

**THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL  
COMMISSION ON LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION  
SCIENCE IN ASSISTING RURAL AMERICA**

by

**Jane Williams**

Good morning. I am pleased to bring you greetings and best wishes for a successful conference from the Commission's chairman, J. Michael Farrell, and the Commission's executive director, Peter R. Young. It is a challenge to prepare oneself for a presentation of this type, and I thank you for that opportunity. I hope what I have to say will spark some thought and exchanges of thought during and after this conference.

I want to cover several items:

1. an overview of what the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science is and has done,
2. a summary of two current programs of the Commission that relate to rural America,
3. a quick look back at last year's White House Conference on Library and Information Services,
4. present two other current and future program emphases of NCLIS that pertain to rural libraries as well as others.

**WHAT NCLIS IS AND HAS DONE**

The Commission is a permanent, independent agency in the executive branch of the federal government. It was established by a 1970 statute (P.L. 91-345). The Commissioners are 14 people appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate for 5-year terms. The 15th Commissioner, and the only *ex officio* member, is the Librarian of Congress.

According to our statute, the Commission has primary responsibility for developing and recommending overall plans and policies related to library and information services adequate to meet the needs of the people of the United States. NCLIS advises the President and the Congress on the implementation of national policy and on the need for cooperation among federal, state and local governments, and public and private agencies, in assuring optimum use of the nation's educational resources.

NCLIS conducts studies, surveys and analyses of the information needs of the nation; appraises the adequacies and deficiencies of current library and information resources and services; evaluates the effectiveness of current library and information service programs; advises federal, state, local and private agencies regarding library and information services; promotes research and development activities, and publishes reports.

Now, compare this glorious, global mandate with the sizes of the Commission's staff and budget. NCLIS' employment ceiling is 12. We now have 5 full-time people on the payroll, plus 2 people on contract. The Commission's budget in the 1993 fiscal year, which began last month, is the highest it's ever been: \$889,000.

Let me put this size in the context of the federal government for you because, as you know, the federal government of the United States is like no other context. There is a group called the Small Agency Council. To qualify as small, an agency has to have fewer than 6,000 employees. In a subdivision of the Small Agency Council, called the Micro Agency Group, a federal agency qualifies for membership if it has fewer than 500 employees. Perhaps now one can begin to appreciate the challenges of being among the very smallest of the federal agencies while possessing statutory language of such broad scope.

I like the analogy a visitor to the office recently gave us. That is, rather than bemoaning or belittling the size of our agency, recast our thinking about our approaches and accomplishments as guerilla action. That may be a little far-fetched but, in any case, our smallness does give us advantages of flexibility and quickness of response when compared with the big agencies and departments, and our status as an independent agency gives us the same avenues of access.

Over the years, since the Commission held its first official meeting in September 1971, it has examined diverse issues pertaining to library and information services, such as:

- ♦ continuing education needs of library personnel,
- ♦ copyright and the revision of legislation in the mid-1970s,
- ♦ conduct of the first White House Conference, in 1979,
- ♦ reauthorization and extension of the LSCA,
- ♦ public and private sector relations,
- ♦ library and information services to cultural minorities,
- ♦ library and information services for the elderly,
- ♦ the role of information in the economy,
- ♦ information literacy,
- ♦ access to public information,
- ♦ a host of legislative initiatives, from paperwork reduction to the recent bills for the Government Printing Office to provide gateways to government information in electronic form.

An important part of the NCLIS statute calls on the Commission to:

...conduct studies, surveys, and analyses of the library and information needs of the Nation, **including the special library and information needs of rural areas**, of economically, socially, or culturally deprived persons, and of elderly persons, and the means by which these needs may be met through information centers, through the libraries of elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education, and through public, research, special, and other types of libraries.

Based on this statutory responsibility, the Commission established a program focus by forming a National Rural information Services Development Program (NRISD) in the early 1980s. This program was based on a recognition that rural communities required assistance in planning and adapting to rapid social, economic, and demographic change. This assistance involved activities which served to increase the capacity to deliver essential services to rural areas.

The NCLIS program was developed in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Library and other components of USDA, along with the assistance and cooperation of state library agencies, and the Kellogg Foundation. Its goal was actually taken from a national program document that the Commission formulated in 1975 which stated that there was a need to "Ensure that basic minimums of library and information services adequate to meet the needs of all local communities are satisfied" [U. S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, (USNCLIS) 1975].

In 1984 the Commission joined with the USDA and the Extension Service to consider establishment of a National Advisory Board on Rural Information Needs. Throughout this activity, the Commission served as a catalyst and coordinator among the various specialized government agencies, private information system concerns, and the various groups of educators, administrators, and librarians involved. The April 1985 report from the planning committee contains a background section authored by Dr. Vavrek. I'd like to read that section's beginning paragraph, partly because it sounds as though it were written in 1992:

We live in a remarkable society. Coexisting in the same ecosystem are extreme differences. On one hand, we point with deserved pride to the accomplishments of technology — the Space Shuttle, microprocessing, telecommunications — are only a few of these distinct achievements. Linearly, we must observe, however, the opposite end of the spectrum. Poverty, social anomie, despair, etc., remind us of enduring unmet challenges within our fragile human framework. We are also cognizant of the fact that our perceptions about ourselves and our world are conditioned by unrelenting change. Causing this change and likewise symptomatic of it is a phenomenon of dynamic and unyielding proportions — information as an ever expanding and nonconsumable product (USCLIS, 1985, p. 3).

The Intermountain Community Learning/Information Services project operated in four Western states — Colorado, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming. This program was designed to demonstrate that the rural library — two in each state, for purposes of the demonstration — can serve as a learning/information

center responding to the personal, business, professional, and governmental information needs of local citizens and organizations through the use of information network links.

To quote from a brochure published on the project:

Microcomputers and telecommunications are central to the ICLIS strategy. Modern technology is helping to deliver educational offerings from the land-grant universities of Colorado, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming to remote locations. Great distances, state borders, and rugged terrain no longer are barriers to educational opportunity.

Local library learning and information centers linked to university libraries through IBM personal computers now aid students pursuing academic degrees. Community learning specialists electronically coordinate sharing of library resources in the four states and provide online access to commercial data previously not available in the community (IBM Academic Information Systems, 1988).

The Intermountain Community Learning and Information Service represents a four-year (1986-1990) \$4.1 million project funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

Important lessons resulted from this involvement in the 1980s. It was learned that the decision-making processes in rural and non-rural communities were not identical and, in certain cases, reflected fundamentally different structures. Working with a decentralized, consensus-based governing and policy-making structure is radically differently from working in the bureaucracy of the federal government. Partnerships including county executive officials and city managers working with expert support staffs are not common in the rural services sector. The absence of local expertise available to advise local officials on a variety of procedures, programs and policies requires a very different information support service approach to assure effective decisions. In short, those involved began to understand that the challenges facing rural residents require information and decision-making structures and tools that are uniquely geared to the culture, environment and climate of rural communities.

## **TWO CURRENT NCLIS PROGRAMS THAT RELATE TO RURAL AMERICA**

Over the years the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science has been involved in many cooperative programs. One of the most important began in 1988 and continues today. It is with the National Center for Education Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Education, to develop and improve the collection and publication of reliable annual public library statistics. The Library Statistics Program now has components that concentrate on academic, school and state library statistics as well as public.

The public library cooperative statistics program depends on the submission of data by local libraries and the work of the state libraries to collect that data and transmit it to Washington. By the end of August 1992 all state libraries had submitted their 1991 public library data. Staff at the National Center for Education Statistics reported that the data are more complete and better edited than in previous years and that the data from more than half of the states required no further work at all.

The published statistical information is available in paper copy and on diskettes. The latest published data is for 1990 and indicates some interesting things about public library services to small communities. In 1990, almost 62% of the 8,978 public libraries in the U.S. reported that they served populations of under 10,000. 45% of all U.S. public libraries reported that they served populations of under 5,000. In 1990, 79.9% of public libraries served populations of less than 25,000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1992). This represents an increase of 2% from data available in 1986.

Small community libraries are not minority institutions in America. They constitute, as you already know, the basis for public library services for the majority of the nation's citizens. Those public libraries that serve small populations of under 25,000, however, are challenged to meet growing demands for resources and services. How these libraries cope with the information needs of rural populations in the future depends, in part, on how well and how accurately we can measure their activities now to prepare for the future.

Last fall the Commission sponsored a library research seminar to engage the research community on topics related to public library statistics. Since then other inquiries have been made as well to pursue how the statistics we now have available can be analyzed to help understand and improve public library and information services.

Examples of research topics suggested to date include:

- ♦ whether library data (e.g., budgets, sizes of collections, circulation) traditionally collected can be used as measures of impact, effectiveness and quality, or whether a new set of output data is needed;
- ♦ what changes have there been in the last 30 years in levels of support from federal, state and local sources and are there differences by region, by urban or rural setting, etc.;
- ♦ the expanding phenomenon of home-based information retrieval and what levels of access libraries provide to these forms of information retrieval;
- ♦ economic analysis of the impact of the rising costs of materials on libraries' structures and missions;
- ♦ in-depth tests of the interrelationship of user location and library location;
- ♦ exploration of options for developing data elements for all types of libraries that begin to capture the ways in which technology is transforming library services.

An important factor for future research is last year's creation of a public library universe file, which identifies every public library outlet in the U.S. This new tool will facilitate sample surveys which can target a subset of the nation's 9,000 public libraries to obtain reliable, accurate information about these institutions. For example, we can now target a statistically accurate sample of the public library universe which can be surveyed for per-capita expenses on library resources and services for rural areas, which can be compared with other areas. Special needs and programs can be targeted with a degree of reliability that was previously impossible. How we use these new tools is in the hands of the

analysts and researchers who are just now becoming aware that these new data are available.

The second current project that I want to mention is that of library and information services to Native Americans. In the early 1970s, the Commission became aware of reported deficiencies in library and information services to Native Americans. Further investigation undertaken by the Commission led to a series of hearings which revealed serious problems in the ability of institutions and organizations to satisfy the informational needs of the Indian communities.

The Commission's interest in this area helped to bring about the first pre-White House Conference on Native American Library and Information Services, in Denver in 1978. This preconference was held prior to the first White House Conference on Library and Information Services, conducted in Washington, D.C., in 1979. Among the 64 resolutions resulting from the White House Conference was one calling for legislation to provide help in developing library and information services on all Indian reservations, in training library personnel, and in other forms of assistance.

In late 1988 the Commission developed plans for another series of regional public hearings on the condition and needs of library and information services to Native Americans. The purpose of the hearings was to assess and review the changes in the extent and quality of service to the Indian communities since the 1979 White House Conference.

Five hearings were held between 1989 and late 1991, covering every region on the country: Southwest (New Mexico), Northeast (Connecticut), Southeast (Florida), Northwest (Seattle) and Alaska. In conjunction with the hearings, Commission members and staff made site visits to local or nearby libraries and information service centers to gather information, observe, and talk directly with Native Americans and tribal leaders. The Commission could not have undertaken this project or the resulting report without the advice, assistance and leadership from many groups and individuals, including experts like Dr. Lotsee Patterson, who is on this conference program.



Over the course of this project, NCLIS reviewed the current condition of Tribal libraries, identified improvements needed to adequately address the needs of Native Americans in the future, and drafted preliminary recommendations for actions needed to improve the range and quality of library and information services available to Native Americans who reside and work on Tribal Reservations throughout the United States as well as those who do not live or work on a Reservation.

The study's findings demonstrate that the full range of library and information needs of Native Americans are not being adequately met. In addition, these communities require specialized library and information resources that can address their unique information and educational needs. Also reflected in this report is an urgent national need to record and preserve the heritage, traditions, achievements and wisdom of Native American cultures.

The Commission found that progress has been made in a few specific areas related to American Indian Tribal libraries. New library and archival facilities have been constructed and existing structures have been renovated or reconfigured, with funding from federal grants. Specialized library training for Native Americans has been made available, and assistance has been provided for acquiring library materials and other resources. New and innovative programs involving different approaches and methods are also required, to point the direction for future overall improvement of library and information service programs for Native Americans.

The Commission's report will be in two volumes. The first, the report itself, is a brief document intended for policy makers, legislators, Tribal leaders, state library agencies and other decision-makers at the federal, state and community levels to improve the libraries and information services provided Native Americans in the continental U.S., Alaska and Hawaii. The second volume is appendices containing detailed descriptions of activities performed by NCLIS, including the hearings and reports on site visits, as well as a long-range action plan developed for the Commission, which identifies strategies for providing high quality services. Both volumes are to be printed and distributed shortly.

The report will present ten major challenges for change to all concerned so that library and information services for Native Americans can be dramatically improved. Let me read the ten challenges from the draft report: Develop consistent funding sources required to support improved Native American library and information services,

- ♦ Strengthen library and information services training and technical assistance available to Native American communities,
- ♦ Develop programs to increase Tribal library material holdings and to develop collections in all formats,
- ♦ Improve access and cooperative activities,
- ♦ Develop state and local partnerships,
- ♦ Establish general federal policy and responsibilities,
- ♦ Establish model programs for Native American libraries and information services,
- ♦ Develop museum and archival services for preserving Native American cultures,
- ♦ Focus attention on adult and family literacy programs,
- ♦ Encourage application of newer information network technologies (USNCLIS, 1985).

There is another important section in the summary report. The draft reads as follows:

All Americans have a role to play in the implementation of the changes called for in this report. Some of the ways each of us can help effect change are:

- Find out what your State, local, or Tribal government is already doing to meet the library and information needs of Native peoples and what it can do to implement this report;
- Identify the 'Challenges' that most closely relate to your organization's goals and objectives, and determine ways you can help them to be realized;
- Foster a spirit of cooperation among State and local agencies to welcome and serve Native Americans;

- Work toward strengthening Federal support for Native American libraries and information services through LSCA Basic Grants and other programs of technical assistance.

Individually, these actions may seem small, but when replicated throughout the Nation the collective impact will be significant. This report, if properly implemented, can build Pathways to Excellence. This, then, is our vision and our eleventh 'Challenge' – a step toward the future (USNCLIS, 1991).

### **WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES**

The July 1991 White House Conference on Library and Information Services was planned and conducted under the Commission's aegis. Conference delegates approved 95 recommendations, many of which relate to rural and small as well as other types of libraries. Let me read parts of a few of them:

- ♦ That establishing new libraries be encouraged, where needed, and support provided for the abolition of barriers to library and information services whether educational, cultural, attitudinal, physical, architectural, legal, fiscal, technological, geographical, environmental, or in language or format." (ACC02-3)
- ♦ That the President and the Congress establish a study commission to recommend policies and programs to improve access to library and information services for Native Americans, including American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other underserved U.S. population groups. (ACC05-3)
- ♦ That actions be undertaken to ensure equal and timely access to information materials and that special attention directed to the needs of geographically isolated areas including the territories and noncontiguous states, to provide more current information and rapid delivery of library materials, regardless of format." (NIP01-1)
- ♦ That networks connecting small, rural, urban and tribal libraries be developed and supported at the federal, state, and local levels to ensure basic library services to all end users. . . The federal government should provide additional funding, based on low-

density populations, under the Library Services and Construction Act to address the networking needs of small and rural libraries. All rural and low-density population libraries should be provided with federal funds for a minimum of one access terminal on the National Research and Education Network.” (NET12-1)

- ♦ That the Congress enable libraries in our increasingly multicultural and diverse society to target relevant services and programs to the special/unique segments of their community populations, including those with disabilities. Libraries should serve as gateways for actively disseminating information to everyone in the U.S., its states, tribes, and territories, including those in remote areas, through both traditional and nontraditional methods and outlets. Services to reach individuals and families of traditionally underserved populations should be comparable to those services offered to traditional users of service-oriented public libraries. . . (SER07-1)
- ♦ That federal priority and economic support be given to establishing libraries as primary information sources for the under-served of the Nation, including these major elements: Congressional adoption of a national policy to extend library services through outreach thus extending the boundaries of traditional library services and reaching people who either cannot avail themselves of library services or are unaware of available services. . . (SER08-1)
- ♦ That the Congress adopt a national policy to ensure the preservation of our information resources. The assessment of preservation needs should be clearly articulated, with adequate funding provided for policy implementation. This policy should include: . . . increased federal funding to support existing regional preservation centers and to create new centers in unserved regions of the country. Together, these resources will help to ensure that small libraries, archives, and historical organizations will have access to the information and services they need to preserve their collections. (PRE 01-1) [White House Conference on Library and Information Services, 1991].

This small sample of the 95 White House Conference recommendations shows that, in addition to there being a large number of recommendations, they covered almost every facet of library and information services. The Commission met in October 1991 to begin to deal with this quantity and scope of recommendations and to discuss the Commission's priorities. Guided by the adage of the Commission's vice chairman, Elinor Swaim, "Everything's in order if you move it around," The Commissioners did just that.

They agreed to three general groupings of the recommendations roughly parallel to the Conference's three themes:

- ♦ availability and access to information (democracy)
- ♦ education services for diverse needs (literacy)
- ♦ information networks through technology (productivity).

The Commissioners also realized they needed to hear from other groups what they considered most important from the Conference recommendations and what they planned to do about the recommendations. The Commissioners further agreed it would be good to provide a forum where representatives of national groups could hear each other address these topics. On March 10, 1992, NCLIS sponsored an open forum which had 27 speakers, among whom was Nettie Taylor, for the Public Library Association. Here is part of her testimony:

Members of the Special Committee on Small and Rural Libraries, as well as the Small and Medium-Sized Libraries Section, are acutely aware of the need of rural residents for equal access to information . . .

At the urging of the Technology in Public Libraries Committee, PLA has joined the Coalition for Networked Information . . . PLA has a particular concern for ensuring that public libraries have access to the information that will be provided through NREN.

We feel that they think, only scholars, academic, special libraries, people with very scholarly needs within another type of institution will need that kind of information, not realizing all the time that many people come to public

libraries for very advanced . . . information, and will need the access through the new technology to get this information (USNCLIS, 1991).

## **TWO OTHER CURRENT AND FUTURE PROGRAM EMPHASES OF NCLIS**

Under the direction of J. Michael Farrell, named chairman of the Commission in March 1992, NCLIS began concentrating attention on those White House Conference recommendations addressing access to government information in electronic formats and the role of libraries in the National Research and Education Network (NREN). An important factor in shaping NCLIS' activities involves the Commission's statutory mission. Our law states that NCLIS ". . . shall have primary responsibility for . . . advising the President and Congress on the **implementation** of national policy. . . "

Of all the topics addressed by the White House Conference recommendations, perhaps the first area to receive national policy action after the Conference was the High-Performance Computing Act of 1991, which the President signed into law in December 1991. The purpose of P.L. 102-194 is to develop a ". . . program to demonstrate how advanced computers, high-capacity and high-speed networks and electronic data bases can improve the national information infrastructure for use by **all Americans.**"

The law calls for the President to establish an advisory committee on high-performance computing consisting of non-federal members, including representatives of the research, education and library communities, network providers, and industry, to provide the director of the Office of Science and Technology with advice. The law further directs federal agencies and departments to work with the private network service providers, state and local agencies, libraries, educational institutions and organizations and others as appropriate, to ensure that researchers, educators and students have access, as appropriate, to the network.

NREN is a networked information initiative for a digital communication superhighway to share research and scholarly information resources among institutions and individuals. NREN is emerging from a loosely organized system

of interconnected networks known as the Federal Research Network. The overall goal of NREN is a high-capacity, high-quality computer network infrastructure that supports a broad set of applications and network services for the research and education communities.

NCLIS is not specifically mentioned in the NREN law, but the Commission has a statutory basis for working with the director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, identified in the law as the lead agency for NREN, in developing network management and access policies. NCLIS has authority to “. . . promote research and development activities which will extend and improve the Nation’s library and information handling capability as essential links in the national and international communications and cooperative networks.” (P.L.100-95)

NCLIS also has statutory authority for developing “. . . overall plans for meeting national library and information needs and for the coordination of activities at the Federal, State, and local levels, taking into consideration all of the library and informational resources of the Nation to meet those needs.” (P.L.91-345) I quoted this last part because it is especially important in light of the partnership roles played by federal agencies, regional network nodes, state agencies and local network communication units in implementing the National Research and Education Network.

The words ‘network’ and ‘networking’ appear 18 times in the 95 White House Conference recommendations. “Information Networks through Technology” was one of ten topic areas for the Conference and included 16 recommendations. Of those recommendations, the most comprehensive was the one labeled, “Share Via a National ‘Superhighway.’”

That the Congress enact legislation creating and funding the National Research and Education Network (NREN) to serve as an information ‘superhighway,’ allowing educational institutions, including libraries, to capitalize on the advantages of technology for resource sharing and the creation and exchange of information. The network should be available in all libraries and other information repositories at every level. The governance structure for NREN should include representation from all interested constituencies, including technical, user, and information provider compo-

nents, as well as government, education at all levels, and libraries (USCLIS, 1992, p. 22).

The High-Performance Computing Act requires that, one year after enactment of this law, the director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy report to the Congress on six policy areas regarding the National Research and Education Network. Those points are enumerated in the law:

1. effective mechanisms for providing operating funds for the maintenance and use of the Network, including user fees, industry support, and continued Federal investment;
2. the future operation and evolution of the Network;
3. how commercial information service providers could be charged for access to the Network, and how Network users could be charged for such commercial information services;
4. the technological feasibility of allowing commercial information service providers to use the Network and other federally funded research networks;
5. how to protect the copyrights of material distributed over the Network; and
6. appropriate policies to ensure the security of resources available on the Network and to protect the privacy of users of networks.

On July 20 and 21, 1992, the Commission sponsored a public forum on libraries' and information services' roles in the National Research and Education Network. The speakers, most of them representatives of national groups or agencies, were asked to address those roles in light of the policy areas outlined in the law as comprising the report back to Congress in December 1992. A total of 26 representatives submitted oral and/or written statements.

The NCLIS director has summarized and organized all the forum statements into a report that has gone to the Office of Science and Technology Policy as an aid in preparing the report to Congress. The Commission is also sending copies of this report to other executive and legislative officials, forum participants, and national library, information and allied associations.



As you might guess, views expressed at the NREN forum and in written statements were as varied as libraries and information organizations themselves. However, it is obvious that there are at least three critical issues that must be addressed if an electronic networked environment is to bring the benefits of which it is capable: that is, the relationships of the public and private sectors, fees for service, and copyright or, as the concept of copyright is more frequently expressed for electronic works, the ownership of intellectual property. The Commission hopes to help address these important concerns.

We also look forward to seeing what will come of the national infrastructure bills introduced in the last Congress, as legislators and others seek to broaden the scope and reach of the National Research and Information Network. We have been in touch with congressional staff about inclusion of libraries generally, in addition to digital libraries, as work resumes on the information infrastructure bills. The Commission's point is that today's libraries can contain, but cannot be replaced by, tomorrow's digital libraries.

Technology alone, of course, will not deliver the solutions to the economic, cultural, social, environmental and human problems of rural America or any other part of America. We are all very aware that education is also being looked at and looked to as both a culprit and a rescuer. Libraries as educational institutions certainly received prominent attention at the White House Conference, as evidenced by the priority recommendation, the Omnibus Children and Youth Literacy Initiative.

After the Commission's October 1991 meeting the following synthesis was developed of the White House Conference recommendations under the general heading of "Education Services for Diverse Needs:"

That the President and Congress invigorate student learning and literacy thru legislation to support and fund 1) school library services (through categorical aid administered through a dedicated office and program at the Department of Education; 2) public library children's and young adult services (including partnerships with relevant organizations and a library-based, salaried Kids Corps project); and 3) research; public and school library partnerships; participation in the nationwide network; and education for service to

children and young adults. That appropriate demonstration grants and technology also be funded.

That literacy for all remain a national priority, with emphasis on training for culturally disadvantaged rural and urban minorities and access to training for the disabled. That the Congress support and fund library literacy programs; development of a national library-based literacy training model, new technologies and equipment, and quality literacy materials; and administer LSCA titles VI and VIII as non-discretionary programs through the states.

One of the things the Commission has done, not only to help implement important White House Conference recommendations, but also further its interagency work in the critical area of education, is to join the AMERICA 2000 Library Partnership, announced in September. Other federal partners are the Department of Education, the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Institute for Literacy.

The *AMERICA 2000 Library Partnership* brochure, of which I brought copies for conference participants, highlights the 1989 education summit of the President and the 50 governors that culminated in the bipartisan announcement of six National Education Goals:

1. All American children will start school ready to learn;
2. At least 90 percent of our students will graduate from high school;
3. Our students will demonstrate competence in the core subjects;
4. American students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement;
5. Every adult will be literate and have the skills necessary to compete in a world economy;
6. Every school will be safe and drug-free.

The brochure outlines components to be included in the Library Partnership:

- ♦ Today's Libraries and the Goals
- ♦ Libraries for the 21st Century, and
- ♦ Involving America 2000 Communities.

At its meeting last week the Commission approved of three of the NCLIS committee chairs working together to plan how NCLIS will pursue the White House Conference recommendation, the discussions revolving around reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the 1994 or 1995 reauthorization of the Library Services and Construction Act, and other interagency and interlibrary work to strengthen libraries as educational institutions. The Commission will hear that group's proposed plan in January.

AMERICA 2000, of course, is the label that President Bush and his administration have used for initiatives related to improving education. An article in this week's *Chronicle of Higher Education* said that many "...believe that Mr. Clinton may adopt certain America 2000 concepts, such as the creation of national standards and means of assessing progress toward those standards. They also believe Mr. Clinton will continue to focus on the education goals that he helped formulate. . ." (Zook, 1991)

## CONCLUSION

Let me close by acknowledging that the latter part of my talk deals with all libraries, not just rural and small public libraries. However, perhaps we can also employ, in a nonpartisan way, a phrase from the recent campaign, to the effect that a rising tide lifts all boats. In our ever smaller and increasingly interrelated world, the strategies for improvement should be as inclusive as possible, and targeted strategies should not unintentionally impair any other part of our universe. The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science hopes to be your worthy partner in helping to improve library and information services for **all** your constituents. Thank you.

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