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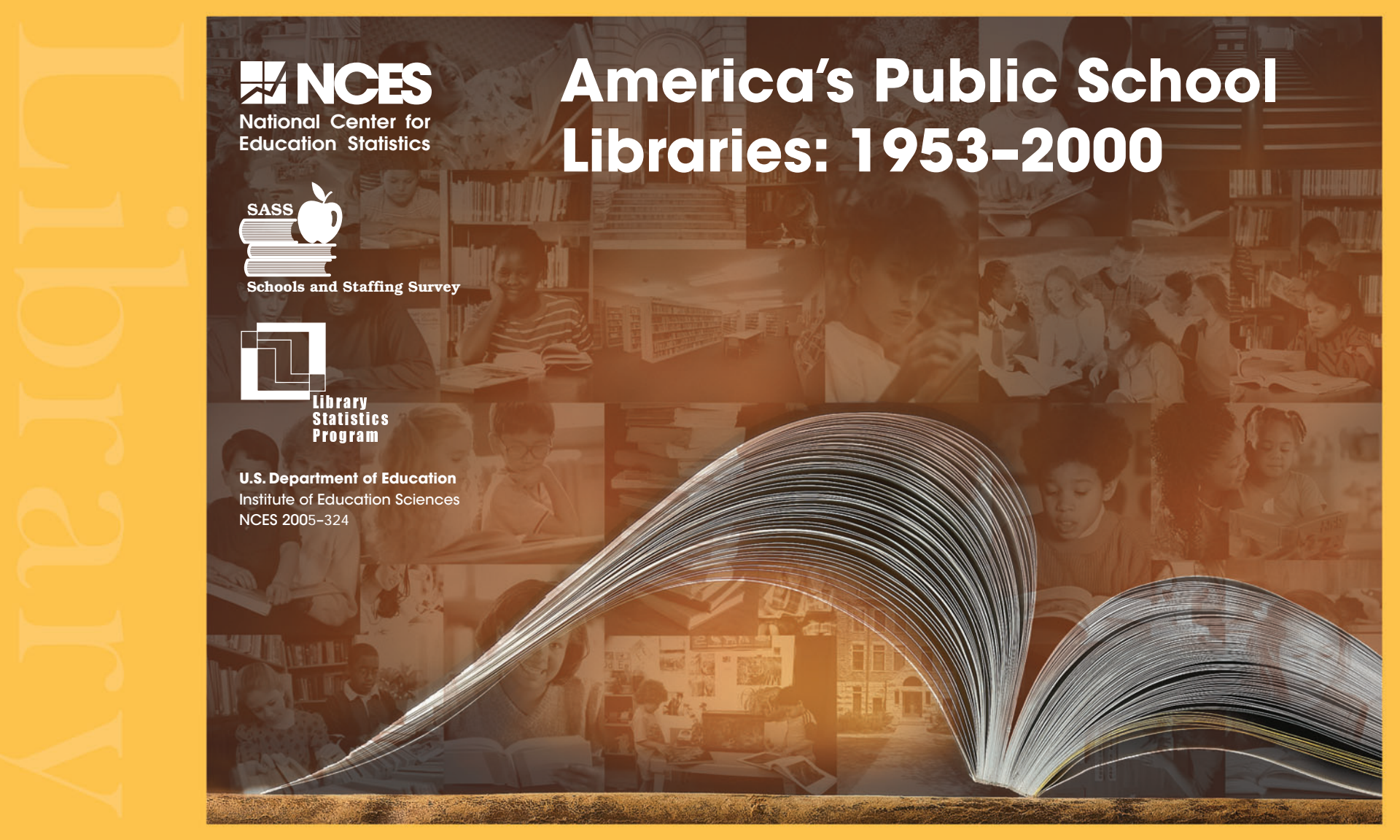
Schools and Staffing Survey



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America's Public School Libraries: 1953-2000



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Margaret Spellings

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Institute of Education Sciences

Grover J. Whitehurst

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Grover J. Whitehurst

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Barbara Holton

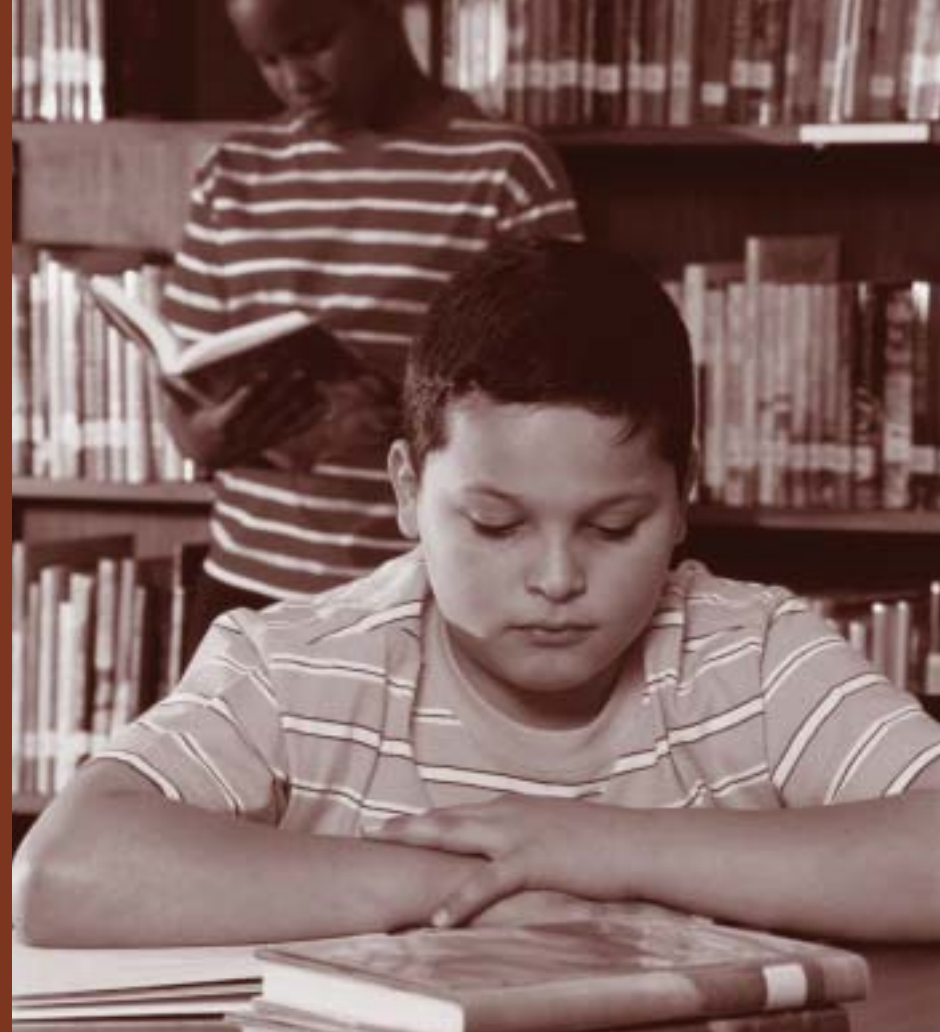
(202) 219-7095

barbara.holton@ed.gov



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Introduction

The past 50 years have seen a dramatic change in the status of the school library. Since the early 1950s, almost 30,000 new school libraries have been established, and thousands of federally funded development and collection expansion projects have enhanced existing libraries in public elementary and secondary schools. At the same time, school libraries have evolved from having a primary focus on books to providing the rich array of resources found in the information centers of today.

This document begins with the 1953–54 school year, before federal funds became available to school libraries through the National Defense Education Act of 1958. Congress put school libraries on the education map when it passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), providing \$100 million specifically for school libraries. Until then they had been a “. . . stepchild of the library profession, and regarded by some school administrators as an appendage to the educational process rather than an integral part . . .” according to Louise Sutherland, a program manager for school library programs in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare’s Office of Education (Sutherland 1970, p. 192).

Some 20 years later, federal appropriations for school libraries had been folded into block grants and libraries had to compete with other school programs for funds, with mixed success. At the same time, the status of the school library had been elevated from stepchild and appendage to the “information base of the school,” according to the congressional testimony of Marilyn Miller (1988, p. 122), former president of the American Association of School Librarians.

The school library is the information base of the school. The school library serves as a point of voluntary access to information and ideas and equally as a learning laboratory for students as they acquire critical thinking and problem solving skills needed in a pluralistic society. Good school librarians work closely with teachers to integrate information seeking and use activities into curriculum units that are designed to deliver content as well as to equip students to locate, evaluate, and use effectively a broad range of resources: print, audio, video, tactile, and now electronic data systems.

Today, school library media centers are more directly addressed in federal education legislation and discussion, as seen in the inclusion of the Improving Literacy through School Libraries Program in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and the White House Conference on School Libraries held in 2002.

Summary of Data

This section presents a national-level table that summarizes the status of school libraries from 1953–54 to 1999–2000, followed by highlights of the data. Presented in the table are 11 key variables for which data were available over this nearly 50-year time frame. The national-level data come from nine federally sponsored reports or databases of national data on school libraries.

The federal share of revenue for public elementary and secondary education was 4.5 percent in 1953–54 and 7.3 percent in 1999–2000 (National Center for Education Statistics 2002). State and local legislative and funding efforts that were also occurring during the time period are not discussed because they are beyond the scope of this report. The efforts at all three levels—federal, state, and local—need to be kept in mind when the descriptive data on the characteristics of libraries across the time span are considered.

- At the national level, there were approximately 129,000 public schools in 1953–54 and 84,000 in 1999–2000 (table 1). School consolidation was a major factor in the reduction in the number of public schools (National Center for Education Statistics 2002). At the same time, in 1953–54, approximately 27.7 million students

attended public schools in the United States. In 1999–2000, the number of students attending the nation’s public schools was about 45.0 million.

- In 1953–54, 36 percent of all public schools had library media centers, but these schools contained 59 percent of all public school students (table 1). In 1999–2000, 92 percent of all public schools had a school library; these schools contained 97 percent of all public school students.
- At the national level, 40 percent of public schools had a librarian in 1953–54 (table 1). In 1999–2000, 86 percent of public schools had a librarian.
- Nationally, for all public school students there were 3 school library books per pupil in 1953–54 and 17 books per pupil in 1999–2000 (table 1).
- In 1953–54, excluding salaries, per pupil expenditures for public school libraries were \$6 (in adjusted 1999–2000 dollars; table 1). In 1999–2000, per pupil expenditures for public school libraries, excluding salaries, were \$15.

Table 1. Historical summary of public school library media center statistics, various years, 1953–54 to 1999–2000: National

Characteristic	1953–54	1958–59 ¹	1960–61	1962–63 ¹	1978	1985–86	1990–91	1993–94	1999–2000
Number of public schools	128,831	82,222	102,487	83,428	83,044	78,455	79,885	80,740	83,824
Number of pupils in public schools	27,652,365	33,716,309	35,952,711	37,252,102	43,576,906	40,122,882	40,103,699	41,621,660	45,035,115
Number of public schools with library media centers	46,880 ²	41,463 ²	47,546 ²	49,158 ²	70,854	73,352	76,544	77,218	76,807
Percent of public schools with library media centers	36	50	46	59	85	93	96	96	92
Number of pupils in schools with library media centers	16,276,181 ²	23,046,072 ²	25,300,243 ²	27,671,105 ²	40,606,100	39,146,923	39,429,143	40,884,333	43,599,096
Percent of pupils in schools with library media centers	59	68	70	74	93	98	98	98	97
Number of schools with a librarian	51,498	34,845	33,401	33,478 ²	—	62,141 ³	62,845	67,350	71,817
Percent of schools with a librarian	40	42	33	40	—	79	79	83	86
Measures of library resources for all public school students in the U.S.									
Books per pupil	3 ^{4,5}	4 ⁴	4 ⁴	5 ⁴	12	15	—	18 ⁶	17 ⁷
Library expenditures (excluding salaries) per pupil (in dollars) ⁸	6	—	12	—	—	16	—	15 ⁶	15 ⁷
Book expenditures per pupil (in dollars) ⁸	4 ⁹	6	8 ⁹	9	11	8	—	8 ^{6,10}	10 ⁷

—Not available.

¹Includes only public schools in districts with 150 or more students.

²Includes only schools with formal, organized libraries; schools with classroom collections only or other types of library services are not included.

³National total was recalculated from individual state data.

⁴Includes only books in formal, organized libraries.

⁵Book data include only schools reporting book stock.

⁶Book and expenditure data are from the 1992–93 school year.

⁷Book and expenditure data are from the 1998–99 school year.

⁸Data are in adjusted 1999–2000 dollars.

⁹Includes books and pamphlets.

¹⁰Includes only locally budgeted expenditures; excludes federal gifts and grants.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare: *Statistics of Public School Libraries, 1953–54 and 1960–61*, and *Public School Library Statistics, 1958–59 and 1962–63*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics: *Statistics of Public School Libraries/Media Centers, Fall 1978*; *Statistics of Public and Private School Library Media Centers, 1985–86*; *Digest of Education Statistics 2001*; and Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), “Public School Questionnaire,” 1990–91, 1993–94, and 1999–2000, “Public School Library Media Center Questionnaire,” 1993–94 and 1999–2000, and 1999–2000 Schools Without Libraries Restricted-Use Data File, September 2003.

History of Federal Funding for School Libraries

Funding for schools and school libraries comes from a variety of sources, including federal, state, and local governments. The federal share of revenue for public elementary and secondary education was 4.5 percent in 1953–54 and 7.3 percent in 1999–2000 (National Center for Education Statistics 2002). State and local legislative and funding efforts that were also occurring during the time period are not discussed because they are beyond the scope of this report. The efforts at all three levels—federal, state, and local—need to be kept in mind when the descriptive data on the characteristics of libraries across the time span are considered.

Federal funding for school libraries first became available through the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958, which was passed by Congress in response to the launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union during the previous year (Mathews 1998). The purpose of the legislation was to improve U.S. education, especially in the areas of science, mathematics, and foreign languages, in order to produce a better trained workforce to meet the defense needs of the country (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1959). NDEA came at a time of rapid growth in the school population. As a result, some districts were focusing their attention on the construction of new

schools and finding qualified new teachers and were able to give only secondary consideration to the provision of instructional equipment and materials.

Title III of NDEA provided financial assistance for strengthening science, mathematics, and modern foreign language instruction (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1959). Funds were available for acquiring equipment and minor remodeling. The types of equipment that could be purchased included audiovisual materials and equipment, laboratory equipment, and printed materials other than textbooks. Funds were distributed to states based on a formula that reflected the size of the school-age population and the relative income per school-age child within the state. States, in turn, used the funds to help finance local projects. States had to match the federal money on a dollar-for-dollar basis with state and/or local funds.

NDEA funds could be used to purchase books and other instructional materials in science, mathematics, and modern foreign languages, but libraries were not specifically mentioned in the legislation. As a result, three major issues arose with regard to the implementation of NDEA Title III from the perspective of school librarians (Gaarder



1966; Graham 1961; Mathews 1998). First, in some school districts, none of the books or materials purchased with NDEA funds were placed in school libraries. Second, some school administrators and librarians did not see libraries as having a primary instructional role, but rather as having a supportive role for principals and teachers. Finally, selection of materials was not handled well in some localities. These issues were later addressed through program guidelines (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1967a) as well as a booklet published by the Office of Education (Mahar and Remer 1965) that described the ways that school library personnel could assist the Title III program.

A number of changes were made to NDEA over the years. The 1964 amendments expanded the content areas in which support could be provided to include history, civics, geography, English, and reading (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1969a). They also contained a provision for the acquisition of specialized equipment for audiovisual libraries. In subsequent years, economics, industrial arts, the arts, and the humanities were added (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1970). During the 1970s, each state formulated its own goals for the program, taking into account minimum standards, quantity and quality of materials and equipment, the need to improve instruction in the academic subject areas, and the need to support special and experimental programs (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1975). In addition, funding uncertainties presented implementation challenges during the 1970s.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was part of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society program to improve the quality of life for all Americans. Title II provided, for the first time, direct federal assistance for the acquisition of school library resources, textbooks, and other instructional materials (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1967b). The legislation defined library

resources as books, periodicals, documents, audiovisual materials, and other related library materials. Funds were provided to states based on the number of public and private school students enrolled in the state. To receive the funds, states had to submit a plan to the U.S. Office of Education for approval. The state plan was to include the development and revision of standards relating to library resources, textbooks, and other printed and published materials. Amendments to the legislation in 1966 permitted states to use 5 percent of their grants, or \$50,000, whichever was greater, to finance the administration of the program. Many states coordinated their ESEA Title II programs with their NDEA Title III programs in addition to other federal programs.

Louise Sutherland (1970, p. 192), a school library program specialist at the U.S. Office of Education, described the importance of Title II.

When the monumental Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed in April 1965, it seemed that the school library would at last have its day in the sun. Long the stepchild of the library profession, and regarded by some school administrators as an appendage to the educational process rather than an integral part, the existence of the school library was formally recognized by the wording of Title II of the act which made possible “a program for making grants for the acquisition of school library resources, textbooks and other printed and published instructional materials for the use of children and teachers in public and private elementary and secondary schools.

According to Jones (1977), ESEA Title II provided the momentum and the funding for states to develop or revise their standards for school libraries. Title II administrative funds were used for the salaries of state department of education staff who provided leadership in the preparation of standards, including the conduct of workshops and conferences for disseminating and interpreting the standards. As school media collections grew and school and district media staff were added, the quantitative standards were revised upwards (Jones 1977). In addition, school district and school media staff gained new responsibilities as a result of Title II and were expected to serve



in leadership roles in selecting, acquiring, organizing, and using instructional materials (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1972).

Jones (1977) found that between 1965 and 1974, the 50 states and the District of Columbia had either developed or revised standards for school library resources in elementary and secondary schools or used the standards of a professional organization. These standards had to be frequently evaluated and revised to address the changing needs and use of media. In addition, some states had developed minimum-level as well as advanced-level standards. According to Jones, Title II had a major effect on the introduction of a variety of audiovisual and other media into the classrooms. She suggested that Title II was a factor in the development of standards for these media. In addition, some states added criteria for selecting materials, such as recency of information, quality of content, and relevance to the instructional program and educational level.

During the first 3 years of ESEA Title II, 12 percent of all public schools (11,680 schools) established a school library (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1971). These new libraries served approximately 5.6 million students. In addition, about 193,600 library

expansion projects were funded between 1965–66 and 1967–68. A 1968 survey of 483 school districts and 1,996 public schools produced estimates regarding the effect of ESEA Title II (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1972). Altogether, 49 percent of all public schools reported that ESEA Title II had a substantial influence on the establishment and growth of school libraries, and an additional 33 percent said that the legislation's influence was moderate. Additional support for the attribution of much of this change to Title II was provided by the fact that the increases during these 4 years at the beginning of the Title II program were almost four times greater than the changes during the previous 4 years (1958–59 to 1962–63) (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1972). According to the second annual report on ESEA Title II (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1969b), many school libraries were also established with state and local funds as well as funds from ESEA Title I, a program for low-achieving students in low-income areas.

In the Education Amendments of 1974, aid to school libraries was provided under Title IV, Part B, Libraries and Learning Resources, which combined the former ESEA Title II, school library resources; the former NDEA, educational equipment; and the former ESEA Title III, guidance, counseling, and testing (Hopkins and Butler 1991). In

1978, Title IV, Part B was renamed Instructional Materials and School Library Resources, and funds under this program could no longer be used for guidance, counseling, testing, and remodeling. ESEA, Title IV, Part B funds were distributed on a formula basis. In the 1981–82 school year, districts received a total of \$134.5 million from ESEA, Title IV-B. Altogether, 92 percent of all districts received funds in 1981–82, and those that did not receive funds tended to be districts with fewer than 600 students enrolled (Knapp et al. 1986).

Chapter 2 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 (ECIA) consolidated 32 former categorical programs into a “block” of funds that could be used for any of the purposes designated in the prior programs (Knapp et al. 1986). One of the programs consolidated into the Chapter 2 block grant was School Library Resources, ESEA, Title IV, Part B. In the year prior to the implementation of Chapter 2, School Library Resources represented one-third of the total funding provided through all the programs consolidated into the block grant. The main goals of Chapter 2 were to improve education, reduce the administrative burden at the local level, enhance local discretion, provide for the participation of parents and school staff in the allocation of funds and the development of programs, and ensure the equitable participation of private school students.

Chapter 2 funds were distributed to states on a formula basis in proportion to their school-age population. States were required to distribute at least 80 percent of their grants to all the districts in the state. Each state was to develop its own allocation formula, based on total district enrollment and the number of students whose education was more costly than average, such as students from low-income families and students living in sparsely populated areas. Districts could choose to use their Chapter 2 grants for many purposes, including library resources. In a study of the implementation of Chapter 2 at the local level (Knapp et al. 1986), it was found that in 1984–85 the most common use of Chapter 2 funds was for computer applications (72 percent of all districts), followed by support for libraries (68 percent of all districts). In addition, in 1984–85, 29 percent of the local block grant funds were being used for library/media center support.

From the enactment of ESEA in 1965 until the adoption of ECIA in 1981, federal categorical programs provided assistance specifically to school libraries. After the enactment of the Chapter 2 block grant, there were no federal programs that provided assistance specifically to school libraries. Chapter 2 allowed districts to use the federal money for school libraries, but did not require it (Riddle 1987).

According to Hopkins and Butler (1991, p. 34),

When education programs were consolidated, school library media programs became competitors for funding at the local and state levels with many other programs. Although many school library media programs received funding in the consolidated laws, the consolidation of education programs ended the consistent growth of library media programs throughout the nation. What has resulted is a “haves” and “have-nots” existence of programs.

The Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988 repealed ECIA Chapter 2 and replaced it with Chapter 2 of Title I. In the 1988 legislation, one area in which assistance could be targeted was the acquisition and use of instructional and educational materials, including library books, reference materials, computer software and hardware for instructional use, and other curricular materials.

U.S. Senator Jack Reed recognized the need to improve school libraries. In February 2001, along with Senator Thad Cochran, he introduced a bill that would provide \$500 million for new books and advanced technology for local school libraries, training for librarians, and supports that would enable the libraries to stay open for more hours. Senator Reed expressed the need for this legislation as follows:

Too many books on school library shelves across the country contain harmful stereotypes and inaccurate material. The reason for this horrible state of affairs is the loss of targeted national funding for libraries—20 years ago dedicated school library funding was rolled into a block grant. By block granting funds to the states we abandoned a national commitment to improving school libraries (<http://reed.senate.gov/schoollibraries/schoollibraryrelease.htm>, accessed 8/22/2001).

The Reed-Cochran bill was incorporated into the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 as the Improving Literacy through School Libraries (LSL) Program. It is one part of the reading skills improvement grants. Local school districts in which at least 20 percent of the students served are from families with incomes below the poverty line are eligible to apply for grants under this program. In FY 2002, the first year of the program, \$12.5 million was available for awards, and 94 grants were awarded.



Other Federal Legislation Impacting School Libraries

Beginning in 1964, federal support for public libraries was provided through the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA). Included in the purpose of LSCA was the promotion of interlibrary cooperation and resource sharing among all types of libraries. Similarly, the 1966 amendments to ESEA Title II called for the coordination of Title II programs with programs conducted under the LSCA at both the state and local levels (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1969b). As a result, some states had representatives from the LSCA staff or State Library serve on the Title II advisory committees and vice versa. At the local level, cooperative planning was done by local school and public library administrators in some communities.

Federal support to libraries changed in 1996, when the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) replaced LSCA. The purposes of LSTA were

(1) to consolidate Federal library service programs; (2) to stimulate excellence and promote access to learning and information resources in all types of libraries for individuals of all ages; (3) to promote library services that provide all users access to information through State, regional,

national, and international electronic networks; (4) to provide linkages among and between libraries; and (5) to promote targeted services to people of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, to individuals with disabilities, and to people with limited functional literacy or information skills (P.L. 104-208, Section 212).

LSTA funding is provided to State Library Agencies through a population-based formula. State Library Agencies may use their appropriations for statewide initiatives and services. In addition, they may distribute the funds to public, school, academic, research, and special libraries through competitive subgrants or cooperative agreements. Funding priorities are activities that use technology for information sharing and programs that make library resources more accessible to urban, rural, or low-income residents, and others who have difficulty using library services.



National Standards

The first set of school library standards appeared in a report, *Standard Library Organization and Equipment for Secondary Schools of Different Sizes*, which was prepared by the Committee on Library Organization and Equipment within National Education Association's (NEA's) Department of Secondary Education (Gann 1998). The report was adopted by the NEA in 1918 and by the American Library Association (ALA) in 1920. ALA then published the report as standards for secondary school libraries. According to Gann (1998), these standards were quantitative and established many of the basic ideas about the school library, the role of the school librarian, and professional training of the school librarian. In 1925, NEA and ALA jointly prepared a set of standards for elementary school libraries. It should be noted that the NEA and ALA standards were recommended standards from professional associations and were not mandatory. However, these standards served as guides to states in preparing their own standards and probably influenced the development of regional standards as well.

The national school library standards that were in place during the 1950s, the starting point for this report, were published in 1945 by the ALA in the document *School Libraries for Today and Tomorrow*

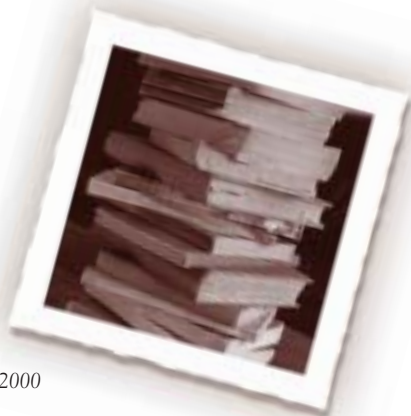
(Gann 1998). The standards contained six major sections: the school library in education; service to pupils and teachers; standards of personnel; book collection and other library resources; housing the library; and administration, supervision, and extension. Although quantitative measurements were used in the 1945 standards, there was an attempt to link these to the quality of library service. Quantitative staffing specifications were given based on school enrollment (Beust 1954). For both elementary and secondary schools, the standards for the size of the book collection ranged from 2,000 volumes with 1,700 titles for a school with 200 students to 15,000 volumes with 8,000 titles for a school with 5,000 students. Quantitative standards were also given for magazine and newspaper subscriptions, but not for audiovisual materials. The standard for minimum annual budget for print materials was \$300 (\$2,853 in 1999–2000 dollars) for schools with 200 students or less and \$1.50 per student (\$14.27 in 1999–2000 dollars) for larger schools.

In 1960, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) prepared a new set of standards to reflect new developments in school library services and to update the quantitative standards (Gann 1998). They were published by ALA as *Standards for School Library Programs*.

The three parts of the 1960 standards document were the school library as an educational force, planning and implementing school library programs, and resources for teaching and learning. The standards broadened the scope of the school library program by incorporating audiovisual materials to a greater extent, although few quantitative standards were developed for them. Quantitative staffing standards were given based on school enrollment (Darling 1964). The standard for the book collection was a minimum of 6,000 to 10,000 books for schools with 200 to 999 students; 10 books per student was the standard for schools with 1,000 or more students. The standard for the book budget was at least \$1,000 to \$1,500 (\$5,759 to \$8,638 in 1999–2000 dollars) for schools with 200 to 249 students and at least \$4.00 to \$6.00 (\$23.03 to \$34.55 in 1999–2000 dollars) per student for schools with 250 or more students. Other standards addressed the budget for supplementary and audiovisual materials.

According to Jones (1977), the 1960 *Standards for School Library Programs* have had a strong influence on the educational community and the development of school library programs. A major factor was that the publication of the standards was accompanied by an extensive AASL campaign to familiarize school personnel with the importance of school library programs and the role that standards play in improving them. A distinctive feature of the 1960 standards was the use of research to develop the quantitative components.

In 1969, AASL and NEA's Department of Audiovisual Instruction (DAVI) jointly developed *Standards for School Media Programs*, which served to coordinate the requirements for school library and audiovisual programs, and to align the standards with educational developments (Jones 1977). The 1969 standards continued to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative standards, but contained a new approach for standards involving expenditures. Quantitative staffing standards continued to be based on school enrollment. The standard for the book collection was a minimum of 6,000 to 10,000 titles representing 10,000 volumes or 20 per student, whichever was greater, for schools with 250 or more students. Quantitative standards for audiovisual materials were included in this set of standards.



Since many changes were occurring in the areas of technology and education, the standards were revised in 1975 as *Media Programs: District and School* (Gann 1998). They were developed jointly by AASL and the new independent Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT), previously NEA's DAVI. The focus of the document was on qualitative goals for the school and the district, but quantitative recommendations were given for staffing, collections, and facilities. For schools with 500 students or fewer, a minimum collection was 20,000 items, or 40 items per student (Jones 1977). An item may be a book, periodical subscription, various types of audiovisual materials, or associated equipment. Larger schools could have fewer than 40 items per student. Quantitative standards were also provided for each type of item. The standard for books was 8,000 to 12,000 volumes, or 16 to 24 per user.

Another milestone was the publication in 1988 of *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs*, prepared jointly by AASL and AECT. The text of *Information Power* was primarily qualitative with some quantitative recommendations presented in the areas of personnel and facilities. In addition, an appendix in *Information Power* presented quantitative data, based on a reanalysis

of survey data from the U.S. Department of Education. It specified levels of support being provided in high-service programs in schools of varying sizes and educational levels. These were meant to be illustrative data rather than recommendations. The qualitative approach was used in the 1998 version of the guidelines, *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* (AASL and AECT 1998), which excluded the illustrative data and put much emphasis on information literacy.



For More Information

This document provides basic information on school libraries from 1953–54 to 1999–2000 and is based on the report *Fifty Years of Supporting Children’s Learning: A History of Public School Libraries and Federal Legislation from 1953–2000* (NCES 2005–311). The full report is divided into four sections that present categories of historical data about public school library media centers: national-level data, regional-level data, school-level data, and state-level data. All tables of library data contain the same 11 key variables as in table 1 on page 3. The full report also includes four appendixes: Per Pupil Measures, Adjusting Dollars Using the Consumer Price Index, States in Regional Accrediting Associations, and Standard Error Tables.

The full report is available on the NCES website at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/libraries/> and print copies can be ordered from ED Pubs from the NCES publication page.

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