

HR 12108
A Statement by Representative John E. Fogarty in Support
of H.R. 11823, House Committee on Education and Labor, June 29, 1962

My deep and abiding commitment to the importance of library service is well known. If the goal of excellence in education is to be achieved, good libraries with well-trained librarians are absolutely essential. I have followed closely the various activities by the States under the present Library Services Act. This program is having an impressive success in helping to bring library service to the millions of ^{rural} Americans who formerly had no public library of any kind.

Rhode Island began participation in the Act in 1958 and since that time forty-three rural community libraries have received benefits under the Rhode Island State plan. These include grants of books, advisory services, centralized book processing and inservice training opportunities. A 1961 report from the State shows that the number of books loaned from these libraries nearly doubled since 1956 and that the amount of local financial support for public libraries increased 95% during the same period. This continued financial effort which the local communities are making is significant evidence of the success of the Library Services Act as a partnership program in which the Federal government shares with State and local governments the responsibility of financing good library service.

It is, in fact, the success of the present Library Services Act which has revealed the serious library needs yet to be met. The stimulus provided by the Library Services Act, the increased use of library facilities by people of all ages, and the new demand for more and more information by those engaged in both formal and informal education have combined to reveal the serious deficiencies which exist in libraries of all kinds.

The present Library Services Act is limited to aiding only public libraries, and only those located in communities of under 10,000 population. This was, and still is, a highly important goal, but this is only a small part of a much larger problem. Library service as we have known it in the past simply will not meet the needs of our citizens in the years that lie ahead. The changes now taking place and those which can already be foreseen will call for important adjustments in the traditional patterns of library organization and distribution. We are going to have many more people, particularly more young people, and older citizens, and they will have more formal education and more leisure time. Those increases in the labor force which are now occurring most rapidly are those in the professional and technical fields where demands for research information and resources are straining the facilities of all our libraries.

The library users of today are more numerous, more highly educated and more sophisticated than their counterparts of yesterday. Their library needs are more complex, greater in quantity, and more expensive to meet. To do this job will require the full and effective use of the resources of all kinds of libraries working together--public libraries, school libraries and libraries of colleges and universities.

HR 11823, the amended Library Services Act, reflects this need for a coordinated approach to the problem of providing good library service for every citizen. Access to recorded knowledge can no longer be neatly compartmentalized. A survey of Rhode Island libraries now being conducted by Brown University is attempting to assess the total library resources of the State so that the individual library user and the material or information he needs can be brought together quickly and economically.

The various titles of the bill now under consideration reflect the diverse but interrelated needs of public, academic, and school libraries. Only by strengthening the resources of each can we expect to achieve reliable and up-to-date reservoirs of educational and informational materials. The student, the businessman, and the housewife, are frequent users of public libraries. The professional specialist, the research worker, and the independent scholar are frequent users of school and academic collections. Yet more and more often these roles are interchangeable and each change makes new demands on library facilities. This proposed amendment recognizes these mutual problems of different kinds of libraries and represents a solid attempt to cope with them on a unified basis.

As one example of the current "information explosion," some ten million words are added to the cumulative knowledge of mankind every month in the field of chemistry alone. The research chemist must spend a major part of his time simply keeping informed of current developments and this field is among the best organized and indexed. The specialist in other fields must work even harder at this task. No single library, and no one kind of library has the money, space, or staff to cope with the sheer bulk of scientific and technical information now being produced. This job requires a joint enterprise which will promote the cooperative acquisition and use of materials and which will fully exploit modern techniques of information storage and retrieval. The Federal government has a real and pressing responsibility to give encouragement and support to the building of the kinds of library resources now needed.

Titles I, II, and III of this amendment give proper emphasis to the importance of library materials and services in school, academic, and public libraries. Title IV is aimed directly at a critical need of the library

profession, that of securing more and more librarians with the special knowledge and skills now required. Even today there are four or five job openings for every library school graduate and in less than a decade, twice the present number of full-time professional librarians will be required. The public library today is a dynamic and positive force which actively supplements the community agencies of formal education and the public librarian is a skilled interpreter of its resources. A good public librarian in a good library will be able to offer our young people constructive and beneficial alternatives to less acceptable activities. She can provide materials which contribute to more fully-informed decisions by citizens and voters; she can help disseminate information which will promote better mental and physical health. A good public librarian will help guide laymen through the growing profusion of special and technical data, much of which affects the lives of each of us.

A well-trained school librarian will build a school library program which is an integral part of the instructional curriculum. She will contribute to the continuous awareness by other faculty members of developments and materials in their fields. She will coordinate the resources and services of the school library with those of the public library and will orient students to the effective use of both. She will be alert to the special reading needs of the gifted student and will be able to provide the books and other materials which enrich the basic curriculum.

The librarian at the college and university level will be an information specialist with broad bibliographic knowledge. She will be able to interpret the appropriate data in one special field to a student or teacher in another. She will have an intensive knowledge of her own collection and will guide the user to other specialized collections located elsewhere.

The kinds of librarians now required will of course know their own clientele and how best to serve them, but they will also be highly aware of the total library situation in their State and region. By making provision for the training of these kinds of personnel, Title IV of the proposed amendment does much to assure the effective use of library resources.

A widespread recognition of the fundamental interdependence of libraries of all kinds seems to me to be essential to sound planning. This is not to suggest any centralization of authority, but rather to promote the fullest possible cooperation among libraries. It is significant to note in this connection that the present Library Services Act has been widely praised for lack of any suggestion of Federal control. The autonomy of local library boards and the authority of librarians at both the State and local levels to determine what their needs are in relation to the Federal program have been carefully preserved. The concepts of cooperation and coordination do not imply any arbitrary consolidation of libraries and this bill would, in my judgment, promote the former and avoid the latter. A prudent regard for the preservation of policy and administrative control at the local level is essential for maintaining unbiased and non-partisan library collections and services. This does not prevent, however, cooperative planning by libraries in order to make the maximum variety of resources conveniently available in the most efficient and economical manner.

The present Library Services Act has been a real milestone in the progress of rural public library service. It stands as tangible evidence of an effective effort by the Federal government to enrich the library resources of our rural residents and we can all be proud of its success. The expanded program now under consideration will take additional giant steps toward really complete library services for all Americans everywhere. In Rhode Island alone

the number of people eligible to receive benefits will increase from 146,054 under the present program to 859,488. I truly believe that "knowledge is freedom" and that a good library system is a major force in bringing freedom to all citizens in their every endeavor. This is the promise held out by our libraries and each of us has a stake in its fulfillment. I strongly urge your favorable action on this bill.