To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Sandra Gioia Treadway entitled “State Libraries in the United States: Identifying and Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century.” I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Information Sciences.

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(Original signatures are on file with official student records).
State Libraries in the United States:
Identifying and Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Science Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Sandra Gioia Treadway
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Abstract

State libraries are important organizations within the library community in the United States, yet little has been written about them and students learn almost nothing about them in the course of graduate study in library and information sciences. State libraries’ contributions to their profession and the citizens they serve are not as well known as they should be nor are they appropriately acknowledged beyond their immediate constituencies.

This study examines a sample of nine state libraries during the past twenty years – three that are highly successful (the California State Library, the New York State Library, and the Library of Michigan), three that are typical of the majority of state libraries (the Georgia Public Library Service, the State Library of Kansas, and the Tennessee State Library and Archives), and three whose survival was placed in jeopardy in the recent past (the Florida State Library and Archives, the Minnesota State Library, and the Washington State Library) – to highlight their role within the greater library community and to analyze their successes and challenges. Research was conducted in primary and secondary sources such as annual reports, strategic plans, newspapers, newsletters, library association periodicals, web sites, and other similar material produced by or written about the nine state libraries to determine what conditions or combination of conditions are conducive to state libraries flourishing and what other factors or combinations of factors might contribute to the weakening or decline of state libraries. Based on this research,
this study offers recommendations concerning what state libraries might do in the future to make themselves more visible within their states and within the larger library community.
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Chapter I

Introduction and Problem Statement

State libraries – or state library agencies (SLAs), as they are often called – are important organizations within the library community in the United States. Their contributions are well known to those who are associated with them, yet surprisingly state libraries’ strengths and accomplishments have often been overlooked or ignored by the vast majority of library professionals, not to mention government officials and ordinary citizens. Most observers who have studied state libraries agree that they are “one of the most important library organizations for the development and improvement of library services in the United States,” that they are “critical to those who are served” and essential to “an effective local-state-federal partnership for the improvement of public library services.”¹ Yet, many also acknowledge that the mission of state library agencies has never been fully understood by librarians or the general public, that state libraries are “generally invisible to the end users of library services,” and that the library profession as a whole has not granted state libraries the status they deserve, despite the profession’s rhetoric about their importance.² In his 1998 study of modern public libraries, Lowell


Martin refers to state libraries as “the missing link” in the public library story and attributes this neglect, in part, to “limited or lukewarm support for state library agencies on the part of the library world – public, academic, and special.”3

There are some obvious reasons why state libraries do not garner much attention. For one, there are so few of them, with only one entity designated as a state library agency in each of the fifty states, the District of Columbia, and a handful of overseas territories and insular areas.4 In addition, no two state libraries are organized precisely alike. Their activities vary a great deal from state to state, making them hard to characterize or discuss in general terms. Many state libraries, for example, have long historical traditions with their roots extending back to the early nineteenth century, while others are modern creations established in the twentieth century to coordinate the development of community-based library service. Some have a great deal of autonomy as independent agencies of their state government; others are embedded within their state’s bureaucracy, operating as a division of a larger governmental unit such as a department of state or education. Two are legislative rather than executive branch agencies. Two-thirds have general collections available for use by researchers, but the size and scope of these collections and the constituencies that use them vary widely.

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4 Among the overseas territories and island areas that have an organization designated as a state library agency are the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. For a complete list of all state library agencies recognized by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, see http://www.imls.gov/programs/libraries.shtm (last accessed March 10, 2007).
Virtually all of them have responsibility for developing statewide library services, but for some this is their sole activity while for others it is just one of many services they perform.

State library functions include

- service as the primary information resource (including reference and interlibrary loan) for state officials and legislatures;
- maintenance of large circulating collections of library science and/or state history materials;
- coordination of state and federal document depository systems;
- management of state archives, records, and preservation programs;
- administration of state and federal aid for local libraries;
- provision of statewide consulting services;
- continuing education;
- management of statewide databases and electronic networks;
- coordination of statewide planning for libraries
- setting statewide standards and guidelines;
- monitoring of library legislation;
- coordination of statewide summer reading programs;
- certification of librarians; and
- the provision of a variety of specialized services, such as libraries for the blind and physically handicapped.

A number of state libraries perform all of these activities, while others concentrate on some but have no responsibility for others. In a few states, the state library is the most
influential library in the state, while in others it is “a sleeping or presently restrained giant.”

Despite their great diversity, state libraries as a group tend to emphasize their similarities rather than their differences. Several of the activities that they have in common are so central to their missions and so vital to the library communities within their states that they foster a strong sense of common purpose and help state libraries forge a distinct identity within the library profession.

First and foremost, all state library agencies administer the federal grant program in support of public library service. Ever since 1956, when the United States government passed the landmark Library Services Act (LSA) and committed itself for the first time to the goal of providing all Americans with access to quality library service, state libraries have played a central role in carrying out that mandate. Congress initially authorized grants under LSA totaling $7.5 million, asking the states to use their portion of these funds to establish library service where it did not yet exist in each state’s remote rural areas. In 1964, the act was renamed the Library Services and Construction Act and was amended to encompass assistance to libraries in cities and metropolitan areas and grants to enable the construction of new library facilities. LSCA was amended again in the 1970s and 1980s, each revision expanding the activities that could be supported with LSCA funding to include interlibrary loan and cooperative library programs as well as

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new services specifically targeted to low-income citizens, Native Americans, the elderly, and the physically and visually handicapped. The legislation enacted in these years gave the states considerable flexibility in structuring the programs covered by LSCA funds, but the states had no leeway with regard to program administration. From the inception of the federal funding program, administrative control was placed exclusively within each state’s state library agency, and it was clear that one of the primary intents was “strengthening the capacity of State library administrative agencies for meeting the needs of all the people of the state.”6 Most state libraries used an administrative portion of the LSA and LSCA funds to hire development staff whose sole responsibility was to improve and expand library service within their state in accord with federal guidelines and to oversee the expenditure of the federal funds.

In 1996, the federal government reaffirmed its commitment to the nation’s libraries but shifted the emphasis of its support, replacing LSCA with the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). LSTA moved central oversight of the federal grant program from the United States Department of Education to a newly created Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and focused the grant program on activities that provided access to information resources for all types of libraries (not just public libraries), with an emphasis on applying new technologies to library services. LSTA maintained the state-based approach of the previous legislation and continued to

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6 For a summary of LSA and LSCA programs, see Gary Strong, “Impact of the Federal Government on State Library Services,” in McClure, State Library Services and Issues, 50-61 (“Strengthening the capacity” quotation found on page 52); Shavit, Federal Aid and State Library Agencies, 6-16; and Casey, “Administration of State and Federal Funds,” 145-155.
channel funds through state library agencies. The LSTA appropriation reached $232 million by 2006 and was distributed to each state (as it had always been) on a formula based on the state’s population. State libraries have a great deal of influence in developing the five-year LSTA plans mandated by IMLS, which outline how the grant funds are to be allocated. The LSTA plans set the priorities for library service within the states and determine how these vital federal funds will be spent.

Most observers recognize that administration of this important federal program has had a major impact not only on the growth of public library service nationwide, but also on the vitality of state libraries. While there are differences of opinion on how much state libraries have changed as a result of the LSA/LSCA/LSTA programs – opinions that range from Genevieve Casey’s view that the legislation “has probably produced a more profound impact on state library development agencies than any other single factor” to David Shavit’s assessment that the impact on state libraries has been “negligible”\(^7\) – the influx of federal dollars has enabled most state libraries to expand their reach and has given them a measure of financial flexibility that they did not have before. Responsibility for the federal library grant program has clearly shaped the identity of state libraries within the library field and has been a powerful unifying and preserving force among them.

State libraries share chief responsibility for a number of other core activities beyond the administration of federal funds, and together these enhance their interest in

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\(^7\) Casey, “Administration of State and Federal Funds,” 145; Shavit, *Federal Aid and State Library Agencies*, 130.
collaboration and cooperation. All state libraries capture, keep, and publish statistics about libraries within their jurisdictions, which are invaluable planning tools. At least forty-six state libraries engage in statewide consulting, planning, interlibrary loan, monitoring of electronic networks, training, managing their state’s document depository program, and administering state aid programs that supplement federal funding. Most state library agencies also provide at least some services to state government, typically research and reference assistance to other agencies and government officials. All state libraries are members and participants, though to varying degrees, in the American Library Association through such subgroups as the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA), the State Library Agency Section (SLAS), the Library and Information Technology Association (LITA), and the Public Library Association (PLA). State librarians also sustain their own independent organization known as the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, or COSLA, whose stated mission is to foster cooperation among state libraries to address issues of common concern, to strengthen relationships with the federal government and other national organizations, and to improve library service across the country. State librarians and their staffs are normally involved with their state’s library association, often serving as officers or members of key committees. Still, all of this activity taken together does not translate into awareness of and appreciation for state library organizations within the library profession or the community at large. State libraries’ responsibility for public library development within their states often masks the other activities in which they are engaged.
State libraries primarily serve government officials and other libraries. Those with large print collections (only nineteen state libraries have book and serial collections equal to or greater than the average of 460,995 volumes or higher) serve the public as well, but their users have traditionally been specialized researchers rather than citizens seeking general information.\(^8\) State libraries thus have a much lower visibility than local public libraries do, and their multifaceted mission is not always transparent to their constituents or the government officials whom they serve. Low visibility and a lack of understanding of the complexity of most state libraries, when combined with the political and economic realities of the past twenty-five years, have resulted in perennial funding issues for state libraries. Recently, these and other considerations have prompted movements in some places to do away with a state library entirely. Minnesota actually eliminated its state library in 2002 then reconstituted it in skeletal form in mid-2004. In the same time period, the state libraries of Florida and Washington experienced serious threats of closure. State libraries, indeed all libraries, should be concerned about what this may portend.

This study examines a sample of nine state libraries during the past twenty years – three that are highly successful (the California State Library, the New York State Library, and the Library of Michigan), three that are typical of the majority of state libraries (the Georgia Public Library Service, the State Library of Kansas, and the Tennessee State

\(^8\) National Center for Education Statistics, *State Library Agencies, Fiscal Year 2005* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2006). These are the latest state library statistics released by NCES. In fiscal year 2005, the median number of books and serial volumes in state library collections was 228,137; the average number for all state library collections is 460,995 volumes.
Library and Archives), and three whose survival was placed in jeopardy in the recent past (the Florida State Library and Archives, the Minnesota State Library, and the Washington State Library) – to assess where these organizations stand at the outset of the twenty-first century. Looking closely at these libraries during the past twenty years, this study seeks to determine what role these state libraries have played within the greater library community and to analyze their successes and challenges. The central research question this study seeks to resolve is what conditions or combination of conditions are conducive to state libraries flourishing – be they historical, political, professional, economic, structural, geographic, technological, or behavioral – and what other factors or combinations of factors might contribute to the weakening or decline of state libraries. What might these conditions be and what can be learned by identifying and analyzing them?
Chapter II
Literature Review

State libraries are rarely mentioned in the literature on American libraries. There is some treatment of them in the substantial body of literature on public libraries in the United States, but next to nothing in publications that address academic, research, or special libraries. Lowell Martin’s excellent recent history of public libraries Enrichment: A History of the Public Library in the United States in the Twentieth Century, for example, includes less than five pages about state libraries in a 196-page volume. This is not because Martin believes that state libraries are unimportant or that as publicly funded libraries with a statewide (rather than local) mission they fell outside the parameters of his study. Rather it is because they are, in his words, the “missing link” in the public library story, and he could not find much information about them that was helpful for his study.9 Wayne Wiegand, professor of library and information studies at Florida State University and an expert on the history of American libraries, shares Martin’s puzzlement at this gap in the literature. In a Library Quarterly article titled “Tunnel Vision and Blind Spots: What the Past Tells us about the Present; Reflections on the Twentieth-Century History of American Librarianship,” Wiegand wrote that in the 1990s every state in America had at least one state library agency that for most of the last half of the twentieth century expended millions of dollars to improve library services, yet there is no comprehensive critical history of state library agencies or even a set of solid case studies to help identify their multiple roles and evaluate their impacts on the millions

9 Martin, Enrichment, 128.
of citizens affected by those dollars.\textsuperscript{10}

While the definitive study of state libraries in the twentieth century has yet to be written, some thoughtful commentaries about state libraries have appeared in print within the past quarter century. As a rule, these articles and books have been written by library professionals who have worked for a substantial portion of their careers inside state libraries or by a handful of library science educators whose research interests have sparked an interest in and appreciation of state library activities. Much of the literature that exists focuses on a few select themes – identifying and explaining what it is that state libraries do, assessing the impact that federal funding for libraries has had on state libraries and the libraries they serve, exploring the nature of state libraries’ relationships with their various constituent groups, and suggesting new directions for state libraries with the advent of new technologies and the information age. Within the small body of extant literature, two essay collections stand out as particularly informative and useful for this study. The first is a series of essays published in a special issue of \textit{Library Trends}; the second group of essays appeared in a volume titled \textit{State Library Services and Issues: Facing Future Challenges}, edited by Charles R. McClure.

In the fall of 1978, \textit{Library Trends} devoted an entire issue to the subject of state libraries, emphasizing their role in developing statewide library services within the context of the LSA and LSCA programs. The journal’s editors noted great improvement

in the level and quality of library service in the United States by the late 1970s, twenty plus years after the federal funding program began, and they recognized that with that growth in library service had come a substantial increase in the responsibilities and activities of state libraries. The editors planned the special issue to highlight this trend and help the library profession understand the increased significance of state libraries.\footnote{John A. McCrossan, “Introduction,” \textit{Library Trends} 27 (Fall 1978), 109, 113.}

The \textit{Library Trends} issue opened with an overview of state libraries – how they were organized, where they were placed within their state governments, and a summary of their activities – which the editors included because, in their view, “most members of the library community are not very familiar with the state agencies.” In developing this profile, authors Joseph Shubert and James Fry used a 1978 survey conducted by the State Library of Florida that identified twenty-five distinct service activities in which state libraries were engaged. (Virtually all of the activities that Shubert and Fry listed are still central to state libraries’ missions today.) Shubert and Fry reported that no matter where state libraries fell within their state’s bureaucracy (at the time, two were independent agencies, one was in the legislative branch, eighteen were under the authority of an independent board or commission, nineteen were located within their state Department of Education, and ten were part of the Department of State or other executive branch department), their internal organizational structures were remarkably similar and that what held them together as a group was their mutual responsibility for library development activities and the need to respond to the driving force of technology. In the context of the late 1970s, technological change meant participation in the Online
Computer Library Center (OCLC), a pioneering bibliographic utility, and in fledgling state information networks.¹²

John McCrossan, state librarian of Vermont, contributed the second article in the *Library Trends* issue, addressing state libraries’ long involvement in planning for and evaluating the quality of library service. McCrossan argued that state libraries had played a key role in this area far longer than most librarians realized, dating back to the time the American Library Association had promulgated its *Post-War Standards for Public Libraries* (which called for every state to designate an agency charged with planning and developing a statewide system of coordinated libraries to serve citizens’ needs). In the late 1970s, state libraries were the most important component in fulfilling the goals for a national library service program as annunciated by the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS). McCrossan’s assessment was that state libraries had made “a good beginning” in this work, but that they would need to provide sustained and dynamic leadership in working with library and user communities in order for there to be “much improvement in library and information services available to all.”¹³

The most substantial essay in the issue was written by Genevieve Casey, former state librarian of Michigan, who wrote at length about the accomplishments made possible by the LSA/LSCA programs. These included the reorganization or incorporation of individual local libraries into effective public library systems and

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¹³ McCrossan, “Planning and Evaluation of Library Programs throughout the States,” *Library Trends* 27 (Fall 1978), 140.
multitype library cooperatives; the expansion of library service to all geographic areas within most states; the erection or remodeling of more than 2,000 library buildings; and the extension of library services to disadvantaged, aging, institutionalized, handicapped, and similar populations that had previously been unserved. In addition to extolling the benefits of federal funding to libraries in general, Casey elaborated on the impact that the federal program had had on state libraries. In her view, federal funding had strengthened state libraries by providing them with grant money to hire development staff, to initiate sorely needed statewide programs and services, and to augment state libraries’ own internal budgets through the portion of the grant funds they were able to keep for administrative needs. The federal program also required extensive planning and accountability, which had caused state libraries in turn to enhance their accounting, budgeting, planning, technology, and consulting systems. Casey also believed that responsibility for the federal funding programs had broadened the outlook of most state libraries and encouraged them to become involved with new models of service delivery, particularly multitype library consortia and complex urban library systems. “There can be no doubt,” Casey concluded,

that the state library development agency of 1978 is a vastly more sophisticated agency, better staffed, better equipped and more respected than it was in 1956, and that much of this growth is a result of LSA/LSCA. It also cannot be questioned that a strong state library is critical to an effective local-state-federal partnership for the improvement of public library services.”

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14 Casey, “Administration of State and Federal Funds,” 159.
Another extremely useful Library Trends piece was a collaborative effort among two state librarians, a library educator, and a staff member of the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). In an essay titled “Development and Coordination of Library Services to State Government,” the four authors described the tremendous growth in state government that had occurred across the United States in the 1960s and 1970s and argued forcefully for state libraries to keep pace through expanded services. The authors found that although most state libraries offered some kind of information service to other state agencies, service to state government had not been on the “leading edge” of state library program development. Five state libraries (Ohio, Indiana, South Dakota, New York, and Texas) were singled out for their efforts to increase services to meet their governments’ needs, but the authors believed that most state libraries had lagged behind. The article encouraged state libraries to be aggressive in reaching out to identify and serve their state governments and to restructure their own organizations, if necessary, to create a special office or unit that would serve as the hub for library activity within state government. They also advocated that state libraries make their programs visible to governors and legislators and that state librarians take a more active leadership role in government. “As state government expands its interests,” the article concluded, as legislative, judicial and executive agencies become increasingly information dependent, and as the relationship of information availability to cost-effectiveness and productivity becomes clearer, it may be expected that information service to state government will become an increasingly critical area of state library agency activity.15

Several of the essays in the *Library Trends* issue summarized state library activities in areas specifically addressed in the federal government’s grant requirements. Among these were articles on services to blind, handicapped, or institutionalized citizens and to school library media specialists. These services were relatively new ones for state libraries in the 1970s, and the authors of these articles called for state library agencies to continue allocating staff and fiscal resources to these activities.\(^\text{16}\) Also highlighted was the importance of state library responsibility for continuing education, which Maryland’s assistant superintendent for libraries, Nettie Taylor, argued should be viewed by state libraries as a logical extension of their library development services necessitated by “the advances in automation and technology, the proliferation of knowledge, and the growing recognition of the need to provide access to the rapid delivery of information in many formats.”\(^\text{17}\)

The final article in the *Library Trends* issue, written by Alphonse Trezza, director of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS), offered an impassioned plea for the creation of a full-service national network of library and information services based on resource-sharing by all libraries. This sounds obvious today, but resource-sharing was still a relatively new concept in the 1970s. Trezza


contended that state libraries were essential partners with the federal government in accomplishing NCLIS’s objective, stating that “The role of the state library agency as coordinator, catalyst, initiator, and even-handed funding agency is essential, extremely difficult and challenging, and requires sensitivity and political acumen of the highest quality.” State libraries should not merely be assigned this role, however. In Trezza’s view, they needed to understand it fully and embrace it. While Trezza suggested a number of areas in which state libraries could take the lead in the effort (helping to win state funding for their state’s information network, involving as many libraries as possible in multitype consortia, providing continuing education, and developing cooperative collection development policies), his article reads more like a pep talk for state libraries rather than a clear road map for moving forward.\(^{18}\)

Eight years after *Library Trends* released its special issue, a second important collection of essays appeared. *State Library Services and Issues: Facing Future Challenges* edited by Charles McClure, professor of library and information science at the University of Oklahoma, addressed many of the same topics found in the *Library Trends* articles. The contributors to this volume were also library science educators or senior state library officials. The stated purpose of the publication was similar to that of the *Library Trends* issue – to inform the profession about state libraries and to help state libraries better understand the challenges that lay ahead. Although somewhat dated with

regard to technological developments, this work contains much that is still relevant to
today’s state libraries.

The first of the fifteen chapters in the volume opens with an essay on the
historical development of state library agencies written by Wayne Wiegand. Wiegand
divides the history of state libraries into four periods. The first period, covering the
eighteenth and most of the nineteenth centuries, was the formative period for state
libraries, when many (though not all) were established across the United States.
Although they operated independently of one another, state libraries by the late
nineteenth century had several common characteristics: they provided basic research
services for state officials (though rarely for the citizenry at large), they were tied to state
politics and politicians (with state librarians being appointed through patronage), they had
little professional identity, and they operated on the margins of state budgets. Between
1890 and 1920, state libraries entered a second period as they began to respond to a
variety of powerful forces changing American society – immigration, urbanization,
industrialization, government reform, professionalization, and the transition from an oral
to a written culture. During this period, as public libraries expanded their missions and
became more actively engaged in the effort to improve education in America, state
libraries widened their roles along these lines as well, forging a close connection with the
public library movement. Melvil Dewey, New York State Librarian, invited colleagues
attending the 1889 American Library Association meeting in St. Louis to a meeting to
discuss the future of state libraries, and from this meeting a National Association of State
Librarians was formed. The association did not live up to Dewey’s hopes, and a decade
after its formation Dewey confided to an associate that “most of our state libraries are
asleep.” During this era, state legislatures took a new interest in the role that state libraries could play in expanding public library service and most created commissions or boards to set library policy and oversee the growth of a statewide system.19

Between 1920 and the mid-1950s, state libraries entered a third phase in their evolution, one that emphasized a consolidation of services. In an effort to streamline state government, many states assigned responsibilities to their state library that had earlier been carried out by a variety of state agencies. State libraries increasingly came under the oversight or became part of a larger agency of government, such as a department of education or state. While maintaining their focus on assisting public libraries, state libraries during this period gradually came to offer the full range of services (outlined earlier in this paper) that would be associated with them throughout the remainder of the twentieth century.

The final phase that Wiegand identified was the period following establishment of the federal LSA program. Wiegand agreed with others who saw a direct correlation between a substantial improvement in library service nationwide and the influx of federal dollars, and he, too, saw a link between the federal grant program and the strengthening of state libraries. LSA and its successor programs stimulated cooperation among state libraries, improved communication among them, encouraged them to engage in long-term planning, required them to collect much-needed statistical information that informed their work, and fostered the development of functional standards. Despite the thirty years of

progress between 1956 and 1986, however, Wiegand was more wary than optimistic about the years ahead. “How state library agencies react to new situations in the future will inevitably be influenced by their past,” he cautioned.

Decades of development have now generated bureaucracies that are sometimes unwisely resistant to change, that occasionally harbor transparent but questionable vested interests in perpetuating the status quo, and that perhaps offer some marginally useful services which may be perceived as essential only because they have survived for a generation or more.

State libraries continued to function on the margins of politics in the 1980s when this essay appeared, and to Wiegand that meant that they were and would continue to be vulnerable. History had shown, Wiegand observed, that where state libraries have developed a strong constituent base of traditional users, they have endured retrenchment movements. Where they have strong, politically savvy leadership, they have even prospered in the midst of dismal state economies.

Wiegand believed that state libraries in the 1980s were too tied to traditional approaches and unwilling to adjust quickly enough to changes in state government and the library profession – too bound, in effect, by their own history. He advised state libraries to be flexible and willing to adapt to the emerging needs and priorities rather than remain bound by the way they had always operated.20

Several chapters in the McClure volume are, in essence, updated versions of articles that appeared in *Library Trends*. This does not appear to have been intentional on the editor’s part, but rather it reflects the continuity of themes, activities, and issues in the state library community in the last quarter of the twentieth century. William Asp’s piece

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on “The State of State Library Agencies,” for example, includes a summary of what state library agencies do and where they each are placed on their state government’s organization chart. Gary Strong’s article on the “Impact of the Federal Government on State Library Services” reprises the history of the federal library program, though it also goes beyond the discussion found in Library Trends by including the changes in the LSCA program that occurred during the 1980s with the program’s new emphasis on the establishment of multitype libraries and resource sharing. June Engle’s chapter “State Library Agencies and Library Development” reviews the basic library development functions of state libraries, which had changed little between the 1970s and 19080s.21 These chapters, as well as others on planning, finance, resource sharing, and politics, reaffirm much of the information found in the special Library Trends issue, but each of the authors stressed what emerged as one of the most important underlying themes of the volume. In addressing these issues, contributors repeatedly emphasized that, more than anything else, state libraries needed to provide strong leadership within their home states and nationally within the library profession. While the issues addressed largely fell within the public library realm, some authors clearly were encouraging state libraries to look beyond their traditional public library constituency when appropriate and to become more vocal in promoting libraries and library issues within their jurisdictions.

In assessing the library development activities of state libraries, Engle, for example, called for an “aggressive stance” on the part of state library agencies. “Without active leadership by the SLA . . . the state library community will be forced to choose between lack of coordinated statewide library development and waiting for another agency to emerge that will play the leadership role.”22 In the chapter on resource sharing (which addressed functions such as bibliographic access, interlibrary loan, reciprocal borrowing, document delivery, and cooperative collection development), Karen Krueger reminded readers that state library agencies have the responsibility for the design, creation, maintenance, and evaluation of a statewide resource-sharing structure encompassing all libraries in the state, and that this undertaking could only be successful if the state library took a strong leadership role. “The state library agency must plan and evaluate and it must do so continually, cooperatively, and courageously,” Krueger wrote. “It cannot be afraid to take some risks, to involve the library community, and to revise, regroup, and rethink.”23 David Shavit’s chapter on the funding of state library agencies also mentioned the leadership factor. Observing that state spending on libraries had not kept pace with federal funding in the 1970s and 1980s, Shavit opined that the level of state funding depended less on a state government’s prosperity (or lack thereof) and more on factors such as the nature of the library community in the state and the leadership of


the state library. In discussing the political climate in which state libraries operate, Robert Clark, director of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, observed that the reputation of the state library, and the state librarian in particular, was the key to success. “The power and authority of an SLA resides in the state librarian’s image and trust which is closely linked with the personality of the director of the state library.” With the right leader in place at the top, Clark believed, a state library could build a strong image that would translate into political and financial success.

Roderick G. Swartz and Nancy L. Zussy (state librarian and deputy state librarian, respectively, at the Washington State Library in the 1980s) closed the volume with a forward-looking piece on the future of state libraries. Their article offered advice on social, political, and professional trends that had become clearer to librarians by the mid-1980s than they might have been nearly a decade earlier when the Library Trends issue appeared. Swartz and Zussy’s article was written with the intent of shaking state libraries loose from the bureaucratic mode in which many still operated. State libraries, they believed, had to transform themselves, adopt new roles, and think differently than they had in the past.

Toward these ends, Swartz and Zussy advised state libraries to think of themselves as being in the information (rather than the library) business and to spend less time worrying about preserving “the library” as an entity unto itself and remain open to

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the many possible alternatives of delivering information services. State libraries needed to be more vocal about reminding citizens that information delivery through libraries continued to constitute a public good, particularly from an economic standpoint, in a society founded upon open access to information by all citizens. State libraries, they added, should lead the way in experimenting with new organizational models, rejecting traditional pyramidal structures that isolated staff within their narrow departments in favor of fluid reporting systems that reflected how work actually occurred in the technological age. They encouraged state libraries to reward teamwork and interdepartmental cooperation among staff in addition to individual accomplishment. They noted that with library service nearly universal in the United States by the 1980s, state libraries in the late-twentieth century should transition from being “establishers of public libraries” to “promoters of public information,” insisting on the rightful place of libraries within the total information community. State libraries needed to shift roles to become innovators, finding creative ways to advance library service within their state or region, rather than implementers of national directions and priorities, as they had in the past. They needed, in the authors’ view, to become connectors between all types of libraries and all types of communities, including some beyond their political boundaries, rather than just focus on the traditional public library constituencies within their own state. They should consider leaving outmoded hierarchical structures and activities that were no longer viable behind and organize first-class teams that maximized the potential of their “people” resources. Swartz and Zussy also advocated that state libraries shift from the recruitment of new librarians into the field (since those efforts had been successful and in the 1980s there were adequate numbers of new professionals) to
encouraging professional excellence through continuing education and training. They were also urged to offer training for nonprofessionals who by the 1980s were beginning to hold active and responsible positions in academic and state libraries.

Those state library agencies which do go through that soul searching, who have the courage to make the changes necessary to their adaptation to ever escalating change, and who are able to successfully assume and maintain the necessary leadership -- both inside and outside their organizations -- those agencies will survive and grow into the next century.

Zussy and Swartz outlined a special role for the “new” state librarian, too. While upholding the basic tenets of the library profession in the evolving information climate -- intellectual freedom and free access to information the most crucial among them -- an effective state librarian should, in their view, also play the role of devil’s advocate. “All things should be open to question in the mind of a state librarian, and a permanent mental ‘itch’ should be part of the job description,” they wrote. He or she should always ask if current practices were the best, if new approaches might be better, if there were new ways to anticipate and address unmet needs. In their view, a willingness to shake things up in the library world and lead the way was crucial.26

About the time that State Library Services and Issues was published, the subject of state libraries also attracted attention from three doctoral students of library science, though none of their studies has subsequently appeared in print. In a dissertation completed in 1983, Sue O’Neal Medina looked at “The Role of the State Library Agency in the Future,” using the Delphi research technique to gather and analyze the responses of


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selected public, academic, and special librarians as well as state library agency directors to a series of questions about the activities that they expected state libraries to be engaged in at the turn of the twenty-first century. Medina found that most librarians anticipated a great deal of continuity in state library functions, particularly with regard to the administration of federal and state funding programs, but they saw technology as the looming unknown. While it was clear that technological change would have a critical impact on state library activities, those polled for this study worried whether state libraries would be able to attract staff with the necessary competencies and skills to implement programs using new technology. Medina also found that state libraries were not doing a good job of involving library leaders in their states – public library directors as well as key librarians in the wider community of academic, law, business, and special libraries. Those queried for the study strongly urged that this be done and encouraged state libraries to reach out well beyond public libraries for advice when setting goals, for the wider library community was a potential (and largely untapped) source of support.27

In 1987, June Engle completed a study of four southeastern state libraries (Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Alabama) to measure the impact they had had on the establishment of statewide multitype library networks and to see if they had involved libraries across their respective states in the planning for these networks. Engle found that “politics, power and personality” were the determining factors in measuring the effectiveness of these state libraries in setting statewide policy. The state libraries that

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had good working relationships with all major policy actors in their state’s library community, clout within their state government, and an agency leader with the personality and style to forge consensus appeared to have made the most progress toward establishing successful networks.\footnote{June Lester Engle, “The State Library Agency as a Policy Actor: An Examination of the Role of the State Library Agency in the Development of Statewide Multitype Library Networks in Four Southeastern States,” Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1987.}

In 1991, Ethel Himmel completed a dissertation based on interviews with ten state librarians to ascertain their views on their roles as managers in the public sector. Himmel was interested in determining whether the model of a public manager developed by Philip Heymann would be helpful in differentiating agency heads who were merely competent from those who from those who were highly effective. Specifically, she looked at the selected state librarians’ perceptions of their roles in managing the environment outside their agencies, which in Heymann’s opinion public managers often ignore or neglect. While Himmel compiled a great deal of interesting information about the attitudes of state librarians, she did not find Heymann’s model particularly effective in distinguishing between chief officers who were merely competent and those who were highly effective in their jobs, except in the area of change. Those librarians who demonstrated an openness to change, who saw themselves as catalysts, and who were willing to be proactive rather than reactive headed agencies that operated more effectively within their state governments than those led by agency heads resistant or reactive to change.\footnote{Ethel Eileen Himmel, “Chief Officers of State Library Agencies as Public Managers: Managing the Authorizing Environment (Library Agency Management),” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1991.}
The theme of leadership in the midst of change also surfaced in Donald E. Riggs’s 1982 volume, *Library Leadership: Visualizing the Future*. In his short chapter on library leadership at the state level, Riggs linked the success of a state library to the quality of its leadership, though he did not underestimate the challenges that state librarians faced. “Being a leader of a state library agency is, without qualification, one of the most difficult positions of leadership in librarianship,” Riggs noted.

The umpteen constituents to be served, or answerable to, make the job nearly impossible. Each legislator, with pressures from ‘back home’ constituents regarding what they want for their libraries, can further compound the leader’s ability to be effective. There is nothing that implies that this crucial leadership position will be any easier in the year 2000.

State libraries had a reputation in the 1970s and 1980s for being bureaucratic organizations not fully in touch with their constituencies, and Riggs was not subtle in commenting on this problem, which he saw as a major obstacle to effective performance. Despite some evolution in thinking that had occurred, “it is still not hard to learn of state library agencies still operating in the autocratic fashion.” These libraries would have to adjust their outlooks, in Riggs’s view, work cooperatively, and communicate with librarians within their regions to set and strive for mutually beneficial goals. Looking ahead to the turn of the twenty-first century, Riggs saw few of the “Machiavellians” surviving at the helm of state library agencies, each being replaced by a leader who was “technology-oriented, a humanist, the consult-before-act type, and someone who has charisma (not necessarily in this order).”

Two additional studies are worth noting here, as they address one of the few “contested” issues relating to state libraries in the professional literature – the impact that administering the federal funding program has had on state libraries. These two analyses reveal vastly different viewpoints, but considering the time that elapsed between the first and second study and the transformation the federal funding program experienced between the mid-1980s and the early 2000s, this is not surprising.

David Shavit, writing in 1985 in *Federal Aid and State Library Agencies: Federal Policy Implementation*, contended that the federal grant program under LSCA had not significantly strengthened state libraries. He challenged assessments to the contrary (such as Genevieve Casey’s in the 1978 *Library Trends* issue) claiming they were based on faith rather than on evidence, and he used case studies of several large state libraries to make his point. Shavit found that administration of the LSCA program had not increased the staffing levels of state libraries permanently (staff numbers had increased temporarily in the 1960s, but then had declined). His research indicated that as of the mid 1980s, state libraries still suffered from a lack of competent and skilled staff and that they had inadequate financial resources, insufficient political support, and, in some cases, leadership that did not possess the requisite managerial and political skills. State libraries, Shavit believed, had not done a good job of clarifying their mission either to librarians or the general public, and although they had made some strides in formal planning, they had not done nearly enough in terms of evaluating the effectiveness of their statewide plans. State libraries were regarded as having relatively low status in the library world despite their potential to influence the profession, in large measure because library leaders had failed to acknowledge the critical role that state libraries played.
Shavit’s findings indicated to him that LSCA had not done much to change the conditions that caused state libraries to be weak and had not prompted state governments to increase their appropriations for libraries. Thus, while the federal program had improved library service in general nationwide, it had not in his view transformed state libraries or the way they were regarded by librarians.31

Seventeen years later, researchers Bruce Kingma, Joseph F. Shubert, and Amanda Yeoh looked at the impact of federal funding on state libraries following the transition from LSCA to LSTA and reached quite different conclusions. Based on a statistical analysis of the last three years of LSCA (1995-1997) and the first three years of the LSTA program (1998-2000), the authors found a substantial rise in the funding and staffing levels for state libraries. Some of the funding increases were attributable to increased federal appropriation levels, but by the year 2000 state libraries in many sections of the country had also been able to leverage those funds to boost state aid for public libraries. Staffing levels saw significant increases as well, with the greatest rise occurring in the areas of automation and electronic network development (from 158.8 full time equivalent positions at state libraries in 1995 to 242.7 in 2000) and in communications and marketing (from 40.3 in 1998 to 55.2 in 2000). While Kingma et al found that state libraries across the board had benefited under the early years of the LSTA program, they noted that state library agencies located within the executive branch,

31 Shavit, Federal Aid and State Library Agencies, 130.
such as in a department of education or state, had the most positive increases.\(^{32}\)

As the 1990s unfolded and governments became more aware of the need to manage their information resources, some concern was expressed in the professional literature urging state libraries to take their rightful place at the discussion table. In 1990, Patricia T. Fletcher reminded state libraries of their traditional role in information resource management, long before IRM became a popular buzzword in wider circles. For years, a number of state libraries had fulfilled mandates to provide such services as the collection and maintenance of government documents, the preservation of state historical and archival materials, and legislative reference. In doing so, Fletcher wrote, they had developed an expertise that could be valuable to state governments, if state libraries would be willing to step beyond the boundaries of their own agencies and offer their assistance. Fletcher pointed out that those entities that participated in the process would be the ones to define how their states would structure and set policies for their information resources and how they would use them to serve citizens. As information professionals, librarians had a lot to offer in areas such as data processing, telecommunications, and office systems. “State library agencies have a major role to assume in the coming years,” Fletcher concluded

but only if they take advantage of their professional acumen and skills and assert themselves at the top levels of state government. They are already breaking ground for IRM even though it is often not identified as such. They are aware of the integral role information plays in the lives of state decision makers and state citizens. Now it is time for them to broaden their role and assume the leadership stance that is theirs by fiat.”\(^{33}\)

Bruce E. Daniels echoed this theme in a 1996 article in *Bottom Line*, focusing on the vital part that state libraries could and should play in planning and refining the information highway. Using the New York State Library as his example, Daniels described how the library developed a vision for libraries as the doorway for citizen access to world wide information and how the state library forged collaborative partnerships with the New York’s education community. Tying this issue to education engaged key state legislators in the vision. The result was several legislative initiatives that facilitated the state library’s work and an increased state-aid appropriation for library technology. Daniels’s point was to demonstrate the difference that the state library’s leadership made, hoping to inspire others to replicate New York’s approach.34

While the library profession in general may not have taken more than passing notice of these essays and articles, some state library leaders (several of whom had contributed to the *Library Trends* issue or the McClure volume) took the calls for adaptation and change to heart. By the mid-1990s, there was a growing consensus among state library officials that it was time to reexamine the guiding assumptions under which state libraries had traditionally operated and develop a new conceptual model. Until that time, state libraries had set benchmarks and measured their progress against a set of

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uniform standards published in 1963 by the American Library Association under the title
Standards for Library Functions at the State Level. These standards, formulated under
the auspices of the American Association of State Libraries (the ALA division that later
became ASCLA), were derived from analyzing the results of an extensive survey of
libraries and associated organizations conducted between 1960 and 1962 by Robert D.
Leigh and Phillip Monypenny. Standards for Library Functions at the State Level
established guidelines in areas such as statewide library development, financing,
information networks, service to state government, personnel, physical facilities,
historical collections, and relationships to other institutions of state government. The
intent was to strengthen state libraries by clarifying what they should be doing and
identifying areas for improvement. The survey results, and the authors’ findings from
subsequent site visits, proved so rich that Monypenny issued a companion volume
containing extensive commentary that provided a superb snapshot of the condition of
state libraries in the mid-1960s.35

The 1963 standards were updated twice (a second edition appeared in 1970 and a
third in 1985),36 and they prevailed as the basic guide for state library management and
development until the late 1990s when the Association of Specialized and Cooperative

35 Philip Monypenny. The Library Functions of the States: Commentary on the
Survey of Library Functions of the States. (Chicago: American Library Association,
1966).

36 American Association of State Libraries, Standards Revision Committee, Standards
for Library Functions at the State Level, rev ed. (Chicago: American Library Association,
1970) and Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies, Standards for
Library Functions at the State Level, 3d ed. (Chicago: American Library Association,
1985).
Library Services (ASCLS) and the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) commissioned a comprehensive new survey of state library agencies. Two consultants with extensive practical as well as research experience with state libraries, Ethel Himmel and William Wilson, conducted this survey between 1997 and 1998. They compiled the results into a report that the American Library Association edited and published in 2000 as *The Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies*. The word “standards” was intentionally left out of the title, although this document was intended as a replacement for the earlier ALA publication. Implicit in the earlier state library standards was “the charge to the state library agency of its responsibility for assuring that certain services and certain accomplishments are provided at the state level.” According to Himmel and Wilson, however, the new survey revealed that state libraries had become much more complex and diverse than they had been when the original standards were written, that state libraries did not find the dated standards helpful any longer, and there was little point any longer in trying to fit all state libraries into the same mold. Instead, *Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies* described various roles that state libraries could appropriately fill and recommended that each state library shape its identity based on the roles most suited to its own unique history, strengths, characteristics, and local situation. The report “acknowledges and celebrates the richness and diversity of the state library agencies while documenting the reality of what they currently do.”

*Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies* is divided into two sections. The

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37 Standards for Library Functions at the State Level, ix; Himmel and Wilson, *Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies*, v-vi.
first section is descriptive and statistical, offering a summary overview of all services and activities performed by state libraries, with detailed charts listing which libraries are engaged in which services. The second section is conceptual, written to suggest how state libraries might think about themselves anew and how they might refine or redefine themselves in the twenty-first century. This section compresses the various state library activities outlined in the first part of the document into several broad categories and delineates a role for each category that state libraries might appropriately play.

The increased complexity of state library agencies at the end of the twentieth century is made abundantly clear in the first section. Where Shubert and Fry had described state libraries’ involvement in twenty-five different service activities in 1978, the Himmel and Wilson survey in the late 1990s found fifty-eight distinct state library functions. While six of these were relatively unusual activities (pursued only by nine or fewer state libraries), at least half the state libraries performed thirty-six of the fifty-eight functions and 80 percent of state libraries had at least twenty-one activities in common. In analyzing these activities (grouped as “services for the public,” “services for government,” and “services for other libraries”), many of the themes that surfaced were reminiscent of earlier commentary in the professional literature. In each of the areas discussed, the impact of technology was the most prominent theme, both the opportunities made possible by new technologies and the challenges posed by relentless technological change.

State libraries must provide traditional library reference services, for example, while also offering expert assistance in finding information through the Internet as well
as a host of information utilities. They must serve their customary patrons while also meeting the needs of new users, many of whom no longer visit the library building but reach the library through the agency’s web site. Newer users are technologically savvy and they expect state library staff to be more knowledgeable than they are. The report also outlined how state libraries’ technological responsibilities had expanded far beyond the fledgling networks and union catalog initiatives described in the earlier literature. By the year 2000, state libraries were involved in creating digital libraries that offered statewide access to full-text information databases, and often they participated in digitization projects to capture unique local collections. “The trend toward statewide electronic gateways to the full breadth of library resources and services will accelerate,” Himmel and Wilson wrote. “State Library Agencies will be key partners in the collaborative efforts that are needed if these initiatives are to be successful.”

In the section discussing services to government, the Himmel and Wilson report found that many state libraries had expanded, as the literature had advised them to do, their support of state government to include advising in the area of state information policy. State libraries that maintained their state’s official archives and records management programs, however, had discovered special challenges in the information arena in the digital age. As government information increasingly appeared in electronic rather than paper form, state libraries had to formulate new strategies and electronic solutions to capture, preserve, and provide access to that information in its original format. They also needed to develop more coordinated approaches to managing

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government information as the line between a “record” and a “publication” had blurred in the digital environment.

Himmel and Wilson found that the services state libraries provided to other libraries had remained fairly consistent through the years, with activities such as the administration of state and federal aid, consulting services, training, the certification of librarians, and other traditional services remaining vitally important. However, many new activities had been added to these in the wake of the new technologies, which inevitably placed a strain on already overextended resources. Among the new areas of involvement for state libraries that surfaced in the survey were database development to provide citizens with access to their state’s library resources, encouragement and facilitation of staff and citizen use of the Internet, management of web sites and electronic networks, and library evaluation and research. The Himmel and Wilson report identified the last area as one likely to grow substantially in the future, with increased emphasis by government on accountability. Already by 2000, it was evident that state libraries were doing more than collecting statistics but were engaged in a wide variety of evaluation activities (or they had hired others to conduct evaluations for them) – everything from needs assessments and cost analyses of specific library functions to public opinion polls regarding library issues and surveys of libraries on “hot topics” facing state and local library decision-makers. State libraries were also no longer operating independently in setting agendas and carrying out library policy. Whenever possible, they were partnering with other organizations to provide services, a trend encouraged by IMLS under the parameters of the LSTA program. Among the organizations state libraries had forged partnerships with were other state agencies,
university libraries, historical societies, museums, humanities councils, foundations, library consortia, and statewide library associations, among many others.  

Following the extensive overview of state library activities and services, the second half of *Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies* offers advice to state libraries that is meant to replace the earlier standards approach. This section of the document represents a marked departure from past thinking about state libraries. The several short pieces in this section emphasize the uniqueness of each state library rather than the features that they have in common. The centerpiece of this section is an article by Barratt Wilkins, longtime state librarian of Florida, titled “The Art of State Librarianship.” As Wilkins describes it, managing a state library is an art rather than a science, a skill that must be learned through experience rather than by applying a prescribed formula. It requires “a mixture of politics, personality, alliances, and position.” There are several “indicators of consequentiality” according to Wilkins that shape all state library agencies and suggest how successful a state library is or is likely to be. Among these are the place of the state library agency within state government, where the appointing authority for the state librarian lies, the size of the agency budget, the personnel complement (including the staff’s education, experience, and diversity), the scope and breadth of the agency’s services and programs, and the history and politics of the state. How a state library leverages these indicators is, in Wilkins’s view, what ultimately determines the library’s standing.

A person seeking a method of evaluation or performance, or a level of understanding of what a state library agency does, should think as broadly as

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possible about all of the factors affecting state library services. Through the constant sifting and winnowing of information, indicators, and factors, both internal and external, a good start can be made toward determining the effectiveness of the state library agency.40

Himmel and Wilson identified nine broad roles that state libraries perform, based on the responses to their survey, and these are listed in the second half of the report. They do not contend that any of these roles are essential or universal, nor do they recommend some roles over others or even rank them in importance. They leave the choice of which roles to fill to each state library’s own discretion. The roles are not new ones. They are mentioned, sometimes with a slightly different name, in the literature about state libraries since the 1970s. Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies suggests, however, that state libraries must find new ways to carry out these roles, depending on the internal and external conditions in which each library operates. According to Himmel and Wilson, all state library activities fall within the roles of:

- Advocate, promoting the importance of libraries and library services to the public and in encouraging legislation to improve library service;
- Advisor, offering expert advice to libraries and other constituents on a wide range of topics;
- Provider, directly providing library services to libraries and often to public at large;
- Data Collector/Evaluator, gathering data and reporting it back to libraries for their use;
- Enforcer, enforcing statutory requirements and federal regulations;
- Leader, encouraging libraries to implement programs and methods to improve efficiency and effectiveness;

40 Ibid, 50-52.
Facilitator, advancing cooperation and linkages among different types of libraries;

Educator, providing information about continuing education opportunities and conducting workshops and training for library staff at all levels; and

Innovator, using state or federal funds to foster programs that improve library service.

Whereas earlier commentary about state libraries urged them to fulfill all of these roles, or at least try to, Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies contends that this is more than any single state library can do. State libraries must make choices, set priorities, and focus their efforts where they will do the most good. They are advised to look at each of the roles to see if there is another organization or entity in their state engaged in the activity already. If so, the report suggests that a state library opt for only a cameo or supporting role. State libraries, according to the Himmel and Wilson study, should lead in those areas where no one else has stepped forward. State libraries are urged not to make these decisions in a vacuum, but to consult with and seek consensus from all those engaged in library activities in their respective states.41 The report takes for granted that a statewide consensus such as this can always be achieved.

Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies closes with an afterword by Sara Parker, state librarian of Missouri and COSLA president at the time the Himmel and Wilson study was published. Although Himmel and Wilson did not rank the roles they outlined by importance, Parker left no doubt that the role of leader was, to her, the most critical. Parker observed that “sooner or later leadership comes, if not from state library

41 Ibid, 57.
then from other state level organizations or from individual libraries.” Her preference was for state libraries to lead the way, making leadership of the library community their top priority, and she listed three factors that they should focus on. State libraries’ success depended, in Parker’s opinion, on their ability to balance their multiple constituencies, on their capacity to become more entrepreneurial, and on their willingness to anticipate and shape the future of libraries. By entrepreneurial, she does not appear to mean that state libraries should become businesses or for-profit enterprises, but rather that they should be more creative in looking beyond their traditional programs, be open to seeking and working with new partners, and be willing to take risks. Parker called on state libraries to develop and articulate a vision of where libraries were headed, what they could and should become in the future. “Without a focus on the future, state libraries might be mistaken for historical preservation agencies,” she wrote. Failure to anticipate the future carried with it the danger that state libraries would be viewed as, or worse would actually become, obsolete.42

The Himmel and Wilson survey and COSLA’s and ALA’s subsequent shift away from previous state library standards in favor of the direction advocated in Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies took place in a larger context that is important to note. Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies appeared at a time when the library profession as a whole was contemplating new ways to articulate to citizens and policymakers the central place and the effectiveness of public libraries in a technological age. When the state library study began, the American Library Association had just

42 Ibid, 63-64.
issued a plan for the future of the nation’s libraries in an information society called ALA Goal 2000. The Public Library Association was also working on a new way of evaluating what public libraries do and had also contracted with consultants Himmel and Wilson to assist with this task. The result of this PLA effort was an influential handbook, *Planning for Results*, which first appeared in 1998 and quickly became the defining document for public libraries.

Some of the same reasoning found in the ALA and PLA initiatives is also manifest in *Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies*. *Planning for Results*, for example, accepts as given that excellence must be defined locally, not globally, and that it is an ever-changing, moving target. ALA’s Goal 2000 took as one of its starting points the proposition that libraries, particularly public libraries, could not do everything that they might wish to do and that they must pick and choose.\(^43\) The guidance offered to state libraries in *Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies* was thus framed in the context of a particular view of the role of libraries in modern American society that was in the ascendancy the latter half of the 1990s into the early twenty-first century. State libraries were pragmatically urged to focus on what was possible in their own states rather than on what might be desirable in a perfect world.

When *Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies* appeared in print in 2000, the currents that would bring trouble to three of the nation’s state libraries were already

stirring. *American Libraries, Library Journal,* and a handful of other professional publications carried stories of the threats to three of the nation’s state libraries as they unfolded, but they covered these as news stories, reporting on what was transpiring but offering no interpretation or analysis. The implication was that these were isolated, local events. There was a collective sigh of relief when the crisis ended in each case, but the literature then went silent. No one has since written about why these libraries were vulnerable or why their existence was threatened. Questions that seem obvious have gone unanswered: Were there things these libraries had failed to do, roles they had not filled or not filled well? Did they operate in environments that worked against them (the history and politics of their state or the placement of their library within the state bureaucracy, for example)? Were there things these state libraries might have done to prevent what occurred? What have other state libraries done right? And, finally, are there some in the library community who share the views of policymakers in at least three states that state libraries may be expendable in the twenty-first century?

As this survey of the professional literature reveals, there has not been much discussion in print about state libraries in the past twenty-five years. What little has appeared does not seem to have attracted a wide readership, nor does it seem to have engaged librarians not already connected in some way to state libraries to learn more about them—let alone to think critically about their past and future role. If the library

community overall is unaware of what state libraries do and the challenges they face, how can policymakers and taxpayers be expected to comprehend?

This study is the first to look at state libraries since publication of *Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies* and within the context of recent threats to the existence of state libraries in three diverse and geographically distant states. It is hoped that this study will offer more up-to-date information and analysis about state library activities (and viability) than is otherwise currently available and that the findings of this study will shed light on future strategic directions that state libraries and the library community at large might take, thereby sparking further professional discourse on this neglected topic.
Chapter III

Methodology

Anyone familiar with state libraries in the United States will affirm that there is no such thing as a typical state library – a reality that makes studying state libraries particularly challenging. As the library literature reveals, state libraries vary greatly in size, scope of activity, placement in state government, range of programs, and budget. A close examination of the literature, however, suggests that state libraries tend to fall within one of three discernible groups.

The first group includes a small number of libraries (between five and eight, depending on the criteria used to define the group) that are more the exception than the rule when it comes to state libraries. They are highly visible within the state library community and are known within wider regional or national library circles as well. These libraries have a measurable presence in the library literature and are recognized as leaders among their state library peers. At the other end of the spectrum are the three libraries that have been most gravely threatened in the past five years, each having faced the prospect of potential closing. The majority of state libraries fall in between these two groups. These state libraries have a reputation for solid programs and responsible management though they are not necessarily known beyond the borders of their state or outside the public library community within their own states. These libraries face issues that concern many libraries across the country, such as outdated or inadequate facilities, staffing shortages, insufficient funding, political roadblocks, and organizational instability, among others. While these issues are not unique, they are at times significant
enough to place limits on the ability of these state libraries to fulfill their missions as they would like to and on their capacity to lead the library community within their states.

This study looks at a sample of nine state libraries: three libraries from the first group that are recognized as strong and successful within their home states and are seen as leaders among state libraries nationally; three from the second group that represent the vast majority of state libraries, with solid and effective programs but without sufficient fiscal, staff, or other resources to excel; and the three libraries that have been most seriously threatened in recent years. The characteristics of the sample libraries and the environment within which they function have been examined to develop a collective profile for each of the three groups based on what the libraries in each group have in common and the ways in which they differ. The factors used in developing the three group profiles include the recent history of each state library, its position in state government, the political climate within the state, each library’s relationship to the library community it serves, the library’s fiscal situation, the range and nature of its programs, the leadership displayed by each state library, and its organizational stability.

This study seeks to identify the conditions or combination of conditions that contribute to the success or flourishing of state libraries and, conversely, shed light on the factors or combinations of factors that contribute to the weakening or decline of state libraries. In analyzing the research findings, this study also seeks to offer insight into future strategic directions that state libraries might take. How, for example, might state libraries position themselves to meet existing threats and to create new opportunities for growth? What steps might state library leaders take to strengthen their agencies and make their contributions more visible within their state government and to the citizens
and library communities they serve. By addressing policy questions such as these that emerge from the findings of this study, this thesis seeks to inform professional discourse on the state of state libraries in America today.

Selection Criteria

Libraries that fall within the first group of the most visible and prominent state libraries were selected by interviewing two long-time state library officials with extensive experience in COSLA and other regional and national library associations. The state librarian of Virginia and the director of Virginia’s public library development program were both asked independently to list the top state libraries in the country – libraries whose leadership, programs, and services placed them at the forefront of state libraries in the United States. Without hesitation, both officials listed the state libraries of California, New York, Michigan, and Illinois. Each added a fifth library to their respective lists, but they differed in their selections. One suggested the Connecticut State Library and the other the Texas State Library and Archives.44

A search was then conducted within the library literature using three of the most accessible and comprehensive library and information science databases: Library Literature and Information Science Full Text; Library, Information Science, and Technology Abstracts (LISTA); and Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA).

The name of each of these libraries (or alternate names, if a library’s name changed in the past twenty years) was searched in each of the three databases, and the total number of citations to articles by or about each of the state libraries was compiled. Each of these databases has its own peculiarities that led to slightly different search criteria in each case. Within the Library Literature and Information Science Full Text database, the search was conducted on the full name of each library (terms anywhere), without the words “university” and “association” in the record. This eliminated articles about California State University’s library or the California State Library Association, for example. Within LISTA, the search was conducted using the name of each individual library (as a default term), again eliminating references to “university” and “association.” Within the LISA database, each library’s name was searched as a keyword, without connection to “university” or “association.”

Eight libraries had more than 200 cumulative citations in these databases, with all the remaining libraries having between 1 and 103 citations each. The top eight state libraries in the literature search included the libraries indicated by the Virginia state library officials:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Literature and Information Science Full Text</th>
<th>LISTA</th>
<th>LISA</th>
<th>TOTAL CITATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

45 Each of these databases has its own peculiarities that led to slightly different search criteria in each case. Within the Library Literature and Information Science Full Text database, the search was conducted on the full name of each library (terms anywhere), without the words “university” and “association” in the record. This eliminated articles about California State University’s library or the California State Library Association, for example. Within LISTA, the search was conducted using the name of each individual library (as a default term), again eliminating references to “university” and “association.” Within the LISA database, each library’s name was searched as a keyword, without connection to “university” or “association.”
The three libraries selected to represent the first group in this study are California, New York, and Michigan. The California State Library (an independent agency) and the New York State Library (an agency within the Department of Education) were selected as they represent the very top of the list. The Library of Michigan was selected as the third library in the group as it falls within the middle of the list and also because it comes under the purview of the Michigan Department of History, Arts, and Libraries, which offers a different frame of reference that would be useful.46

Forty state libraries (plus the District of Columbia Public Library, which operates also as the state library for purposes of distributing federal aid) fall within the second category of this study. This group, the vast majority of state libraries, includes libraries that vary greatly in size, scope, budget, and organizational placement. There is a vast deal less information about these libraries in the general library literature and as a rule they have low visibility within the library community outside their home states. In selecting three libraries from the large pool of state libraries within this category, the goal was to choose libraries of different sizes (measured in full-time equivalent staff) and placement within government as well as different combinations of responsibilities and activities in order that these libraries reflect the diversity among libraries in this group. The average library in this group has 56.4 full-time equivalent positions, with only four libraries in the group having 100 or more full time staff. In reviewing the statistics and

46 The Illinois State Library is located within the Illinois Department of State. The Library of Virginia is located within the Virginia Department of Education. As several other libraries selected for this study fall within these branches of government in their home states, it seemed useful to select a library that is placed differently on its state organization chart, to see what if any effect this might have on the library’s experience.
information on each library compiled by the National Center for Educational Statistics, the following libraries were chosen to comprise group two: the Georgia Public Library Service (a library with 43 FTEs that is located within the University of Georgia system and focuses mainly on library development activities), the State Library of Kansas (an independent agency with 27 FTEs, offering several programs and services reaching beyond public libraries), and the Tennessee State Library and Archives (a legislative agency with 193 FTEs, a large printed and manuscript collection, and responsibility for a wide range of library services).\textsuperscript{47}

The third group of state libraries considered for this study consists of the three that have been most seriously threatened during the past five years. The most grim situation that any organization can face is elimination. Three libraries among all the nation’s state libraries have recently faced such a challenge, with the governors of their state in each case recommending the closing of the state library and the consolidation of its services and collections with other public or private agencies. The state libraries of Minnesota, Florida, and Washington have weathered this experience within the past five years and were obvious choices to comprise group three.

\textsuperscript{47} The statistics used to compare and evaluate the state libraries throughout this study are the latest available, which are from 2005. They can be found in the standard source for state library data, which is the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, \textit{State Library Agencies, Fiscal Year 2005} (Washington D. C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). There is a time-lag between receipt of these annual statistics by the Department of Education and publication of the detailed tables. The statistical tables for 2006 have not yet been released. This publication is only available online at \url{http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2007300}. 
Research Design

This study was conducted using the following research design:

1). Review of the primary source material produced by the nine libraries and state library associations: The web sites, newsletters, press releases, major reports, studies, strategic plans, and other information pieces released or published by each of the state libraries were reviewed and used to provide insight into the activities, major programs and initiatives, strengths, and challenges of the libraries under study, from their own perspective. These publications and documents revealed patterns and highlighted areas of similarity and difference among the state libraries in each of the three groups. Research in these sources also indicated how (and how often) each of the libraries share information with the public and their library community.

The literature about state libraries suggests that a state library cannot be successful without the support of the state’s library community. Thus, a review was also conducted of the web sites, newsletters, journals, and other information pieces prepared or published by the professional library association in each of the nine states included in this study. This review provided information about how closely aligned each state library agency is with its state’s library association, how much interest the professional association exhibits in the state library and its issues and activities, and in the case of the libraries in group three, how the library association responded to the state library’s crisis.

2.) Review of the secondary literature: Wayne Wiegand and Barratt Wilkins have suggested that state libraries have been greatly affected by their history and that past experiences, assumptions, and practices have a direct bearing on many state libraries
today. Thus, this study also relies on a review of the existing secondary literature concerning the history, growth, and development of each of the state libraries included in this study as well as articles about these nine state libraries in the standard library literature (*American Libraries, Library Journal, Interface, and similar publications*). The information gathered through this research provided essential perspective on how each state library came to be the entity that it is today and what obstacles each library may have had to overcome in the past twenty years. This review also provided an environmental scan of which activities and issues involving these state libraries were noted in the mainstream library periodical literature and made available to the wider library community.

3). *Review of press and journal coverage*: A review was also conducted of the newspaper of record published in the state capital of each of the nine states included in this study for articles about each state library. These articles shed light on the image of each state library in wider public and professional circles, indicating whether these nine state libraries are viewed favorably or unfavorably. This review also provided an environmental scan of what activities and issues involving these state libraries are reported in the mainstream press within each state.

4.) *Compile and analyze results*: The findings from all these sources were analyzed and interpreted together to offer insight, conclusions, and recommendations that might be of use to state library leaders in planning for the future.
Chapter IV

Results and Discussion

Group I Libraries

1.) The California State Library (CSL) is an independent state agency, founded in 1850. Its state librarian is appointed by the governor. The California State Library serves as the central reference and research library for state government and the California legislature as well as the general public. It collects, preserves, and generates a wide array of information, with specialties in California history and law as well as state government publications. Its holdings comprise 835,836 volumes, with an additional 4.5 million government documents that are largely uncataloged. The CSL advises and provides technical assistance to and outreach programs for public libraries; administers state and federal grant programs to support local public libraries and statewide library programs; and develops automation systems to improve resource sharing and access to information. Other specialized programs include a Special Collections Library and a Braille and Talking Book Library.

The library and the majority of its collections are located in the State Capitol complex in Sacramento in a building constructed in 1928 to house both the State Library and the Supreme Court. In 1994, a second Library and Courts Building was opened nearby, adding much needed collection and office space within a modern setting. In addition, the California State Library operates a branch library specializing in genealogy and family history in San Francisco, and it has an office providing legislative research assistance inside the State Capitol building. The 1928 building underwent renovations in
the late 1990s to render the structure earthquake safe and to upgrade the climate control
systems and add compact shelving. The public may use the state library’s collections in
the reading rooms on site, but the library’s materials do not circulate directly to
individual borrowers. Citizens may borrow books from the CSL collection through the
state’s interlibrary loan system by placing requests through their local public library.

In 2005, the CSL’s budget was $64.4 million. The CSL does not rely on public
funding alone, but also receives substantial additional financial support for its programs
and acquisitions from its private partner, the California State Library Foundation. The
CSL Foundation publishes its own quarterly magazine, the California State Library
Bulletin, which is handsomely designed and illustrated and contains articles about
California history and the CSL’s collections as well as news of Library and Foundation
events and recent acquisitions.

As an organization, the CSL has been relatively stable throughout its history.
Since 1900, the agency has had only eight state librarians, three of whom have served
during the period covered by this study. Both Gary Strong (1980-1994) and Kevin Starr
(1994-2004), state librarians during most of this time, were extremely accomplished and
recognized library administrators prior to their appointments and were well known within
the library community in California. Both were acknowledged to be strong leaders in the
state library community during their tenures. In 2004, as part of a major reorganization
of California government under the California Performance Review initiative, an attempt

48 “California State Library Materials Return to Better Home” American Libraries
Online (June 26, 2000).
was made to move the CSL into the Department of Education and Workforce Preparation. This appears to have been a move to consolidate administrative functions but was not an attempt to alter the scope or programs of the library. In the end, this recommendation was not acted on, and the CSL remained an independent agency.49

The CSL has experienced budget ups and downs throughout the period under study. After some leaner years tied to the national recession in the early 1990s, the CSL’s budget rebounded and in 1998 jumped 27 percent in one year to reach $86 million, heralded in the library literature at the time as California’s “largest budget ever. The following year, both the CSL’s budget and state aid to local libraries saw another big boost that was noted in the national library press.50 Like every other cultural institution in America, the CSL faced sharp budget reductions again between 2002 and 2004 with the downturn in the economy following the September 11, 2001, attacks. State librarian Kevin Starr eliminated the library’s book budget and placed some programs on hold in order to save as many staff positions as possible, but the CSL weathered the crisis without outside interference or questioning. In 2004 when Starr retired, he affirmed that despite the cuts, the library was in overall good shape, even though the number of CSL employees had dropped from a high of 250 to a low of 170 and the library’s funding for

49 Biography of Gary E. Strong, University Librarian, University of California at Los Angeles, UCLA Library web site at http://www2.library.ucla.edu/about/2465.cfm (last accessed March 25, 2007); Evan St. Lifer and Michael Rogers, “Starr Appointed CA State Librarian” Library Journal 119 (October 1, 1994); “CA State Library May Join Education Agency.” Library Journal 129 (September 1, 2004).

collection development was only a third of what it had once been. By 2005, the CSL had added back about 23 positions, reaching an employment level of 193.51

The CSL has an ambitious vision. It desires to be recognized as “the most dynamic state library in the nation.” The benchmarks it uses to measure its success are the size of its collections; the efficiency of its service (to state government, which it regards as its primary client, as well as to libraries, library networks and the general public); its advocacy and support of appropriate technology; its effective statewide leadership in library development; and its commitment to caring for the heritage of California and the well-being of Californians. Throughout the period under study, the CSL implemented numerous programs that fit with that vision and made certain that legislators, the public, and the library community locally and nationally knew about these activities.

In 1988, for example, the CSL cooperated in launching a program to identify and train librarians with management and leadership potential to become future library leaders. The program encouraged a selected group of entry-level librarians of all ethnic backgrounds to move into positions of leadership by providing them with an intensive professional development training experience that would help them overcome hidden barriers to advancement. The annual week-long Transition to Management seminar, funded first with LSCA then LSTA money, became an overnight success and continues to this day, now having aided in preparing a generation of librarians to fulfill their

professional potential.\textsuperscript{52} In 1991, the CSL moved to provide state lawmakers and officials with specialized and in-depth assistance with their information needs on contemporary policy issues by creating the California Research Bureau. This library department provides nonpartisan research services that often result in reports that inform policy decisions. Many of these reports eventually become available to the public through the CSL web site. This highly used service has become an invaluable resource within California government.

In 1998, the CSL turned to address the plight of the 400 rural public libraries in the state, which were light years behind the major urban library systems. The Rural Initiative assessed the needs of rural libraries and then offered multi-year training for library staff, boards, and volunteers based on the needs they identified. Libraries were also provided with the capability to use features such as video conferencing and virtual meeting rooms to connect them to other training and information resources.\textsuperscript{53}

In 1999, the CSL launched the Library of California Network (LCN), a comprehensive project to connect all of California’s nearly 8,500 public, academic, and special libraries through one multitype network. The network’s goal, to be achieved in stages over a fifteen year period, was to make it possible for Californians to have access to all the state’s library resources through one “doorway” on their personal computers.


\textsuperscript{53} Al Bennett, “The Rural Initiative of the California State Library” \textit{Rural Libraries} 22 (2002); 7-18; “California State Library Continues Rural Initiative Program.” \textit{The California State Library Connection} (February 2001), 1-2.
The LCN made tremendous progress in its first three years, adding several thousand libraries and numerous large electronic collections (such as the online holdings of the University of California’s Digital Library in 2000) to the network. Although the budget cuts of the 2002-2003 period wiped out all funding for future development of the LCN, the program received wide attention and earned the CSL a reputation as a technology leader.\textsuperscript{54} State officials recognized this expertise and turned to the state library to develop the content for the web portal to state government, My California. Because the CSL had done such an excellent job of educating officials about the contributions it had made in the information and technology field, decision makers recognized that libraries, and the CSL in particular, were experts in information seeking behavior and could organize the site using the language and structure that would ensure citizens would find what they were searching for.\textsuperscript{55}

Other innovative programs that the CSL undertook in the early 2000s were comprehensive training programs to assist libraries in serving patrons with disabilities and an initiative to improve library service and access to information resources among California’s federally recognized Native American tribes and tribal people.\textsuperscript{56}


\textsuperscript{55} “My California Website Earns National Praise,” \textit{California State Library Connection} (October 2001), 3.

The CSL is skilled in sharing word of its activities not only with the public but with the state and national library community. The CSL publishes a newsletter, issues press releases, submits articles written by CSL staff to national publications, and encourages staff to be active in the state library association. The CSL receives extensive coverage in the newspaper of record in the state capitol, the *Sacramento Bee*. A search of the *Bee* in Newsbank revealed that between 1987 and 2007, the paper published 218 articles that covered a program or activity of the CSL or quoted a CSL staff member about a library-related issue.

2.) The New York State Library (NYSL) is an agency in the Office of Cultural Education within the New York State Department of Education. It was established in 1818 and has grown to become the largest state library in the nation. The state librarian, who also holds the title assistant commissioner for libraries, is appointed by the State Board of Regents and reports to the Commissioner for Education. The New York State Library is the repository for official publications of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of state government and serves as the research library for state officials and citizens interested in government information. Its collections, however, extend well beyond state publications and include historical manuscripts, maps, prints, sheet music, and rare books that document nearly four centuries of New York history and culture. The only state library and one of a handful of non-university libraries to hold membership in

the prestigious Association of Research Libraries, the NYSL holds more than 2,633,000 books and serials, with its entire research collection totaling more than 20 million items. In addition to supporting serious historical research, the NYSL is also a major center for the study of genealogy and family history.

The NYSL has three major components: a Research Library that collects and provides access to the printed and manuscript collections; a Talking Book and Braille Library that serves New York’s visually impaired population; and a Division of Library Development that provides consulting services to the state’s vast network of public libraries and administers the state and federal library aid programs. In addition, the NYSL is responsible for two large-scale projects, the New Netherland Project, which identifies and publishes early Dutch manuscripts in New York State repositories, and the New York Newspaper Project, which preserves and reformats the state’s historical newspapers.

The NYSL has been located in five different places in Albany throughout its history. Since 1976, it has been based in the Cultural Education Center, a modern facility that was specially designed to house the library as well as the state archives and state museum, the two other agencies that comprise the Office of Cultural Education. The building is located in the heart of the state government complex at the edge of Empire State Plaza opposite the State Capitol. In 2005, the state completed a $7.5 million renovation of the building to add storage space, a conservation laboratory, up-to-date climate controls, a movable shelving system, and a handsome new research room that is shared by the New York State Archives and the NYSL’s Special Collections and
Manuscripts Department. Researchers have always been welcome to use the NYSL collections onsite but borrowing had traditionally been restricted to state officials and employees, lawyers, physicians, and local government historians. In 2004, an effort to improve access to the library’s collections and provide better serve to citizens, the NYSL extended borrowing privileges to all New York residents over the age of eighteen – a move that caught the attention of the national library press.58

The NYSL has the largest budget of any state library agency, totaling $106.1 million in 2005. The library receives additional support for programs from the Friends of the New York State Library, a non-profit organization whose mission is described as “helping build the future of The Nation’s Greatest State Library.” The Friends raise funds to support the library and increase awareness about the library by publishing a newsletter, the New York State Library News, and sponsoring a wide variety of speakers and public programs.

The NYSL has had a reputation for leadership in the library field for more than a hundred years. Melvil Dewey, revered today as the father of modern librarianship, served as New York State Librarian from 1888 to 1906. In the forefront of innovation and activity in his profession, Dewey instituted numerous new programs at the NYSL


58 “State Library Says: We Want to Card You!” New York State Association of Library Boards Newsletter (Fall 2004); Andrew Albanese, “All State Residents Gain Connection to Collections, Including Databases,” Library Journal 129 (September 15, 2004); “New York State Library Offers Walk-Up Borrowing,” American Libraries 35 (September 2004), 20.
that placed the library in the vanguard of state libraries nationally. He also made the library an important resource for state government, creating a structure that provided effective research service for state agencies and the state legislature. The NYSL’s service to state government was still heralded as a hallmark of the library a century later.\footnote{Wiegand, “The Historical Development of State Library Agencies, 6; Robbins-Carter, “Education for State Librarianship,” 213.}

There has been remarkable stability in the leadership of the NYSL, with only two individuals serving as state librarian in the past thirty years. Joseph F. Shubert, who was regarded in New York library circles as the Dewey of his day and for whom a major New York award for library excellence is named, served as state librarian from 1977 to 1997. Janet Welch, a nationally recognized expert in public awareness, library advocacy, and coalition building, has served as state librarian since 1997.\footnote{Yates, “Capital Asset.” “Biography: Janet Martin Welch, Assistant Commissioner for Libraries and State Librarian,” New York State Library web site (http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/library/about/jmwbio.htm) (last accessed March 20, 2007.).}

While the leadership of the NYSL has been relatively stable, the library’s budgetary situation has not. The recession of the early 1990s took a heavy toll on the library, with the loss of several million dollars in the library’s annual state appropriation and a 23 percent reduction in library staff. In 1995, George Pataki became governor of New York, and the NYSL began to face some organizational as well as financial challenges. Shortly after his inauguration, Pataki revealed his interest in a major restructuring of the state’s education bureaucracy. In terms of the state library, his budget
recommended further cuts to the library’s staff, travel, and acquisitions funding and even proposed eliminating the position of state librarian in a series of measures aimed at reducing the Education Department’s overall budget by 27 percent. The state librarian’s job was saved, but Pataki continued to try to reorganize the Education Department by moving it from the State Board of Regents and placing it under his direct control. The Friends of the New York State Library rallied to fight this move, which they saw as making the library more vulnerable to political pressures. Governor Pataki was not successful in bringing about this organizational change, but he did reduce the library’s budget again. Then, in 2002, he zeroed out all tax-based funding for the state library, proposing to fund the library’s operations (and those of its sister institutions, the State Archives, Museum and Public Broadcasting) through a public benefit corporation financed by surcharges for recording deeds and other documents filed with the localities. The Friends of the New York State Library mobilized to try to stop this effort as well, but they were not successful. Funding for the state library continues through surcharges on filing and other fees collected by county government.

Despite these setbacks, the NYSL has managed to keep its momentum going due in large measure to action taken by the New York State Board of Regents, which

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oversees New York’s Department of Education. In 1998, the Board created a Regents Commission on Library Services to develop a vision for libraries in the twenty-first century and a comprehensive plan for providing New Yorkers with the best possible access to information through library service. The Regents Commission completed its report two years later, and since that time the NYSL has been closely involved in carrying out the report’s recommendations. Among the NYSL’s major accomplishments are the creation of NOVEL, the New York Online Virtual Electronic Library, which provides online access to a large collection of magazine, newspapers, books, and other reference resources; the creation of twenty-seven new public library districts, with the result that more than 260,000 New Yorkers who previously did not have local library service were now served; the inauguration of a statewide Spanish language outreach program for local libraries; the expansion of the state library-sponsored summer reading program from 172,000 participants in 1999 to more than 1 million in 2006; initiation of several digitization projects opening up NYSL collections to users and grants to encourage local library digitization efforts; a program to recruit and train future librarians; and the launching of a series of New Century Libraries Leadership meetings. Those recommendations of the Regents Commission as yet unfunded have been folded into a special legislative proposal known as the New York Knowledge Initiative. Both the Regents Report and the Knowledge Initiative have been well publicized, at least in government and library circles, and have kept the needs of New York libraries, particularly the NYSL, visible before policymakers.  

The NYSL does an excellent job of getting the word out to the library community about its issues and activities. It gets good coverage not only in the national library press but within the state as well. The *New York Library Association Bulletin*, for example, regularly carries stories about NYSL activities and programs, and the state librarian supplies an annual article summarizing the NYSL’s varied activities. How much of this awareness is reaching the populace at large, though, is a real question. A search via Newsbank of the *Times Union*, the paper of record for the state capitol at Albany, reveals only 39 articles since 1986 that have mentioned the NYSL, and many of these contain passing mentions rather than substantive articles about the library itself.

3.) **The Library of Michigan** (LM), which was founded in 1828 when Michigan was still a territory, is an agency of the state’s Department of History, Arts, and Libraries. The state librarian is appointed by the governor in consultation with the library’s board of trustees and reports to the director of the Department of History, Arts, and Libraries. The Library of Michigan serves as the primary reference library for the legislature, executive departments and the judiciary of the state; maintains and provides access to a research collection focusing on Michigan history, genealogy, and culture; distributes state and federal aid to libraries; serves as a regional depository for federal documents; collects and disseminates state documents; and assists and leads in library development activities for

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Regents Commission on Library Services web site ([see](http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/rcols/progress.htm), last accessed March 28, 2007); New York State Knowledge Initiative web site ([see](http://www.oce.nysed.gov/nyki/), last accessed March 28, 2007).
the state. Beyond these activities, its major programs include the Michigan Center for the Book, the Michigan Law Library, the Michigan Newspaper Project, and the Program for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

The LM has occupied numerous buildings in its long history. Following a fire in the state office building in which the library was housed in 1951, the collection was dispersed to several locations. By the early 1960s, the Dudley Building, a former farm equipment warehouse, became the library’s new home, while the Law Library operated from the office building in which the Supreme Court and the attorney general’s office were located. In 1985, the legislature approved construction of a new building near the State Capitol designed especially for the library as well as the state’s archives and history museum. The new Library of Michigan and Historical Center opened in the spring of 1989.64 In 2003, in conjunction with the celebration of the Library of Michigan’s 175th anniversary, the library opened the Martha W. Griffiths Michigan Rare Book Room, paid for entirely with private funds. This “room” is actually an area within the library that includes a handsomely appointed reading room and a storage area for the LM’s rare materials, with state-of-the-art climate controls and security, along with an adjoining exhibition room and curatorial work space.65 Researchers may use all the LM collections

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65 “Library of Michigan Celebrates the Opening of Martha W. Griffiths Michigan Rare Book Room,” Library of Michigan web site (see http://www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-18835_18896-77483--,00.html, last accessed March 10, 2007).
onsite, and government employees and Michigan residents with proper identification have borrowing privileges.

In 2005, the LM’s budget was $27.6 million. The LM receives additional support for the library’s programs and services (including facilities enhancement) from the private Library of Michigan Foundation.

The LM has experienced a considerable amount of leadership and organizational change in the past twenty years. Four different state librarians have led the library, with gaps between their service at times while a lengthy search for a new librarian occurred. James W. Fry served as state librarian from 1985 to 1994, but left the LM under a cloud after being convicted of sexual harassment charges brought by a library employee. George Needham, former executive director of the Public Library Association, became state librarian in 1996 but served only two and a half years, leaving to take a high-level position with OCLC. Christie Brandau, a recognized leader in the public library community and deputy librarian of the Iowa State Library, served from 2000-2005, when current state librarian Nancy Robertson was appointed to the post. In 1983, strong dissatisfaction within Michigan’s library community over the state library’s performance led to a study of the state library and a major reorganization. As part of the reorganization, the Michigan State Library (as it was then known) was transferred from the Department of Education to the Michigan Legislative Council, becoming one of only

two state libraries to be located within the legislative branch of government. The law that reorganized the library was patterned on the organizational model of the Library of Congress. To highlight this comparison, the state library’s name was changed from the Michigan State Library to the Library of Michigan. In 2001, however, Governor John Engler won legislative approval to move the library yet again, this time into a new Department of History, Arts and Libraries that he created within the executive branch to link all state agencies that dealt with tourism, the arts, and culture under one umbrella. Included in the new department were the Michigan Historical Center, Michigan Historical Commission, the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, Michigan Office of Film and Television, and the Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs.67

Transfer to the legislative branch of government in the mid-1980s transformed the LM. From an agency that one library observer described as “going down the drain,” the library was reinvigorated with the opening of a new building, the first ever designed specifically for library purposes, and an improved funding stream. The library was able to attract strong and imaginative leadership, and by the mid 1990s, it had become the foremost state library in the nation in the realm of electronic information delivery. In 1998, the LM played a key role in launching the Michigan Electronic Library (MeL), a statewide collaborative effort to point users to quality Internet resources on important topics that soon grew to include access for Michigan residents to a vast array of full-text

resources through their desktop computers. Now a standard component of state library service nationwide, full-text electronic databases available to users remotely from their desktops were a pathbreaking innovation when first introduced. Michigan led the way in offering these and other topically-organized information through one portal to its citizens. Its efforts in this arena even caught the attention of Yahoo!, which modeled some of its initial organizational structure on MeL.68 Continuing to enhance the information offerings available through MeL, the LM was able in 2004 to secure funding for a Digitization for Preservation and Access Grant Program. In 2005, the Michigan legislature appropriated $964,000 for the LM to digitize materials held by Michigan libraries to preserve the original materials and make their images available via the electronic library interface.69

The LM has had an excellent relationship with the library community of the state, particularly during the past fifteen years after discontent among Michigan’s librarians prompted a refocus and reorganization of the agency. In September 1999, the LM spearheaded a Preferred Future Conference that brought representatives from all the state’s libraries together to discuss and agree on a shared vision for Michigan’s libraries in the twenty-first century. The LM’s Board of Trustees endorsed the conference’s recommendations and has supported staff efforts to collaborate with the state’s public,


academic, and special libraries to implement them.\textsuperscript{70} In reaching out to the library community, however, the LM has not neglected its service to state government, though unlike the California and New York State Libraries, it does not define government as its primary constituency. Nonetheless, the LM has a page on its web site devoted to services for government and has initiated a Legislative and State Employees Newsletter with information on current policy topics that help them with their work.

The LM, though the efforts of its Foundation, has made an exceptional effort to reach out to new audiences. The Foundation has sponsored author appearances, readings, and book signings and hosts a gala event each spring called “A Night for Notables,” featuring authors of notable books about Michigan. The Foundation also assists in funding programs and activities that state funds are insufficient to support. The Foundation, for example, raised more than $5 million to help pay for the construction of the LM’s new Rare Book Room and has contributed more than $2 million to develop the LM’s genealogical collection.\textsuperscript{71} The Foundation’s support has been vital, especially in the wake of the budget reductions that had an impact on the Library in 2001. While the cuts were not as large as other state libraries experienced, the 10 percent reduction imposed on the library meant that book buying was severely curtailed, that some


electronic databases were eliminated, and that some service hours were trimmed. The library is currently closed to the public on Monday and Thursday mornings.\footnote{“Michigan Legislature Cuts Library Funding,” American Libraries Online, November 12, 2001; “Budget News Impacts Michigan’s Libraries” Access 19 (December 2001), 2; “Focus on Reduced Hours,” Library of Michigan Focus 23 5 (Spring 2005), 1.}

The LM does an excellent job of communicating its activities through its web site and many of its innovative programs have been picked up in the state and national library press. However, local coverage of the library in the general media appears to be weak. A search through the \textit{Lansing State Journal}, the paper of record for Michigan’s state capital, for the period 1999 through early 2007, yields 125 articles that mention the library. While half of these are articles of substance on a library program or event, particularly those that feature children’s activities or Michigan author appearances, one-fourth of the mentions are references to the library’s closing on a state holiday.

\textit{Group II Libraries}

1.) \textbf{The Georgia Public Library Service} (GPLS), as Georgia’s state library agency is known, is a department within the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. It was established as a state library commission in 1897, and transferred into the Department of Education in 1920. It became the Division of Public Library Services within the education department in the early 1960s. The state librarian is appointed by and reports to the University System’s Board of Regents. The mission of the Georgia Public Library Service is to foster, promote, and support public libraries across the state
and to administer the state’s LSTA grant program. Its major programs include PINES, an innovative statewide public library automation and lending network; GALILEO, a virtual library of online databases; GLASS, the library for the blind, visually impaired, and physically disabled; and library development consulting and training services.

The GPLS is located in a modern office complex about 10 miles from the State Capitol building in downtown Atlanta. It consists mainly of administrative and staff offices for the library’s 43 full-time employees. The GPLS has a reference collection of nearly 7,000 titles that concentrates primarily on library and information science materials that are intended to support library professionals within the state. State documents and other reference and history collections that the library used earlier in the twentieth century to support the research and reference service that it once provided to state government were transferred decades ago to other libraries within the university system. The GPLS does not have a reading room or a public service component. Citizens and researchers may borrow from the collection, however, through the interlibrary loan system available at their local or university library.73

The GPLS has experienced tremendous instability in the recent past. In 1995, State Librarian Joe B. Forsee returned from attending the midwinter meeting of the American Library Association to find that while he had been gone, the state superintendent of schools had announced a major reorganization of her department and

73 For insight into the collections and services of the Georgia State Library earlier in the twentieth century, see Highlights of a Decade, 1936-1946 (Atlanta: Georgia State Library, 1947), and Ella May Thornton, The Georgia State Library, 1926-1935 (Atlanta: Georgia State Library, 1936).
had eliminated fourteen top-level positions, among them that of the state librarian. The
Georgia Council of Public Librarians and the directors of the state’s public libraries
objected strongly to this move, fearful that it meant a downgrading of the Division of
Public Library Services and a loss of financial support and technical assistance for local
libraries. Rather than engage in public protests, the library community focused on
articulating why the state needed a strong state library agency and set forth a vision of
what an effective state library agency could and should be. Public library leaders worked
with the superintendent and State Board of Education to make their needs known. An
elegant statement summarizing the views of the library community and describing how a
strong state library would provide an umbrella over the state’s individual public library
systems and a safety net beneath them appeared in the spring issue of the Georgia Library
Association’s journal, the *Georgia Librarian*. Their efforts were not immediately
successful, however. The library was moved in 1996 in a further reorganization from the
Department of Education to the Department of Technical and Adult Education, where it
operated for several years with an acting director, Dr. Thomas Ploeg, at the helm. Then
in 2000, the agency was renamed the Georgia Public Library Service and was placed
under the Board of Regents. In October 2001, Dr. Lamar Veatch, director of the state
library in Alabama, was appointed state librarian and assistant vice chancellor for library

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74 “GA Eliminates State Librarian’s Job,” *Library Journal* 120 (April 1, 1995), 109-111;
“GA State Librarian Post Eliminated; N.Y. State Librarian’s Job At Risk,” *American

development and services, and this turbulent period in the agency’s history came to a close.\textsuperscript{76}

The instability that the agency experienced made the library community extremely nervous about the status of the state’s LSTA funding. High staff turnover due to low morale and substantially reduced resources meant that the GPLS experienced difficulty meeting most of the goals that had been projected in the 1997-2002 LSTA Five-Year Plan.\textsuperscript{77} With the move to the university system and the hiring of a new state librarian, the GPLS quickly got back on track. By 2005, the agency’s budget had stabilized at $37.2 million and there have been modest increases since. Governor Sonny Perdue has taken a keen interest in the GPLS as part of his emphasis on improving educational opportunities for Georgians. With his support, the state legislature appropriated $1.2 million in 2005 for a Major Repair and Renovation Grant program to improve and update library buildings across the state. In 2006, the governor’s budget included substantial new funding for the state aid program that the GPLS administers.\textsuperscript{78}

The GPLS concentrates much of its effort on consulting with public libraries in a wide variety of areas. In the technology realm, it has focused its energy and staff

\textsuperscript{76} “Dr. Lamar Veatch Named State Library Director,” \textit{Georgia Library Quarterly} 38 (Fall 2001), 9.


\textsuperscript{78} “GPLS Distributes $1.2 million in grants to fund repairs, renovations,” \textit{Georgia Public Library Service News} 3 (Fall 2005), 1, 8; “GPLS Distributes Additional Grants for Library Repairs and Renovations,” \textit{Georgia Public Library Service News} 3 (February 2006), 1, 4; “Governor Approves $13.5 Million for Books, Library Construction,” \textit{Georgia Public Library Service News} 3 (June 2006), 1-2.
resources on a project known as the Public Information Network for Electronic Services, or PINES. PINES is a library automation and lending network for Georgia’s public libraries that has sought to link the holdings of all libraries into one statewide borderless library that provides equal access to information for all Georgians. With a PINES borrowers card, citizens have access to materials beyond what is available on their local shelves and enjoy benefits of a shared collection. PINES has attracted national attention as the project team could not find an integrated library system currently on the market that could handle such a large consortium. Local libraries needed to be part of the unified system to facilitate statewide borrowing while also maintaining local control of their users, policies, and other administrative functions. Rather than try to function using a commercial product that could not meet the system’s requirements, GPLS staff developed their own integrated library system based on the open source web browser Firefox. Evergreen, as the system is called, currently has 1.6 cardholders and is growing rapidly.79

The GPLS was not a good communicator about its work or activities until recently, when it launched a newsletter that is widely distributed to the library community in the state, with back issues archived on the GPLS web site. The newsletter projects the energy and vitality that emanate from the agency, although how far into the public’s consciousness that extends is not clear. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, the paper of record for Georgia’s state capital, is only available online since 2002. Since that time, there has been only one article about the GPLS and the agency has been mentioned in

passing in only nine other pieces.

2.) The State Library of Kansas (SLK) is an independent agency within the executive branch of state government. It was founded in 1871 following the merger of two government libraries that had been established three years earlier. The state librarian is appointed by and reports to the governor. The library offers research and reference services to Kansas legislators and provides public access to information in its collection, which specializes in Kansas public policy and law. The collection contains approximately 150,000 books and serials and 194,000 uncataloged public documents. Researchers may use the collections on site and may receive research assistance online through virtual exchanges with reference staff or through interlibrary loan. The SLK does not loan directly to patrons, however. The SLK provides library development services to Kansas’s public libraries, with an emphasis on resource sharing, and it administers the federal LSTA funding program. In addition the SLK offers specialized library services to the visually impaired and physically disabled and manages the Kansas Center for the Book affiliated with the Library of Congress. The state library is located on the third floor of the Kansas State Capitol building in downtown Topeka. The collection of materials for the Talking Books program of the SLK is based at Emporia State University in Emporia.

With a staff of 27 and a budget of only $6.56 million, the SLK cannot have a significant physical presence within the state. As a result, it has placed a heavy emphasis on encouraging resource sharing among all Kansas libraries and on using technology effectively. In the mid 1980s, the SLK launched the Kansas Library Network to
stimulate resource sharing and bring information and services to Kansans. The network began with an Interlibrary Loan Development Program that provided funds to strengthen the collections of twenty-three libraries designated as ILL resource centers and a Materials Replacement Fund to assist libraries replace items lost through their participation in ILL. Ten years later, as the World Wide Web was beginning to grow, the Kansas Library Network launched Blue Skyways, a web resource aimed at pointing citizens to unique Kansas resources, from directories and forms to online copies of the state constitution and other key documents. Today, Blue Skyways makes it easy for people to find hundreds of web sites vetted by SLK librarians on Kansas cities and towns, businesses, schools, libraries, and other organizations. Using a statewide Kansas Library Card, state residents can today also access the online databases provided by the state library. The latest Blue Skyways development coordinated by the SLK is the Western Trails Project to digitize historical materials from five Kansas repositories using an IMLS grant.80

Although small in size and funding stream, the SLK has been remarkably stable in terms of its organization, location, and leadership. From the early 1980s until his retirement in 2004, Duane F. Johnson served as Kansas state librarian and much of the

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SLK’s success has been credited to his ability to build consensus and promote partnerships among the state’s regional, urban, rural, academic, and school libraries as well as the Kansas Library Association. Christie P. Brandau, state librarian of Michigan, succeeded Johnson in 2005 and has made a concerted effort both to build strong relationships with libraries across the state and to continue to investigate new technologies. She was one of the first state librarians to start a blog, describing her visits to libraries around the state. She has also encouraged SLK staff to investigate the virtual game world of SecondLife.com, where librarians have established an information resource called Info Island for collaboration and experimentation with providing services to a new and younger clientele.

The SLK publishes a monthly newsletter, *Kansas Libraries*, which is archived on the library’s web site. Communication with the library community within the state appears to be effective, both through outlets such as the newsletter and personal contacts. How much awareness of the library within the local community is difficult to assess, but it does not appear to be high. The *Topeka Capital-Journal*, which is available online going back to 2002, contained 24 articles that mentioned the SLK over five years, but only five of these were actually about state library programs or activities. There has been almost no mention of the SLK in the national library press.

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3.) The Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA) functions as a division within the office of the Tennessee Secretary of State, which is located in the legislative branch of state government. It was founded in 1854, and the state librarian; who also serves as the state archivist, is appointed by the secretary of state and reports to the secretary although the library is governed by a five-member State Library and Archives Management Board. The Tennessee State Library and Archives collects and preserves the official records of Tennessee state government and other related manuscripts of historical value; maintains an extensive general printed collection (totaling more than 1,000,000 items) with an emphasis on Tennessee history, culture, and genealogy; collects and distributes state publications; and encourages the development of libraries across the state by offering advice, guidance, and library extension services. The TSLA manages the state’s Regional Library System, with 95 of its 193 employees working in twelve regional library centers scattered across the state. Other TSLA core programs include the Tennessee Legislative Recording Program, the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, and the Tennessee Electronic Library (TEL).

The TSLA is located in a classic state building specially constructed for the library and archives in 1953. The building, which is situated immediately to the west of the State Capitol in downtown Nashville, also serves as a memorial to the Tennessee men and women who served in the Armed Forces during World War II, and as such has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Unlike the other state libraries included in this study, access to the TSLA building is controlled. Visitors are asked to show a form of government identification with a photograph (such as a driver’s license)
and are issued a registration card that must be carried at all times. Library materials must be used in the building and do not circulate, except by request to state agencies.

The TSLA has had a great deal of stability in the past twenty-five years, following its move in 1982 from the Department of Education to the Office of the Secretary of State. The shift to the legislative branch proved beneficial to the library, as it saw a great improvement in its funding and support. The only major change since that time has been the transfer in 1999 to the TSLA of the twelve regional libraries in the Tennessee Regional Library System. The leadership of the TSLA has been stable as well, with only two individuals serving as state librarian in the past twenty years. From 1987 to 2005, Edwin S. Gleaves, former director of the library school at Vanderbilt University, held the post. In 2005 he was succeeded by his deputy, Jeanne Sugg, who is the current state librarian.

The TSLA experienced the same kind of budget reductions that all the libraries in this study did in the 2001-2003 period. With a loss of nearly $2 million in a budget that was then a little higher than $15 million, hiring and state travel was frozen and state grants to local libraries were reduced by $1.5 million. The TSLA and its regional libraries closed along with other state agencies for three days in the summer of 2002 while the legislature debated a statewide funding plan. Since that time, funded primarily


by an increase in the state sales tax, the TSLA has been able to build back what it lost and then some, with its budget in 2005 at $16.1 million.  The TSLA did make headlines in 2003 when, in response to the economic downturn, several counties in Tennessee reduced their support for their local libraries, violating their maintenance of effort agreements with the state library. Under these agreements, state funds that had been used to purchase materials would have to be returned by any locality that reduced its library service. The TSLA threatened to remove books purchased with state monies if a county in violation of its maintenance of effort had already spent the state funds.

Although the primary focus of the TSLA is providing service to state government, particularly the legislature, and assisting researchers in using its printed and manuscript holdings, in recent years the library has engaged in important outreach initiatives. The library started a Public Library Management Institute to train the directors of small and mid-sized public libraries who do not have master’s degrees in library and information science. The Institute helps these directors to develop much-needed planning, management, and policy-making skills. This institute has been so successful that the library recently launched a similar Archives Institute for staff working in local archives and historical societies.


The TSLA has been extremely proactive in raising awareness of the importance of preserving historical and public records within Tennessee. In the late 1990s, the TSLA sponsored a summit meeting that brought archivists, records managers and public officials from across the state together discuss key archival and records issues. The result was a document that set goals for the TSLA, the state legislature, and localities, which was titled “The Volunteer Challenge.” The library has been a prime mover in accomplishing many of these goals, among them working for increased funding for local records programs, strengthening the legal requirements regarding the preservation of local records, and establishing a Local Archives Program within TSLA.87

The TSLA has also made a significant effort to reach out to history teachers, by cooperating with the Cumberland River Valley Consortium and others in carrying out the provisions of Teaching American History grants and in digitizing primary source materials from the archival collection tied to the state’s Standards of Learning. Through TeVA, the library is also engaged in digitizing items from its collections to create a virtual library of Tennessee history.

The TSLA appears to have an excellent relationship with the Tennessee Library Association and the library community in the state. Several articles by State Librarian Edwin Gleaves appeared in the association’s journal in the 1990s, and TSLA news or

updates appear regularly in the association’s newsletter. The TSLA also seems to get respectable coverage in the Nashville Tennessean. Since 1999 (which is as far back as online issues of the paper are available in Newsbank), 83 articles that mention the TSLA appeared in the Tennessean. About a third of these contain passing references to the state library agency, but nearly two-thirds are articles about historical materials in the library or about TSLA programs.

**Group III Libraries**

1.) The State Library and Archives of Florida (SLAF), which was formally established in 1925 but traces its roots back to 1845, is a department within the Division of Library and Information Services in the Florida Department of State. The state librarian is appointed by the Secretary of State, who in turn is a gubernatorial appointee. The State Library and Archives of Florida provides library, records management, and archival services to state government; develops library services statewide through state and federal aid programs; maintains a large research and reference collection focusing on Florida history and culture; maintains and provides access to the historically significant records of Florida history; and manages the state’s public documents depository program. Its other major activities include the Florida Memory Project, the Florida Government Information Locator Service, and the Florida Electronic Library.

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The SLAF is located in the R. A. Gray Building in downtown Tallahassee, within two blocks from the State Capitol, where the SLAF also maintains a Legislative Library to attend to the information needs of the Florida state assembly. The library building was constructed in 1976 especially to house the state library and the state archives (which were then separate agencies) as well as the Florida State Museum. The SLAF’s holdings include 263,000 books, more than 40,000 cubic feet of archival records, and 357,580 state documents. The library also operates an off-site records center for non-permanent state records. The public may borrow books from the circulating collection, but researchers are required to check in with the Reference staff on arrival at the library and place all requests for books with the staff, as the stacks are closed (unless one is a state employee or has special stacks privileges).

The leadership of the SLAF has been stable throughout most of the period under study. The library had only one state librarian, Barratt Wilkins, from 1977 through early 2003. Wilkins was much beloved and respected by the state’s library community and was credited with the library’s strong record of success. His accomplishments included oversight of the incorporation of the state archives and the records management program into the Division of Library and Information Services, a substantial increase in the agency’s budget and employment level, the expansion of library service to more than twenty Florida counties that were without service when he became state librarian, and leadership in fostering collaboration among all types of libraries. He was also a recognized library leader nationally, with perhaps his greatest accomplishment being his service as co-chair of the Legislative Committee of COSLA that lobbied strenuously and successfully for the reauthorization of LSTA. Wilkins’s career at the SLAF would most
likely have continued for several more years had it not been for the crisis that faced the library beginning late in 2002, with the state’s governor proposing that the SLAF cease to exist.  

December 2002 was not the first time that the need for a state library had been questioned in Florida. In 1990, State Senator George Kirkpatrick had suggested eliminating the library as a cost-saving measure, but immediately the then Secretary of State squelched the idea, releasing a statement outlining the negative impact that loss of the library would have on state government, public libraries, and the state’s citizens.  

With the economic downturn of 2002, however, the issue surfaced again, this time as a serious challenge from the Governor’s Office. In an attempt to balance the state budget in the wake of a large financial shortfall and to carry out his goal of reducing the size of Florida’s state government, Governor Jeb Bush included in his December 2002 budget submission to the state legislature a proposal to eliminate the State Library and Archives, which he claimed was an unnecessary agency and a luxury the state could no longer afford. His plan recommended transferring the library’s printed collections to Florida State University in Tallahassee, moving the state archives and records management programs to the Department of Management Services (the same agency that oversaw the state motor pool and private prisons), and reassigning the responsibility for oversight of


the federal LSTA grant program to a reorganized Department of State and Community Partnerships. The Bush proposal claimed that closing the library and reallocating some of its functions would reduce the state payroll by 55 employees and save $5.4 million. State Librarian Barratt Wilkins, who as a state employee was unable to speak out against the governor’s recommendation, opted to retire early rather than oversee the demise of the library.91

The president of Florida State University, who had not been consulted in advance, balked at accepting thousands of books and other materials with the expectation that the university would make them accessible to Florida citizens without any additional staff or resources with which to manage the collection. As word of the governor’s budget proposal began to spread in library and historical circles, opposition grew quickly. The recently retired state librarian spoke out and lobbied forcefully against the proposal and a coalition of librarians, archivists, historians, genealogists, and their professional organizations galvanized to defeat the measure. The Florida Historical Society drafted a petition asking the legislature to act to save the library and gathered more than 16,000 signatures within the month of February 2003. The Florida Genealogical Society and the Florida Library Association created informational web sites with late-breaking information, links to statewide news coverage of the issue, and recommendations for action. They also worked with a public relations firm to spread word of the governor’s

actions across the state. In the wake of this resistance and the intense adverse coverage that the story received in the state’s press, the Governor’s Office shifted its position slightly to allow the state archives to remain with the library but put forward a new proposal to privatize the library and archival functions by merging their collections with those of Nova Southeastern University, a private university located in Fort Lauderdale.\textsuperscript{92}

Instead of calming the firestorm, this new proposal to privatize the collections made the research community angrier. Hundreds of protesters formed a human chain around the state library building in a dramatic move that caught the legislature’s attention and prompted state lawmakers to kill the initiative by refusing to appropriate any funding to move the library from Tallahassee. Although supporters celebrated a victory, they soon learned that the Governor’s Office had not given up on the idea and that an attempt was being made to raise private dollars to transfer the library to Nova. In the end, Governor Bush decided to abandon the plan and leave the library intact.\textsuperscript{93}

Surprisingly to most observers, the SLAF bounced back rather quickly from this difficult period. Defeated in their attempt to do away with the state library, Governor Bush and Secretary of State Glenda Hood urged the library’s administration to put greater

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\textsuperscript{92} “Support Grows to Save Florida State Library,” \textit{American Libraries Online}, February 24, 2003.
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emphasis on raising Floridians’ awareness of the library’s programs and services and encouraging greater use of the collections by citizens. Judith Ring, Wilkins’s deputy who was appointed state librarian following his retirement, took several steps once the crisis was over to make the state library’s value much more evident both to policymakers and citizens. It was her decision to close the library’s stacks to researchers, a move she said would cause patrons to begin their work by consulting the professional reference staff which in turn would make citizens more aware of the importance of the staff’s expertise. She also undertook a marketing campaign to bring the library’s services to the attention of state employees and government officials and commissioned a study of the importance of libraries in Florida to demonstrate return on investment that Florida citizens derived from public support of libraries.94 During the devastating hurricane season in 2004, the SLAF also established a widely used clearinghouse for information on hurricane recovery assistance. Ring’s efforts to increase awareness of the library combined with the continuing lobbying on behalf of the SLAF from the Legislative Committee of the Florida Library Association resulted in an extremely positive response from the Florida legislature. By 2005, state library funding was raised to an all-time high of $60.3 million, and additional appropriations were secured to support the state library’s work with multi-

type and rural libraries, to fund literacy programs, and to add new resources to the Florida
Electronic Library.95

With the crisis behind it, the SLAF has reasserted a leadership role in areas such as
technology and statewide planning. The SLAF was one of the first state libraries to
grapple with the issue of cataloging state agencies’ electronic publications and making
them available through the library’s catalog. It has also initiated a statewide campaign to
help local libraries cope with the increasing expectation by state and local government
that citizens will access government services electronically, with many turning to
libraries for help. The archival program also launched the impressive Florida Memory
Project – a web site that has digital images of many of the SLAF’s documentary and
photographic collections as well as a variety of educational resources for students and
teachers to use in classes relating to Florida history. The state library has also developed
a leadership plan for Florida’s libraries that creates a framework in which libraries and
librarians can prepare themselves to meet the challenges that globalization, technology,
and other emerging trends are placing before the library profession.96

95 Lauren Glisson, “New Directions for the State Library and Archives of Florida,”
Florida Libraries (Spring 2005), 8-10.

96 Cherie McCraw, “Beyond Paper: Managing the State’s Electronic Documents,”
Florida Libraries (Spring 2001), 13-15; “State Library and Archives Works Toward E-
Newsletter, January-March 2007 (see http://dlis.dos.state.fl.us/newsletter/article.aspx?articleID=1072&newsID=1019, last
accessed April 2, 2007) State Library and Archives of Florida, Florida Library
The crisis faced by the SLAF from late 2002 through 2004, the response from the library and historical community, and the SLAF’s aggressive awareness campaign have definitely made the agency much more visible within the state. Since 2002, the Florida Library Association has continued to feature news about the state library in its *FLA News Digest* and to include state library programs as priorities on the association’s annual legislative agenda. The *Tallahassee Democrat*, the paper of record in the Florida state capital, has also greatly increased its coverage of SLAF activities. Since 1994, the paper has published 151 articles about the library: 35 appeared in the 1994-2002 period; 80 appeared between 2002 and 2004, when the possible demise of the state library was under consideration; and 36 articles have appeared from 2005 through 2007.

2.) The Minnesota State Library (MSL) traces its roots back to 1899 and the establishment of the Minnesota Public Library Commission. In 1919, the Library Commission was moved into the state’s Department of Education and was given responsibility for supervising school libraries across the state. In 1984, additional activities were added to its scope (among them the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped) and the agency became known as the Office of Library Development Services.97 Today, the library is still located within the Department of Education but its name has been changed to the Division of Library Services and School Technology. The state librarian reports to an assistant commissioner in the education department. The

division provides leadership and support to the state’s public and school libraries, assists them with planning for library services and technology, and administers federal and state grants-in-aid programs for libraries and schools.

The state library has had several homes in its history. In 1983, it moved into a building on Capitol Square in downtown St. Paul where most of the Department of Education was housed. In 2004, the library development staff were relocated in a modern office building in Roseville, eight miles away from the State Capitol; the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is in a separate location in Fairbault. The state library currently has no collections and thus no traditional library patrons. Its staff is engaged solely in consulting and development work with public and school libraries. The Minnesota State Library is the smallest of the nation’s state library agencies, with only 19 full-time staff and a budget of $16.4 million, with $13.7 of that amount constituting the federal LSTA grant.98

The MSL has experienced a tremendous amount of instability during the past twenty years, both in terms of leadership and organizational structure. William G. Asp, a prominent figure in the American Library Association, COSLA, and ASCLA, served as head of the agency from 1975 to 1995 and saw the library through several periods of tight financial times. The worst period occurred in the early 1990s, when the state legislature

98 The statistics reported by the state library agencies of Hawaii and the District of Columbia indicate that they are smaller, but these agencies report only staff that specifically administer the state library functions. The state library agencies in both Hawaii and the District of Columbia are located within large public libraries, thus they have many staff members not reported as specifically assigned to administration who carry out state library programs and activities.
reduced the budget for the Department of Education by 20 percent and the state library’s staff from 27 to 21 full time employees. Then in 1995, in another government consolidation move, Minnesota eliminated (temporarily, as it has turned out) its state Department of Education, combining education functions with other state programs relating to children and families into a new Department of Children, Families, and Learning. The state library was placed within this agency, which prompted State Librarian William Asp to resign because he believed it would lead to the diminution of the library’s visibility and support. His predictions proved correct. When the next serious economic downtown hit following the attacks of September 11, 2001, Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura cut the library’s staff by another 4.5 FTEs, then in June 2002 eliminated 6 more of the remaining 9 staff members who administered the library’s development activities, including the then state librarian, Joyce C. Swonger. The Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, which is operated separately, was left intact. With the abolishment of the majority of the library development positions, the permanent closing of the library’s collection of 30,000 volumes that had previously been available through interlibrary loan, and the transfer of the remaining three staff to the Office of Management Services, Minnesota’s state library agency effectively ceased to exist.99

The move to eliminate the state library was made without consulting anyone in the library, including the state librarian, anyone in the legislature, or anyone among the

library’s constituent groups. As soon as the news was made public, the library community in the state and nation responded quickly. Almost immediately, the Legislative Forum of the Minnesota Library Association and the Minnesota Educational Media Organization held a strategy session and prepared a statement with information about the critical role that the state library played with regard to statewide leadership, expertise and resource sharing, the administration of state and federal funding programs, and involvement in a wide variety of library technology activities. Within a few weeks, representatives from school, academic, and public libraries across the state organized into a lobbying group called the Minnesota Library Leadership Coalition. The coalition organized a letter writing campaign aimed at convincing members of the legislature to derail this move. Meanwhile at the national level, the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science and the American Library Association registered their concern and affirmed the need for a state library agency in every state. IMLS weighed in as well, questioning the Department of Children, Families, and Learning on the department’s plans for carrying out the state’s Five-Year LSTA Plan, which is an essential prerequisite in order to maintain eligibility to receive federal funds.100

The library community’s lobbying efforts were largely successful. Although the Library Leadership Coalition had hoped to convince the legislature to reestablish the state library under an independent library commission, which did not happen, the legislature did recreate a state Department of Education and placed the state library once again under

its purview. In addition to restoring the library development functions to the state library, the assembly gave the agency the added responsibility for school technology. Accordingly, the state library agency’s name was changed to the State Library Services and School Technology Division. In 2004 a new state librarian, Suzanne Miller, was hired and a State Library Advisory Council was created to monitor the state’s LSTA plan and the allocation of the federal funds and to assist the state library in strengthening libraries (and the state library agency in particular) within the state. Since then, the library has focused a great deal of attention toward formulating a State Plan for Libraries as a way to improve visibility and funding for Minnesota’s libraries. The plan process included open meetings at which librarians and the general public were asked to identify the services they value most from libraries, the needs they have that are as yet unmet, and their views on the structure of library service delivery. Although the plan was scheduled to be completed by the close of 2005, staffing shortages at the state library have slowed the process down, and a draft of the plan has not yet appeared.101

Although the state library agency was restored, it is currently struggling to fulfill its grant administration and consulting roles as well as provide guidance for technology to the state’s public schools. There are only six full-time librarians on the staff (not counting the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped), including the director. In an attempt to improve the library’s visibility, the library attempted to publish a bimonthly newsletter, *Minnesota Libraries*, but the publications schedule was more than

staff could keep up with. Instead, the library issues an electronic newsletter called “Streaming News,” which contains short informational items that are easy to write and produce. Getting wider coverage of the library and its activities is clearly a formidable challenge. A search of both the St. Paul Pioneer Press and the Star Tribune, which covers the twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, both of which have texts of their papers available online back to the mid-1980s, reveals only four articles about the state library, all dating back to the 1990s. A search on all of the various names under which the library has been known during the past twenty years as well as the names of the two state librarians who have served during that time yielded only these four articles.

3.) The Washington State Library (WSL) traces its roots back to the Organic Act of 1853, which officially created the Territory of Washington and at the same time established a Territorial Library. The primary purpose of the library was to meet the needs of the territory’s lawyers and government officials. Although the public was permitted to use the library’s books and papers, service to the state’s citizens was a low priority and remained so for nearly a hundred years. Following Washington’s rise to statehood in 1889, the Territorial Library officially became the Washington State Library headed by a politically appointed state librarian.

During the first few decades of the twentieth century, several successive state librarians expanded the library’s purview beyond the previously limited role of acquiring books and government records. The library began to advise the growing number of public libraries in the state, located predominantly in urban areas, and launched a traveling library program to bring rudimentary library service to the state’s more remote
areas. The WSL had extremely limited fiscal or staff resources to devote to these new functions, however, and the state library’s profile remained low within the state until the 1940s, when the Washington Library Association launched an intensive lobbying campaign to improve library service across the state. In 1941, a new era for the WSL began when the state legislature created an independent State Library Commission with responsibility for administering the library and hiring the state librarian, and at the same time it substantially increased the library’s budget. Four years later, legislators appropriated funds to encourage the establishment and development of public libraries throughout Washington and placed responsibility for the distribution of this state aid with the State Library Commission.102

The WSL flourished in the 1950s through the 1990s. In part, this was a result of increased state support and the opportunities for growth provided by the federal LSA and LSTA programs. But the men and women who led the state library during this period also deserve credit for making a concerted effort to capitalize on these opportunities. During these years, the state library worked aggressively to bring effective library service into all parts of the state, even the most far-flung rural areas, forging collaborations with other libraries and successfully advancing the regional model for local library service. The library also greatly expanded its service within state government, acquiring specialized library materials that supported the work of state agencies and their employees and establishing several branch libraries within the state’s mental hospitals,

prisons, and homes for the mentally disabled. The WSL was also a pioneer among state libraries for its ambitious Washington Library Network (WLN) project, an early communications framework that linked libraries of all types across the state, eventually creating an automated system with a common database for participating libraries that ensured quality control across the system that was capable of communicating with other systems. Eventually, the Washington Library Network became the basis for a wider Western Library Network that stretched from Texas to the Arctic Circle. The WSL also did path breaking work in developing an advanced Government Information Locator System, or GILS, under two highly competitive National Leadership Grants awarded by IMLS. WSL’s GILS system became a prototype that other states used in establishing their systems.  

By the mid-1980s, a time when many state libraries were described as having a “lackluster record,” the WSL was regarded as one of a few “brilliant exceptions,” earning a national reputation for the quality and breadth of its service to state institutions and its pioneering efforts in library networking.  

Today, the WSL describes its mission as that of collecting, preserving, and making accessible to Washingtonians materials on the government, history, culture, and natural resources of the state; providing leadership and coordination of services to all libraries in the state of Washington; supporting the information needs of residents in state institutions and the visually impaired; and serving as the primary source in the region for published information from the federal government. The library’s holdings include

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103  *Ibid*, 166-177, 188-190, 199.  

738,486 books and serials and approximately 814,000 public documents. Residents of Washington may obtain a borrower’s card and check out materials.

For much of its history, the WSL was located in a historic building situated on the campus of the State Capitol between the House and Senate office buildings. However, following an earthquake in the spring of 2001 that damaged the state Capitol, the library building was needed to house legislative staff that had to evacuate the Capitol while it was being repaired. The WSL was moved in mid-2001 to rented quarters in a modern office building in Tumwater, about five miles from downtown Olympia. The budget of the WSL is $10.3 million, and it currently employees 85 full-time staff members. In addition to the public funds that support the library, additional gifts and financial assistance is provided by a private group affiliated with the library, the Friends of the Washington State Library, which was founded in 2002.

The WSL has had talented and stable leadership throughout its recent history. Both Roderick G. Swartz, who served as state librarian from 1975 through 1986, and Nancy L. Zussy, state librarian from 1986 through 2002, were known regionally and nationally as library leaders prior to their appointments. Because of their leadership within the state and the support that the WSL provided for state government, both Swartz and Zussy were seen as having “considerable ‘clout’ in the halls of the state legislature” and “warm working relationships with the state’s chief executives.” The WSL during their tenures was known for its innovative programs, and their leadership of the library
community in the state caused Washington’s libraries to be “known, admired, and emulated by others across the country.”\textsuperscript{105}

Given the WSL’s reputation for excellence among state libraries nationally and its long history of quality service to state government, no one would have predicted that the library would find itself in a fight for its life in the early twenty-first century. In December 2001, however, when Washington Governor Gary Locke found himself facing a biennial budget shortfall of $1.2 billion (which had as much to do with the collapse of Boeing, one of Washington State’s primary employers, as it did with the general national economic downturn), the new budget he submitted to the state legislature recommended deep reductions in funding for most state agencies and the complete elimination of two – the state film office and the WSL. The governor estimated that closing the state library would save about $9 million a year and reduce the workforce by 140 employees. Locke justified his action by stating that citizens would not feel any effect since the Olympia’s large public library was just a few blocks from State Capitol and the WSL’s collections could be transferred there and to other large libraries across the state, where the state’s residents would continue to have access to them. When State Librarian Nancy Zussy learned of this surprise move and protested to the Governor’s Office, she was told that the state library was not considered central to the state’s mission and that most citizens could fulfill their information needs through the Internet, rendering the state library

\textsuperscript{105} Reynolds, \textit{Dynamics of Change}, 145-164.
Realizing that the governor could not be dissuaded, Zussy met one-on-one with more than forty state legislators to educate them about the unique role that the state library played. She spoke to them about the research and information services that the library provided to the legislature and to state agencies and reminded them that the library’s collections had unique historical value, attracting thousands of students, historians, genealogists, and other researchers each year. In addition to the in-person visitation to the library, she reminded them that the online databases that the WSL purchased and made available to citizens through Find-It! Washington were used by more than 3,500 people a day. If the state library were to close, thirteen branch libraries in state prisons and other institutions would also shut down, cutting off services to these special need populations. And, without a state library agency, Washington would be in violation of federal LSTA requirements and could possibly lose more than $3 million of federal money. In response to Zussy’s arguments, several members of the state legislature began investigating alternative options to closing the library.\footnote{107}{“Reading the Library Its Last Rites? Locke Proposes Closing Facility to Save Money.” \textit{Seattle Times}, January 28, 2002; “Closing the Washington State Library,” \textit{PNLA Quarterly} 66 (Winter 2002), 22; “Washington Governor Proposes Closing State Library,” \textit{American Libraries} 33 (February 2002): 19; and Rebecca Lenzini, “Washington’s Governor Proposes Closing State Library,” \textit{Information Today} 19 (March 2002): 20, 48.}
The Washington Library Association also sprang into action, launching a grassroots letter-writing and public information campaign that played out in the state press. The joint efforts of the state library and the library association resulted in a legislative compromise that the governor was forced to accept: the state library would be kept open but it would move from reporting to an independent library commission to becoming a unit within the Washington Department of State. The library sustained serious budget reductions of 23 percent and the loss of 26 positions, but it managed to survive. With the library’s future more secure, Nancy Zussy decided to retire as state librarian in April 2002. Jan Walsh, assistant director of customer services for the WSL, was named interim state librarian and was appointed to the position the following November.

Although this appeared to signal a diminution in stature for the state library, the transfer to the Department of State placed the library under the stewardship of Washington’s Secretary of State Sam Reed, a Republican who was a staunch supporter of libraries. Reed did not share the governor’s view that the state library was expendable, and he quickly made it clear that he thought the library would be an excellent fit with his department (which also oversaw the State Archives) and that he welcomed the

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opportunity to strengthen and enhance the WSL. In July 2002, he held a summit meeting with the state library’s major stakeholders to get their views on which of the library’s services they valued most, and he used their advice in working with the library’s staff to reposition the library. Given concerns about the library’s visibility, Reed and State Librarian Walsh announced that the focus of the library’s future efforts would be in reaching out to meet the information needs of the public through technology rather than emphasizing service to state government.

Although Reed moved quickly to assuage the library community’s fears, the threat to the library’s existence had come as such as shock that library supporters did not want to take anything for granted. A Friends of the Washington State Library group that had been moribund for years was rejuvenated in 2002 to fight to save the WSL, and it was so effective in lobbying that one legislator proclaimed “you have a small army out there.” As in Florida, the Friends of the Washington State Library established a web site that provided up-to-the-minute information on the legislative session and links to articles about the library’s plight that appeared in newspapers across the state. The Friends group has since become a public relations and programming arm of the state library, raising funds for new acquisitions and sponsoring special events and programs that connect more people to the library’s activities.\textsuperscript{110}

The WSL emerged from its crisis determined to be more accessible to the public in a wide variety of ways. The library improved its signage, expanded its hours, and provided a more welcoming atmosphere within the building and through its web site. Working with the Friends, the library also scheduled public events such as book signings and talks on Washington history topics that began to attract new audiences. The library improved its web site, featuring unique historical collections and a new Digital Archives, and the state librarian started a blog that invited observers to comment on library activities. In an effort to make the state library as well as the archives more accessible, Secretary of State Reed has recently proposed a new building called the Washington State Heritage Center be constructed on the Capitol campus to house the state library, archives, and the state museum. He has argued effectively that this will bring all the state’s valuable historical collections together in one place where Washingtonians can view and use them. Planning for the new Heritage Center is progressing, with funding to come from new taxes on recording fees and corporate licenses and from numerous private donors.111

The WSL has an excellent working relationship with the state’s library association, which has supported the library through its recent crisis and continues to

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include articles about the library’s needs and activities in its journal and particularly in its advocacy newsletter, the *Washington Library Advocate*. There is also a good deal of awareness of the state library in the wider community in the very recent past. A search in Newsbank of the *Olympian*, the paper of record in the state capital which is only available online since 2001, indicates that 60 articles about the Washington State Library have appeared in the past six years. Twelve of these had to do with the 2002 budget crisis, but many of the remaining articles have covered programs or activities of the WSL.
Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

Profile of Group I Libraries

Research for this study has revealed that the California State Library, the New York State Library, and the Library of Michigan have much in common. These commonalities help to explain why the three are ranked among the strongest state libraries in the nation. They are all older organizations, with their roots extending back to the early days of each state’s history. They also have a broader mission than many state libraries. In addition to their responsibility for statewide library development and the administration of state and federal grant programs (a responsibility that all state libraries share), these three libraries are engaged in a wide range of other activities that connect them to constituencies beyond libraries and librarians. All, for example, have large printed collections that concentrate on state history and culture. Many of the items they hold are unique and rare, and they are heavily used by historical researchers. These libraries have extensive collections in the field of genealogy and family history as well and thus strong ties to the genealogical community in their states. Two of the three libraries in this group allow state residents to borrow materials directly, one offers circulation indirectly through the state’s interlibrary loan system. But in all cases, the collections are readily accessible to users who visit the three libraries and researchers are welcomed; increasingly these libraries are opening their collections to remote users via digitization projects.
These three libraries also have responsibility for collecting and making available all published material generated by state government, but they do much more than just maintain the state document depository system. All three libraries offer state officials and employees a range of special services that have been developed or packaged specifically to meet the needs of state government. As a result, there is a greater chance in these states that policymakers have used or have in some way benefited directly from the state library and that they recognize the expertise in the information arena that state libraries contribute to government and its citizens. This does not mean that these libraries have been immune from politics or from the vagaries of their state’s politicians, but they have not been targeted or seen as expendable (as is the case with the libraries included in Group III). All three libraries have experienced budget reductions and staff cuts in the past twenty years, but these occurrences have corresponded with national economic trends and the accompanying ramifications within each state, and they affected publicly funded state agencies across the board not just the state library. Even New York Governor Pataki’s proposal to eliminate the position of state librarian should not be seen as an attack on the state library per se. He was trying to eliminate a management position not the library itself in an attempt to streamline the educational bureaucracy and wrest control of New York’s education system from the powerful and independent State Regents. During the past twenty-five years, there has been some discussion both in New York and in Michigan concerning the best place for the state library in each state’s bureaucratic hierarchy, but no one ever suggested that the library be done away with.

All three libraries in Group I have been relatively stable in terms of their organizational structure in the past twenty years. Despite the budgetary ups and downs
that have at times affected the ability of these state libraries to purchase materials, hire new staff, or launch new programs, state funds have been available for upgrading or modernizing their library facilities – and in the case of Michigan, for the construction of an entirely new building.

All three libraries have also been viewed by their peers as leaders in library and information technology, a fact that seems to be understood within state government circles as well. The written evidence also suggests that the three libraries in Group I have an excellent relationship with the wider library community within their states. State librarians and staff members are active in their state library associations and regularly contribute to library association publications. The legislative agendas of the library associations in California, New York, and Michigan commonly include support for state library initiatives or needs.

The three libraries in Group I have another similar feature that is relatively unusual among state libraries. Each of the libraries in Group I has a private Foundation or Friends group affiliated with it. The California State Library Foundation, the Friends of the New York State Library, and the Library of Michigan Foundation provide meaningful financial assistance to their state libraries and invaluable logistical as well as fiscal support for a wide variety of publications and public programs that enhance the community awareness of these state libraries and widen the circle of citizens who are affected by these state libraries and understand and care about the libraries’ mission.

Despite these many similarities, there are a few differences among the libraries in Group I that are worth noting. For one, each of these libraries is positioned differently within state government. One is an independent agency reporting directly to the
governor, one is an agency within the Department of Education, and one is an agency in a Department of History, Arts, and Libraries (a government department unique to Michigan). And, although these three libraries have had stable leadership in the past twenty plus years, Michigan has had more turnover in the state librarian’s position than California and New York and in the 1980s the Library of Michigan experienced some significant organizational shifting. Finally, looking at the coverage of all three libraries in the paper of record in their state capitals, California and Michigan have higher profiles in their respective communities than the New York State Library does.

Summary Profile of Group I Libraries:

**Similarities**

Older libraries, in terms of founding and ties to their state’s history

Broad missions and wide range of activities

Large printed collections documenting their state’s history

Circulate materials directly to public or through Interlibrary Loan system

Collections readily accessible to users who visit the library

Maintain state document depository system and offer special services to state government officials and employees

Budget problems have posed challenges but not been crippling

Organizational stability

Strong, nationally recognized state librarians

Leaders in library and information technology

Excellent relationship with state’s library community

Affiliated with a private foundation or friends group
Differences

Different placement in state government (one independent agency, one in Department of Education, one in unique Department of History, Arts, and Libraries)

One library (LM) had greater leadership turnover

One library (NYSL) had lower visibility in community press

Profile of Group II Libraries

The libraries included in Group II have a great deal in common with each other but there are subtle differences among them as well that reflect the diversity among state libraries as a whole. These libraries were founded later than the libraries in Group I. The State Library of Kansas was established just ten years following the state’s entry into the Union in 1861, but Georgia’s state library was created more than a hundred years following statehood and the Tennessee’s was nearly fifty-eight years after its admission into the United States in 1796. What this meant in the case of Kansas and Georgia particularly was that their state libraries did not acquire many materials relating to their state’s early history that would in time become historically significant. Their collections focused, as a result, primarily on law and more recent government information.

While the missions of these three libraries are somewhat different, they each place a heavy emphasis on their library development responsibilities. In the case of Georgia, working to promote and strengthen the state’s public libraries is the only responsibility that the state library fulfills, and the State Library of Kansas definitely regards this as its primary activity. Kansas and Tennessee also devote considerable staff resources to supporting the research needs of their state governments, particularly the legislatures in
their states. The Group I libraries fulfill both these roles as well, but the difference is that
the Group I libraries are involved in many other activities and serve a more diverse
constituency while the libraries in Group II consider public libraries and government
officials to be their primary stakeholders.

As a general rule, the Group II libraries have much more limited contact with the
public than the Group I libraries do. The Georgia Public Library Service does not serve
the public directly at all. The State Library of Kansas does allow citizens to use its
collections, but as the collections contain only legal and public policy materials and
citizens may not borrow materials from the library, public use of the SLK is minimal.
The Tennessee State Library and Archives also does not circulate materials to the public
either, but its collections, which include the state’s archives, are unique and thus attract
several thousand researchers a year who are working on Tennessee history and genealogy
topics. Researchers must show identification, however, and must have a specific research
interest to gain admittance to the TSLA facility. Until very recently, the general public
has not been encouraged to visit the TSLA building. The TSLA building is visible to the
public, located as it is near the State Capitol; the public would have difficulty finding
either the GPLS or the SLK, as the former is in an office complex away from the state
capital and the latter is located in a suite of rooms in the State Capitol building itself.

The three Group II libraries are placed within their state government bureaucracy
at the present time in a way that seems to work to the advantage of each library – that is
to say they appear to be protected from the worst of the vicissitudes of state politics. As
an independent agency reporting directly to the governor, the SLK is able to keep the
state’s governor fully informed about library activities and able to make a case for
support directly to the chief executive. The TSLA reports to the Secretary of State, who
is located within the legislative branch of government, the branch of government that
controls the purse strings. As long as the Secretary of State is supportive of the state
library’s mission, the agency can be assured of having its needs understood. The Georgia
State Library did not fare well for many years as a small agency within the state’s
educational secretariat and was vulnerable to many of the same pressures that faced the
threatened Group III libraries. However, reincarnated in 2000 as the Georgia Public
Library Service, the library has done extremely well since its move under the university
system’s Board of Regents, which understands the state library’s mission. Still, although
these libraries are sheltered somewhat from political pressures, they are not protected
from their state’s fiscal problems. Each of these libraries has experienced funding
decreases in the past decade, and in the case of Georgia, the financial realities were
serious enough in the late 1990s to put the library at risk.

The leadership of the Group II libraries during the past twenty years has been
similar as well, in that the men and women who have headed up the three state libraries
have had solid reputations and records of accomplishment within their states but they
have not necessarily been well known in the wider library profession. Edwin Gleaves, of
Tennessee, and Duane Johnson, of Kansas, however, were senior members of COSLA for
many years due to their long tenure as state librarians, but there are virtually no mentions
of them in the national library literature.

Although the library community in Georgia, Kansas, and Tennessee are familiar
with the responsibilities and activities of their state library, the TSLA is the only one of
the three libraries that appears to have visibility within the state capital. The GPLS and
SLK are rarely mentioned in the paper of record in their communities. The TSLA does much better, with an average of ten articles a year appearing in the Nashville paper, many of these articles relating to the library’s historical collections or to information available in the state’s archives.

Summary Profile of Group II Libraries:

Similarities

Founded later than Group I libraries, in two cases significantly after statehood
Two of three do not have historical collections
Two of three place strongest emphasis on public library development activities
Two of three devote considerable resources to state government’s research needs
More limited contact with the public
No circulation of materials
All experienced significant fiscal challenges in recent past
Well-respected leaders but not nationally known

Differences

Different placement in state government (one an independent agency, a legislative agency in Department of State, one in state university system)
Two of three have low visibility in community press

Profile of Group III Libraries

While the circumstances of their very recent history are comparable, the Group III libraries otherwise have many more differences than similarities. The Washington State Library was founded when Washington was just a territory, thirty-six years before it
became a state. On the other hand, Minnesota established its state library forty-one years after statehood, while Florida did not create a state library until nearly eighty years after it achieved statehood. As a result, the Washington State Library amassed a large collection of historically significant books, maps, newspapers, and federal documents dealing with the exploration and settlement of the American West. Florida and Minnesota did not build similar collections, although the Florida State Library acquired the state’s archives through a merger in the 1980s adding an important research component to its responsibilities.

For much of its history, the primary focus of the Florida State Library was on the development of the state’s public libraries, as was and still is the case with Minnesota. While working with the state’s public libraries has also traditionally been a priority for the Washington State Library, Washington (like the New York State Library) has been known nationally for many years for its outstanding service as an information resource for state government.

Minnesota’s state library agency is an extremely small organization, with 19 full-time staff members. It has no direct contact with the public, dealing almost exclusively with public library directors and school media specialists. Prior to it’s recent incarnation, it had a small library science-focused collection that it made available through interlibrary loan, but that collection has since been dispersed and the public at large has no reason to visit the library. The Washington State Library, on the other hand, is a medium sized state library, with 85 full-time employees. Until the last few years, its primary constituency has been public libraries and state government, with some public visitation for research purposes. Before the crisis that threatened to eliminate the library,
the public was not a high priority for the WSL, by its own admission. Since 2002, however, outreach to the public has become an important library concern. Florida’s State Library and Archives, with 122 full-time staff is one of the larger state libraries in the country and serves not only libraries and state government but also the archival and records management community in the state and a large number of historical and genealogical researchers.

Minnesota’s state library has had a history of organizational instability, having been moved several times from one government department to another and from one building to another. The agency has also experienced severe financial problems since the early 1990s. Within the state’s Department of Education for most of that time, it suffered most when it was part of a Department of Children, Families, and Learning, which was meant to replace the traditional state model for education. Florida and Washington’s state libraries, on other hand, had been relatively stable organizations for a long time. For most of its history, the FSLA reported to the Secretary of State, who was chosen in a statewide election. Washington had been an independent state agency. The WSL had been forced to move from its prime location near the State Capitol and was occupying much less visible temporary quarters when it was threatened, but the FSLA was firmly ensconced in a landmark building it had occupied for more than thirty years.

There are variations as well among the three libraries in terms of the public’s awareness of their programs and services. The FSLA received decent (by state library standards) coverage in the Tallahassee paper prior to 2002, whereas coverage of Minnesota’s state library agency was virtually non-existent.
The Group III libraries do have some experiences in common, however. Prior to their recent problems, all three libraries were led by state librarians who were active in the library profession nationally and who had a great deal of experience in their positions. The state librarians of Minnesota and Florida had each served more than twenty years in that capacity, while Washington had had two state librarians who served eleven and sixteen years respectively. Each of these libraries had and continue to have solid working relationships with the library communities in their states. The Group III libraries have one other critical factor in common: none of them anticipated that they would face a situation in which their very existence would be called into question. In each case, this scenario took them completely by surprise.

**Summary Profile of Group III Libraries:**

*Similarities*

Two of the three were stable organizations throughout most of their history

Strong, nationally recognized leaders with longevity and experience

None of the Group III state libraries anticipated the crisis they faced in advance

* Differences*

Wide variance in founding dates

Wide range of activities, with one agency having the state archives, another concentrating in state government and technology resources, and the third focused primarily on public library development

Great difference in size of organizations (one small, one medium, and one large state library agency)

Different placement in state government prior to crisis (one in Department of Education, one in Department of State, and one an independent agency)

Wide divergence in community awareness as evidenced in press coverage
Implications

The research conducted for this study suggests that, while there is no magic formula that can be adopted by a state library to guarantee success, there are certain conditions or factors that have helped some state libraries fare better than others. Age or longevity is one. State libraries that were founded early in their state’s history have done better over time than those founded much more recently. These libraries have deeper roots within the processes and structure of their state government. Equally important, over time these libraries have acquired books, documents, photographs, newspapers, and other materials that document their state’s history, making them important research repositories. These collections attract a sizable number of historians, genealogists, and other researchers to each of these libraries, providing them with a larger constituent base than state libraries that do not have general historical collections. Size also matters. The libraries that have larger staffs and budgets have tended to fare better, having sufficient resources to maintain momentum during lean times and the flexibility to take advantage of new opportunities as they arise.

Where a library agency is placed within state government also makes a difference. The situation of the libraries included in this study indicates that those that are independent agencies and those that are included in a culturally-oriented department (such as Michigan’s Department of History, Arts, and Libraries) have greater control over their programs and services and an advantage in making their case for state support and resources. Libraries that fall under the purview of a Department of Education face greater challenges in this regard. The notable exception is the New York State Library, which reports to New York’s equivalent of an education department, the independent and
powerful State Board of Regents. But even more important than where a library is placed within government is whether or not a state library agency has an advocate in the organization or individual to whom it reports. The Tennessee State Library and Archives, for example, has done much better than it might in recent years due to the staunch support of longtime Secretary of State Riley Darnell; the Washington State Library has bounced back quickly from the crisis it experienced five years ago because Washington’s Secretary of State, Sam Reed, has been a champion of the state library and the state’s other major cultural agencies that fall within his purview. The Georgia Public Library Service has seen some important increases in funding for libraries in the past few years due to the support of Governor Sonny Perdue, who sees a direct connection between his education goals and libraries.

Virtually all of the above-listed factors that have contributed to the success of state libraries are beyond an individual library’s ability to control. This makes it all the more important for state libraries to identify and focus on elements over which they can have some influence. All the Group I libraries in this study offer special or customized services to state government (the California Research Bureau is a prime example). These services provide a direct benefit to state employees and officials and help to keep the state library relevant to the mission of other state agencies and departments. These services do not by themselves offer protection from problems (the situation of the Washington State Library, long known for the support it provides to state government, makes this clear), but they do enhance a state library’s standing in state government. All Group I libraries also have a private foundation or friends’ organization aligned closely to it. Such groups are not a substitute for state support, but they do provide additional funds
for acquisitions or programs for which there will never be sufficient state money. They also connect a group of highly motivated and interested citizens to the state library’s mission. Members of foundation or friends groups often serve as effective advocates for a state library, particularly at times when the library may face external challenges. Very few state libraries to date have pursued this option, but the benefit to those that have is evident.

The most successful libraries examined in this study have another component in common. They all sponsor numerous special events, lectures, workshops, book talks and signings, and other programs that appeal to public audiences. For example, the State Library of Kansas and the Library of Michigan host their state’s Center for the Book, affiliated with the Library of Congress, and sponsor well-attended and promoted book events and festivals. The Washington State Library has recently begun a program of evening lectures featuring local historians and authors speaking about the state’s history. Through its friends organization, the New York State Library sponsors similar talks and programs that draw large audiences to the library.

All the libraries in this study appear to have good relationships with the library community within their state and their state’s library association. These relationships made a critical difference in saving the state libraries of Florida, Washington, and Minnesota from elimination. Librarians and the state’s library association also advocated for Georgia’s, New York, and Michigan’s state library agencies when they experienced setbacks as well. The support of the library community in a state cannot by itself ensure a state library’s success, but it has made a vital difference for many of the libraries included in this study.
In addition to these positive factors, it is possible to identify conditions that contribute to the weakening of state libraries. Some of these, obviously, are beyond a state library’s control. In periods of economic downturn when state revenues fall below budgetary needs, all state agencies are likely to experience funding reductions that have an impact on staffing, programs, and services, and state libraries are no exception. While virtually all state libraries have faced such circumstances, those whose activities and contributions have been less visible to decision makers and the public have been more seriously affected. The political climate within a state can also work against state libraries, particularly if the executive or legislative branches of government are controlled by individuals who are committed shrinking the size of government. If they do not understand or appreciate the unique role that a state library plays, they may well believe (as in the case of Florida, Washington, or Minnesota, for example) that a state library merely duplicates services already available to citizens at the local level.

State libraries cannot do much about the economic and political conditions within which they must operate, though they can learn lessons from the experience of others that can help them function within certain environments. They can, however, address some of the other conditions that cause them to be at risk. Those located within education departments can take steps to communicate more effectively the connection between the state library’s mission and the information needs of the K-12, community college, and even higher education communities and not assume that the connection is readily apparent to education administrators. Low visibility with the public is also something that state libraries can work to redress, finding new ways within the limits of their resources to make citizens aware of what they do. Virtually all state libraries manage the
licensing for statewide databases that are made available free of charge to the public, and many also offer an interface through which one can search for online government information seamlessly across state agencies and web sites. The state library’s role in providing these resources, however, is often hidden from view to a citizen logging on to use them. This point was brought home dramatically in Washington State, when a legislator was explaining to State Librarian Nancy Zussy why he supported the governor’s proposal to close the state library. He found virtually everything he needed on the Internet, and to prove his contention, he showed her the site he used most often. It was Find It! Washington, which was created and maintained by the state library, but he had no idea this was the case.  


An in-depth look at this study’s sample of nine state libraries suggests there is nothing that state libraries can do to shield themselves from threats, but they can be proactive in positioning themselves better to anticipate and meet them. The recent history of state libraries suggests that they can no longer assume, as they did throughout most of the second half of the twentieth century, that if they serve public libraries well their value is transparent to government decision makers and the state’s citizenry, that their place in the state’s bureaucracy is secure, and that their role as administrators of the federal LSTA program is sufficient to ensure their continued existence. State libraries, no matter their size or the scope of their activities, need to:
• Recognize that the technological environment in which they operate requires that they be more effective in explaining the value that they add in an information-rich age and compete more aggressively for limited public funds. They need to advocate not only for public libraries (which is one of their critically important functions) but also for their own unique role, something state libraries have traditionally been reluctant or uncomfortable doing,

• Articulate the expertise they bring to bear in identifying authoritative digital information, licensing it, harvesting it, organizing it, and making it accessible. Other libraries understand what state libraries do in this regard, but the public and policymakers must as well,

• Pay attention to branding their products and services in a way that makes state libraries’ work more visible. Many local library efforts (such as summer reading programs, access to licensed information resources, digitization of local collections, and the like) are made possible with state library support, but citizens and government officials have no way of knowing this. Libraries have traditionally associated branding with business enterprises, but cultural organizations are increasingly realizing the importance of brand identification with their endeavors as well,

• Seek new ways to provide service to state government, particularly in the area of technology. Rather than wait for state agencies to request reference assistance, state libraries need to identify new opportunities to apply library expertise to the work of government, such as key offering to assist in organizing state web portals and linking the library’s online reference services (particularly live chat) directly to state government sites,
• Where possible, be more proactive in linking state library activities to wider educational goals and objectives. Whether or not a state library is located within an education department, its services have an impact on education that often goes unrecognized. Facilitating online database access is only one example. State libraries with historical or archival collections have an opportunity to assist teachers in using primary sources in classrooms, linking them where appropriate to a state’s standards of learning. The Tennessee State Library and Archives’s recent educational outreach efforts are a notable example of this. In addition, state libraries might well play an important role in life-long learning, not only in preparing librarians to be future library leaders, but in offering appropriate educational programs that appeal to the wider public as well, and

• Play a leadership role in anticipating and shaping the future of libraries. State libraries occupy a unique position with their states and can use their expertise and experience as well as that of the public, academic, and special libraries with whom they interact to craft a vision for libraries and suggest pathways to the future. This represents an expansion of state libraries’ traditional library development role, but it is an appropriate one and will be vitally important in ensuring continuing state and federal support for libraries.

It will be easier for larger state libraries and state libraries with broader missions to consider following these recommendations than for smaller state libraries and those that only have library development responsibilities. Still, the recent history of state libraries – particularly those state libraries that have had to justify their existence and
fight to survive – strongly suggests that efforts to increase visibility and connect with
the wider public are vitally important. This is not something that state libraries
traditionally felt compelled to do. The roles that state libraries play, described most
recently by Himmel and Wilson in *Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies*, are
still valid, but they need to be expanded to encompass wider constituencies. State
libraries, for example, are still Advocates, but not only of the importance of libraries
and library services in general but of their own unique contributions. State libraries
must still be Providers, but not only of consulting services to libraries and reference
services to citizens and state government, but of programs and outreach efforts that
reach wider audiences. State libraries are still Educators, but would do well to
address younger audiences and life-long learners as well as librarians. And state
libraries must continue to be Leaders, but not just to improve library efficiency and
effectiveness but to help libraries and citizens understand the role that libraries can
and must play in the future.
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