

Academic Libraries and the White House Conference— Two Statements

The following statements by two candidates for ALA president were submitted at the request of the ACRL ad hoc Committee on the White House Conference, Joseph A. Boisse, chair.

Communication should be the prime concern of the academic librarians in the series of governors' conferences leading to the White House level gathering in 1979. The purpose of this entire effort is to enable the lay public to understand and articulate, in their terms, the need for information resources delivery. The articulation, if it is emphatic and forceful, could have a positive impact on federal and state legislative reaction for years to come.

It will be fairly easy for the lay public to identify with some of the aspects of library service, particularly as it relates to school-age youth and special social groupings. It will be more difficult to relate to the academic libraries. And it is important that academic library resources be understood by the lay public. It is important that they understand how those resources can have an effect upon the economic and social welfare of our society. It is important that the lay public be able to articulate how research and development translate into problem-solving ability for all of society, thus justifying and repaying any initial investment in resources and personnel.

Academic librarians must be a part of these dialogues. They must be articulate. That articulation must be stripped of jargon and petty concerns so that we can deal straightforwardly with lay concerns. If society is to begin to solve its problems, as how to survive in a world of finite resources, members of society must understand clearly that they must begin to mine the one infinite resource our technological society has . . . information. Academic librarians must inspire confidence that libraries can be geared to provide quick, efficient, and effective returns that will be profitable to all of society. It means fast and dedicated involvement from the academic library community. And judging from how often these affairs are offered to society, it may well be now or never.—*Gerald R. Shields, Assistant Dean, School of Information and Library Studies, State University of New York at Buffalo.* ■■

Scheduled for fall 1979, the White House Conference on Library and Information Services, preceded by fifty-six state, territorial, and special conferences, offers us an unparalleled opportunity to focus both legislative and citizen attention on the broad range of current and future information needs of American society. To realize this opportunity, academic librarians need to be directly involved, both individually and through their organizations, in identifying urgent agenda items for both the state and national conferences. We need to be ready as well to offer viable proposals for consideration by lay delegates, state legislatures, and the Congress. Our objective should be to lay the legislative foundations at state and national levels for a coherent, coordinated, comprehensive national library and information policy that explicitly recognizes the responsibility of government to assure full, effective access to books, journals, media, and information.

Forceful presentation of the special concerns of academic librarians and their clientele will be essential. Critical questions of public policy centering on the design, funding, and operation of bibliographic and resource-sharing networks require elucidation. The copyright issue, for example, should be restated, not as a more technical debate between competing private and institutional interests, but as a question to which legislators can relate as advocates for the access rights of all citizens. The federal responsibility for creation of comprehensive bibliographic data bases, readily accessible at the local level and linked to an effective delivery system, requires clear definition. At both federal and state levels, coordination is needed (1) to assure that no library is denied network access, (2) to restructure library funding so that the community of support becomes coterminous with the community of users, and (3) to insure ongoing collection development, maintenance, and preservation in the nation's academic and research libraries.

The focus of the state and White House conferences must not be on polite rhetoric but on constructive debate on that most critical question of all—what priority will America give to meeting the information needs of all its citizens in the context of a crowded national social agenda?—*Thomas J. Galvin, Dean, Graduate School of Library and Information Sciences, University of Pittsburgh.* ■■