funding for the Statewide Resource Libraries, along with funding available to the Regional Resource Libraries from the funds generated for counties without Regional Resource Libraries, will create a new collaborative environment for the provision of information services.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The 29 libraries currently serving as District Library Centers should no longer have this designation; however, these libraries and four additional libraries should receive a new designation as Regional Resource Libraries.

This recommendation represents a separation of the two roles that were included in Martin's original vision for the DLCs. You will recall that the first was serving as a "high-level resource...;" the second was coordinating "all existing library units into a cooperative system." Recommendation 3 continues to provide a critical role for the DLCs as high level resources but changes the model used to provide the developmental aspects that are currently the responsibility of DLCs.

The new Regional Resource Library model will accomplish a number of important objectives. First and foremost, it will help to strengthen a network of strategically located public libraries across the State. In addition to providing residents in the regions surrounding the Regional Resource Libraries with enhanced services and resources, this approach is consistent with the Brookings Institution strategy that calls for a reinvestment in older, established communities. The majority of the existing DLCs that will be transformed into Regional Resource Libraries are located in the communities targeted in the ***Back to Prosperity*** document.

The Regional Resource Libraries will serve the public directly on a walk-in basis, and, through services such as interlibrary loan and referred reference, they will be an asset to other libraries in their area as well.

An advantage of separating the regional resource provider role from the library development role is that it will serve to reduce the animosity that now exists between some of the DLCs and other libraries in their region by clearly delineating the purposes for the separated funding streams and clarifying the division

of respective responsibilities of library systems and the existing DLCs.

The consultants also believe that Regional Resource Libraries can serve an additional function as a means of attaining “universal access” to library service. Currently, approximately 3% of Pennsylvania’s population lives in areas that do not directly support a public library. Currently, these residents of the State have no legal access to public library services through the Statewide Card Program because they have no “home” library. While 3% may sound like a small number, this translates into approximately 370,000 people. Of these, somewhere in the neighborhood of 75,000 are under 18 years old. We believe that it is unacceptable that tens of thousands of school-aged children in Pennsylvania have no legal access to public library service.

Since the Regional Resource Libraries will receive significant State funding that is derived from every portion of the State under the proposed structure, the consultants believe that it is appropriate that these libraries should be open to all residents of the Commonwealth, regardless of whether or not they have a “home” library. However, to preserve funding already received by individual libraries it will be necessary to require that any municipality currently supporting a State-aided library would need to continue to do so at its current level or higher. Access to the Regional Resource Library should not be used as an excuse to reduce local support.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The calculation of Regional Resource Library Aid should be county-based, i.e., a specific amount should be identified for each county based on population. Funding generated by the formula for counties that do not have a Regional Resource Library within their boundaries should be used to help the libraries that are designated as Regional Resource Libraries jointly develop a shared virtual information network in cooperation with the four

Statewide Resource Libraries. The virtual information network will serve all residents of the Commonwealth.

Basing the funding model for Regional Resource Libraries at the county level serves to underscore the county as the most appropriate unit for library development. The progress made by libraries that have secured county funding and that participate in county library systems was cited earlier in this report. You will also recall that chart on page 3 shows that Pennsylvania lags well behind other states in local funding for public libraries. The consultants believe that the county unit of government is the most fruitful avenue to pursue in terms of increasing local support for public libraries. Every resident of the Keystone State lives in a county. The same cannot be said for townships or boroughs.

A model that works toward county level planning and support for public library service results in universal access to public library service (a goal that most states have achieved, but one that has escaped Pennsylvania's grasp). Providing opportunities for counties to capture additional State funding in return for their support for library services can be used to increase awareness of library services among county supervisors and to leverage additional county support.

At the same time, it is recognized that it is unlikely that some counties will ever provide support. In other instances, no library is, or is likely to become, a candidate for Regional Resource Library status. Most of these counties are extremely rural, tend to have poor economies and a small population base. The consultants believe that a virtual information network that eliminates some of the barriers of time and place is the most appropriate way to ensure these residents with access to high quality reference and information services. In fact, the development of such a network will benefit all residents of the State.

In the case of counties without a Regional Resource Library within their boundaries, the funds generated from the county-based formula would create a source of dollars to enable Regional Resource Libraries to be

participants with the Statewide Resource Libraries in the State's emerging Virtual Information Network. The consultants are heartened by the fact that work is already underway to develop this network and that efforts are being made to engage school and academic libraries as partners in this endeavor.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Aid to the 33 Regional Resource Libraries should be for the purpose of strengthening these libraries and for enabling them to serve a regional audience. The 33 Regional Resource Libraries should have specific Interlibrary Loan responsibilities but SHOULD NOT have the "library development" responsibilities such as consulting service, continuing education, and Commonwealth Libraries liaison duties now required of DLCs.

The Regional Resource Library structure should provide a minimum payment of \$ 160,000 (indexed to 2005 dollars) for any library serving in this capacity. Additional aid above this amount should be generated based on the population of the county being served.

Since the primary purpose of this aid is the development of a network of strong, exemplary libraries across the State, the consultants believe that the funding should go directly to the Regional Resource Library and that there should be relatively few restrictions on how the dollars are expended. Allowable expenditures should certainly include materials, licensing of electronic resources, and, at least, professional staffing. The State may choose to restrict the use of money for capital purchases; however a good case could be made for allowing the money to be spent on computers and peripherals.

The Regional Resource Libraries should be encouraged to consider how this aid might be used to encourage cooperative efforts that increase efficiency. For example, the Regional Resource Libraries should not be prohibited from spending a portion of their aid on cooperative cataloging regardless of whether this

service is performed by the Regional Resource Library itself or by a county-based federated library system.

We have already addressed some of the benefits of separating the high-level resource provider role from the developmental role. However, one of the current functions of DLCs that the consultants believe should remain with the newly created Regional Resource Libraries is interlibrary loan. At the same time, we would encourage the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to explore more streamlined models for interlibrary loan. There are several models that are being used by other states that could be considered for implementation in the Keystone State. Furthermore, the State should take an active role to ensure that all residents have access to national resources through the interlibrary system that is created. The curtailing of national-level interlibrary loan service in some areas of the State during the recent funding downturn, while understandable, was regrettable. All Pennsylvanians should have access to resources beyond State boundaries.

RECOMMENDATION 6

A new category of State Aid entitled “Library Advancement Agency Aid” should be created. The calculation of this aid should be county-based, i.e., a specific amount should be identified for each county based on population and land area.

Library Advancement Agencies would be county-based. County library systems or, lacking the presence of a “qualified” library system, the regional resource libraries designated to serve in the development capacity, would concentrate on the development of enhanced library services within their county. The Office of Commonwealth Libraries will make the determination as to the entity that will fulfill the library development role.

Because the size of a territory served and the low of density of population in an area tend to result in

higher costs for providing services, such as consulting service and technology support, the consultants recommend that the number of square miles to be served be factored into the funding formula along with population. Geography and a sparse population base have clearly impeded progress in some areas of the State. This is not to say that high population density does not present service delivery challenges.

However, the consultants believe that the population portion of the formula is probably sufficient to address this issue. If the Office of Commonwealth Libraries in concert with the library community determines that the population factor alone does not adequately address this issue, a small population density factor could be added; however, care must be exercised to ensure that this factor doesn't negate the impact of the geographic factor designed to assist rural areas.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Library Advancement Agency Aid should be for the purpose of providing the following services:

- *Consulting services*
- *Planning services (including individual library development plans)*
- *Continuing education*
- *Public relations/public awareness*
- *Grant writing/fund development assistance*
- *Technology support*
- *Delivery service*
- *Liaison with Office of Commonwealth Libraries*

The multi-faceted nature of DLC responsibilities (having both high-level resource provider responsibilities and library development responsibilities) has hindered the process of setting service priorities in some areas of the State. The advent of the county systems has, in a few instances, contributed to the lack of clarity. By stepping in to provide what they have perceived as needed development services that were not being offered by the DLC designated to serve their county, library systems have sometimes blurred the lines between

the roles and responsibilities of DLCs and library systems.

It has grown increasingly difficult to describe who does what. The situation has in some places become so strained between DLCs and library systems that legal actions have ensued.

The model proposed in this report attempts to clarify responsibilities. While it is true that different entities (county library systems in some cases and libraries designated as Regional Resource Libraries in others) would be providing development services under the new plan; the functional picture will be clearer. It will be possible in each county to clearly identify who should be doing what.

This is not to say that some negotiation might not happen at the county or regional level. The key is not so much who is doing a particular task, rather it is who is responsible for seeing that a task or function is fulfilled.

A Regional Resource Library that is designated to act as a Library Advancement Agency might decide that the most efficient way to provide delivery service for the library it serves is by contracting with a library system in another nearby county. The practice of “contracting out” services should be seen as a legitimate way of meeting library development responsibilities. However, the fact that another entity, even a private sector entity, is performing a particular task does not negate the responsibility for seeing that the function is carried out.

Organizations serving as Library Advancement Agencies should also be encouraged to work with the libraries they serve to determine the ways in which a requirement is fulfilled. The “negotiated agreement” process is a perfectly valid one and should be employed. The difference between the current negotiated agreement process and the one envisioned between the Library Advancement Agencies and their libraries is that all of the potential

uses for the funds in question will be related to library development.

One of the fundamental developmental roles of Library Advancement Agencies should be assisting libraries with planning. The consultants envision the creation of “individual development plans” that examine collection, staffing, technology, facility, and overall funding needs. In some cases, this kind of intensive planning may reveal that a consolidation of services or sharing of staffing or administrative services might be advisable.

The Library Advancement Agencies are not designed to force libraries to consolidate; however, the consultants believe that joint advocacy for increased county-based funding and intensive planning will result in some mergers that, in the end, will provide a higher level of service to the public.

RECOMMENDATION 8

Library Advancement Agency Aid should be distributed to library systems in counties that have systems in place that meet specific criteria. (The Office of Commonwealth Libraries would certify library systems as being “qualified” systems.) If no library system exists, or if an existing library system does not meet the established criteria, the Library Advancement Agency aid should be distributed to the library designated as a Regional Resource Library that is in closest proximity to the county or the Regional Resource Library deemed most capable of providing library development activities in the county lacking a “qualified” system. (Again, the Office of Commonwealth Libraries would make the decision.)

Library Advancement Agency Aid is **not** seen as a replacement for County Coordination Aid. The consultants strongly urge that this basic form of support to county library systems be continued. County Coordination Aid provides county systems with a basic level of credibility. It legitimizes federated systems and supports and promotes improved

communication and activities designed to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of local libraries. It also provides a platform for emerging systems that wish to work toward becoming systems “qualified” to serve as Library Advancement Agencies.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The primary criteria for measuring a “qualified” system should be financial support from county government of not less than \$ 6.00 per capita (indexed to 2005 dollars).

Other criteria for certification as a “qualified” system should include:

- *Director/Administrator of system is full-time and holds a Master’s degree in Library Science from an ALA accredited library school.*
- *A current long-range/strategic plan for library services in the county (plan no older than five years).*
- *A current technology plan for technology implementation and support (plan no older than three years).*
- *A current marketing plan for increasing public awareness of library services in the county (plan no older than five years).*
- *Availability of an automated integrated library system (ILS) that serves all State-aided libraries in the county. (The system does not need to be the operator of the ILS. In fact, small counties should be encouraged to join the system being offered through the Office of Commonwealth Libraries or to join with other counties in multi-county automation consortia).*
- *Centralized processing of at least 75% of the library materials purchased by the libraries in the county.*
- *Extension/outreach services that address the library and information needs of underserved residents of the county and/or the needs of individuals with special needs.*
- *County funding equal to or in excess of \$6.00 per capita (indexed to 2005 dollars).*

All systems should be required to meet the funding criteria and the automation system requirement to be eligible for certification as a “qualified” system. However, in addition to the funding and automation criteria, systems should also be required to meet most of the other standards outlined above. Systems should be certified as being “qualified” if they meet 4 of the 8 criteria by the first and second years of their participation in the funding program. Systems should be certified as being mature if they meet 5 of the 8 criteria in the third and fourth years of funding. Systems should be certified as “qualified” if they meet 6 of the 8 criteria in the fifth and sixth years of funding. Systems should be certified as “qualified” if they meet 7 of the 8 criteria in all years thereafter.

The consultants believe that the mechanisms that are put in place to improve and develop libraries should be developmental in design. We have already pointed out that many libraries and many counties lag far behind in offering high quality library service. If these counties and these libraries are going to improve, they have to participate in the process. The transitional implementation of criteria is intended to enable counties that have weak library systems to qualify initially and to continue to qualify as incremental progress is made toward becoming a “qualified” system. The consultants believe that the expenditure of Library Services and Technology Act funds for demonstration projects is also an appropriate way to encourage libraries and counties to take full advantage of a renewed emphasis on library development.

RECOMMENDATION 10

Individual libraries should be held to a higher standard as additional money and effort is put into the development of libraries.

Pennsylvania’s standards for public libraries are low and, in many instances, outdated. In spite of this fact, many libraries still struggle to meet them. The

reduction in State Aid that took place in 2003 resulted in many libraries applying for waivers. In recognition of the funding shortfall, these waivers were routinely granted. The Office of Commonwealth Libraries recently took an important first step in indicating that libraries will be held to higher standards. A memo issued in July 2005 indicates that, with the partial restoration of State Aid, waivers would no longer be granted routinely. The consultants believe that this step is appropriate and should be applauded.

However, a second step is also needed. Pennsylvania needs to begin work on new, updated standards for libraries that recognize the tremendous changes that have taken place in the provision of library and information services. The promulgation of new standards is always difficult. What some see as a floor are perceived by others as a ceiling. Nevertheless, if Pennsylvanians are going to receive high quality library service and, if libraries expect the State to invest in public libraries, adherence to well crafted, up-to-date standards is essential.

OUTCOMES IF THE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE ENACTED

The recommendations outlined above are intended to address a variety of structural problems that have had a negative impact on the level of public library service offered by Pennsylvania's libraries for decades. Nevertheless, the full implementation of these recommendations will not solve **ALL** of the existing problems. Specifically, a careful assessment of political realities has resulted in some recommendations that might be characterized as an "incremental" governance solution.

In our assessment, Pennsylvania's proliferation of governmental units, and a corresponding proliferation of library governance units, impedes progress. However, we believe that it is unlikely that library services in Pennsylvania will move rapidly to a consolidated county model. Therefore, we have chosen to recommend a solution that encourages county-level cooperation and coordination and that encourages county investment in libraries. We believe that this incremental approach will result in a higher level of service and in higher efficiency.

That said, we believe that the recommendations that have been provided have great potential for moving library and information services in Pennsylvania forward. Following is a brief summary of some of the outcomes that can be anticipated if the plan is fully implemented:

- The vast majority of Pennsylvanians will have access to enhanced library and information services within a reasonable distance of their home.
- Residents of rural portions of the State served by small libraries will receive a higher level of library services because of a greater focus on "library development" activities.
- All residents of the Commonwealth, including those residing in very rural portions of the State, will have improved electronic access to statewide and regional resources.

- Students and teachers will benefit from greater statewide and regional coordination of both electronic and print resources related to meeting rigorous education standards.
- The people of Pennsylvania will have a better understanding of the services and resources that public libraries in the 21st century can deliver through a geographically distributed network of exemplary libraries.
- Residents who currently have no legal access to public library service will be able to use Regional Resource Libraries.
- Library directors and administrators will be able to devote more time to service and less time to intergovernmental squabbles because the recommended funding mechanisms clarify the purpose of funding and reduce situations in which multiple entities are contending for the same funds.
- Citizens of the Commonwealth, from toddlers to senior citizens, will perceive Pennsylvania libraries as primary resources for personal development and lifelong learning.
- Regional Resource Library Aid will provide the kind of reinvestment in older, established communities called for in the Brookings Institution's ***Back to Prosperity*** document.
- Regional economic development interests will be able to point to their public libraries as important, high-quality cultural/educational assets.
- Pennsylvania libraries' performance in comparison to libraries in other states will improve.