

## MATERIALS GRANTS FOR CALIFORNIA'S RURAL LIBRARIES

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California's most isolated library outlets, serving sparse populations far from an urban center, have twice received grants from the California State Library for materials upgrading. The purpose of the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) grants was to help libraries in sparsely populated areas to provide fresh, up-to-date non-fiction materials.

Much of California's visibility to the nation and the world is focused on the huge coastal metropolitan areas of the state. Less visible are the expanses of deserts and mountains where population remains sparse and communities are isolated by many miles of often difficult geography. It would be hard for many Americans to even visualize a county library system where service outlets are a hundred or more miles from the headquarters library, and that headquarters itself might be located in a county seat of not more than a few thousand people.

Adding to the geographic isolation problems of many of California's rural counties in recent years have been increasingly serious financial woes. While in fact many California public libraries have had serious financial crises over the past few years, the rural counties, for a variety of reasons, have especially severe funding problems. Counties

with small population bases are increasingly burdened by "state-mandated" costs in the welfare and justice courts areas. Many libraries in these counties struggle to keep their doors open; interlibrary loan and even walk-in reference and readers' aid services are at times curtailed. These conditions often prevent the staff from competing for LSCA dollars through the regular proposal and application process. LSCA was by-passing some of the very target group it was designed to help. As a result, \$741,000 in LSCA funds were granted over a three year period to rural libraries. While the grant was to be used for non-fiction, the choice of format, and whether for adults, children, or some of both, was left entirely to the local recipient library.

Although we certainly know a rural library when we see one, defining it for the purposes of the grant and making the available money come out right was more difficult. For one thing, library service areas in California tend to cover large areas, because of the well-developed county library system in the state, and there are no official population figures by outlet within each library service jurisdiction. We also had to find a way to limit the grants so as to be large enough to make a local (outlet) impact. We wanted to reach the truly isolated outlets, including the tiny libraries tucked away in the Sierra Nevada, many miles from their own headquarters library in the county seat. And we needed verifiable, uniform measurements for eligibility.

For the purposes of meeting the above requirements, we listed those counties in California not designated as within

a federal Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). As it happened this list defined exactly the target we wanted. Using the MSA designation excluded some fairly rural county libraries which receive other state and federal grants because of their larger headquarters operation. It allowed us to concentrate the funds to libraries whose headquarters were not in an MSA. Having defined the libraries by the non-MSA designation, the grants were offered to eligible libraries according to the following scale.

<u>POPULATION OF LIBRARY SERVICE AREA</u>	<u>GRANT</u>
Under 5,000	\$ 1,000
5,000 to 15,000	5,000
15,000 to 25,000	10,000
25,000 to 50,000	15,000
50,000 to 100,000	20,000
Over 100,000	25,000

Libraries which received these grants for non-fiction were able to concentrate the funds on direct and visible enhancement of service. The grants were extremely popular with librarians, who were given complete discretion in the selection, placement, and movement of the materials except for a requirement for an "equitable distribution... to all outlets." A single simplified LSCA report form was required.

Because we wanted to assure that local jurisdictions did not supplant in any way their local appropriations with the LSCA grant, we tied eligibility for the second year's

LSCA materials grant to a state aid program (called the Public Library Fund) which already requires a local maintenance of effort, and from which we already had built-in data.

The grants were also a good local public relations tool, whenever the librarian chose to make them so. They raised the local visibility of the library and emphasized locally the importance that the state places upon the availability of up-to-date library materials in isolated areas. In fact an official in one county reportedly complained, "Why is the state sending us books when our roads are full of potholes?"

Following is a list of recipients of the grants:

LIBRARY MATERIALS GRANTS TO CALIFORNIA PUBLIC LIBRARIES  
IN SPARCE POPULATION AREAS

Library Services and Construction Act

1985/86 and 1986/87

<u>LIBRARY</u>	<u>POPULATION</u>	<u>TOTAL AWARD</u>
Alpine County Library	1,180	2,000
Amador County Library	22,700	20,000
Calaveras County Library	26,300	25,000
Colusa County Library	14,550	10,000
Del Norte County Library	18,450	20,000
Glenn County		
Orland Free Library	11,155	10,000
Willows Public Library	11,725	10,000
Humboldt County		
Eureka-Humboldt County Library	112,100	50,000

<u>LIBRARY</u>	<u>POPULATION</u>	<u>TOTAL AWARD</u>
Imperial County		
Imperial County Library	38,060	30,000
El Centro Public Library	27,300	30,000
Brawley Public Library	17,650	20,000
Calexico Public Library	16,950	20,000
Imperial Public Library	3,870	2,000
Inyo County Library	18,250	20,000
Kings County Library	83,500	40,000
Lake County Library	47,000	30,000
*Lassen County Library	23,850	10,000
Madera County Library	75,300	40,000
Mendocino County Library	72,700	40,000
Merced County Library	157,900	50,000
*Modoc County Library	9,600	5,000
Mono County Library	9,150	10,000
Nevada County Library	66,300	40,000
Plumas County Library (Includes Sierra County)	22,040	20,000
San Benito County		
San Benito County Library	28,340	30,000
San Juan Bautista City Library	1,410	2,000
San Luis Obispo County		
San Luis Obispo County Library	170,950	50,000
Paso Robles Public Library	12,650	10,000
Siskiyou County Library	42,050	30,000
*Tehama County Library	42,700	15,000

<u>LIBRARY</u>	<u>POPULATION</u>	<u>TOTAL AWARD</u>
Trinity County Library	13,300	10,000
Tuolumne County Library	<u>52,500</u>	<u>40,000</u>
	TOTAL	<u>\$741,000</u>

\*Not eligible for second year of grant.