

Postal Costs of College Libraries. In April, ACRL and the ALA Washington Office sent a questionnaire to the ACRL 100 institutions asking for data on postal costs. The survey was prompted by the request of Rep. Bill Ford (D-MI), who chairs both the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee and the House Postsecondary Education Subcommittee, for help from the higher education community in fighting the Administration's budget proposal to eliminate all postal subsidy funding.

Rep. Ford, who will be in charge of Higher Education Act reauthorization during this Congress, has often said he does more for libraries through his postal committee than through his education positions. He was concerned that the President's FY 1986 budget, if enacted, would mean that as of October 1, 1985, those eligible for free mail for the blind would have to pay the full cost of this mail, and all preferred postal rates, such as nonprofit bulk mail, classroom publications, and the 4th class library rate, would be increased to the full commercial rate. A 2-pound book package sent library rate would be 94¢ compared with the current 54¢, a 74 percent increase.

The Senate has gone along with most of the President's proposal, including in its version of the budget only \$100 million of the \$981 million needed in FY '86 to make up the postal revenue forgone through free and preferred rates. The House budget would freeze postal funding. At this writing, House-Senate conferees are meeting to reconcile this and other differences. The outcome will be significant for libraries, and good data is always helpful in trying to influence such outcomes.

Of the 100 representative college libraries comprising ACRL's "100", 68 responded, with 53 usable responses. Respondents spent from \$344 to \$26,030 on postage in 1984. The average college library spent \$5,857 in 1984, but surprisingly, has budgeted or received only \$5,655 for 1985.

Only 15 respondents were able to itemize their postal costs by class of mail. About half of these divide their postal expenditures fairly evenly between 1st class mail and 4th class packages--usually 4th class library rate, sometimes 4th class book rate. Four spend most on 1st class; three spend most on library rate, and one spends most on book rate. None of the 15 mentioned 2nd class or 3rd class nonprofit mail.

Thirty respondents commented on the impact of a possible 74 percent increase in the 4th class library rate. Of these, 23 felt the increase would have a major impact on library services; 18 mentioned that interlibrary loan service would be affected. A few representative comments:

"It would nearly double our interlibrary loan postage expenses for the last quarter of 1985 and seriously hamper our outreach program to rural Minnesotans during a time of serious agricultural economic conditions."

"The total library budget was "frozen" for next year and any increase in postage rates comes out of the materials budget."

"Since Interlibrary Loan costs must be passed onto the patron requesting the materials, this important library service would probably cease to be an option in many cases. Film rentals through the mail might also become cost-prohibitive."

"Minimal, use local shuttle and bus to MINITEX."

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