

**SETTING THE DIRECTION FOR  
THE LIBRARY STATISTICS COOPERATIVE PROGRAM**

**September 23, 1998  
10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**

*National Center for Education Statistics:* Paul Planchon; Jeff Williams; Adrienne Chute; Elaine Kroe

*National Commission on Libraries and Information Science:* Abe Abramson; Rebecca Bingham; Joan Challinor; Bob Willard; Judith Russell; Kim Miller; Howard Harris

*Public Library Representatives:* Dianne Carty; Sandi Long; Sarah Long; Gerry Roland

*State Library Representatives:* Keith Lance; Joseph Shubert; Barratt Wilkins

*Academic Library Representatives:* William Agruilar; Ronald Naylor; Carolyn Norman; Robert Wedgeworth

*School Library Representatives:* June Berry; Paula Montgomery; Ann Weeks

*Library Cooperatives and Networks:* Jordan Scepaniski; Mary Treacy

*American Library Association:* Carol Henderson; Mary Jo Lynch

*Observers:* Patricia Garner; Bob Rossi; Diana Tope; J. D. Waggoner; Al Zimmerman

**TAPE 1, SIDE A**

Willard: I am delighted to kick off this meeting. First of all, I want to say “Thank you, as strongly as I possibly can to all of you who have agreed to spend part of your time with us to talk about a very important subject. I’ll say more in just a few minutes about the meetings. At this point, I would like to make sure that you know the members of the Commission that are here: Abe Abramson from the hub of five valleys (and one of those is Montana, right?).

Abramson: Wait a minute, don’t think we aren’t paying attention. We now have a fourteen-day waiting period before you can buy a cabin in Montana. (Laughter).

Willard: Our newest Commissioner, Rebecca Bingham from Louisville, Kentucky. Later Joan Challinor who is local, but has been out of town and is just returning, will join us. She will be here shortly.

Also, I would like to recognize the members of the staff that are here: my new deputy and long-time colleague, Judy Russell (sitting at the front).

Welcome, Joan, I just introduced you; Kim Miller, who has been the backbone of our statistics program for many a year; and, on a consulting basis, Howard Harris. Howard...well, everybody that will have a role later on. But, at this point I would like to ask Paul Planchon to say a few remarks on behalf of NCES.

Planchon: Thank you, Bob. I'd like to join Bob in welcoming all of you to this meeting. A special thanks to staff at NCLIS: Bob, Judy Russell, special consultant Howard Harris, and Kim Miller for organizing and getting such a wonderful meeting together. I appreciate that very much.

I would like to acknowledge the staff that are here with me from NCES: Adrienne Chute, Elaine Kroe, and Jeff Williams. They are the backbone of our Library Statistics Program at NCES.

I would also like to thank the participants for coming and joining us: the members of the Federal-State Cooperative System Steering Committee; members of the State Library Steering Committee; and the participants and members of the Academic Library committee, the Library School Media Survey Committee, and Networks and Cooperatives. Participation of people like yourselves is a key activity, or a key function, in the way we do business at NCES.

We did a little survey a few years ago. I think at that time we had approximately 35 advisory groups that worked with us on various surveys involving 200 or 300 people who would come and give their advice on the content and direction of our surveys. Without the participation of the citizens around the country, we could not do our job. And, so, we appreciate their participation very much.

About a year ago, NCES and NCLIS decided to commission the paper that Howard has prepared to take a look at the Library Statistics Program at NCES and the relationship between NCES and NCLIS. That seemed particularly appropriate given the expansion of the Library Statistics Program. During that period, it saw the creation of the Federal-State Cooperative System, the Public Library Survey, the institution of the State-Library Survey, making regular the School and Media Center Survey as part of our Schools and Staffing Survey. We just completed a new Networks and Cooperative Survey. During that period, we also did a survey of Federal Libraries, and, of course, we continue the Academic Libraries as a part of IPEDS. We thought it was appropriate to step back and to examine that program and the relationship with NCLIS. I would like to thank Howard very much for your fine paper. It is a very thoughtful paper. It is a very challenging paper. And, I hope it will serve as a springboard for the discussion on the future of the Library Statistics Program in this country. I hope this discussion will affirm what we have been doing will, and I hope it will help identify what we could do better. I think it will serve as an opportunity for us at NCES to re-evaluate our Library Statistics Program [not only] what it has done in the past 10 years, but how we can make it better.

If a case could be made for new surveys or surveys on different cycles, I think all of those things are possible if we can just make the case. We are in a favored position at NCES these last few years with our new Commissioner Pat Forgione who, by the way, sends his greetings. We are in a period where we have been successful in getting some budget increases, and I think it is quite possible that we can provide the rationale for an enhanced Library Statistics Program, if that is possible. I look forward very much to the discussion today. I hope that we can develop some appropriate follow-up to this meeting so that we can continue this discussion. I look forward to your comments. I will be making a few reflections at the end of the meeting. Thank you all for coming. [applause]

Willard: Let me set the pattern now for remaining in my seat for the next presentation because this meant to be just a comfortable conversation by all of us. The Commission – as probably everybody in this room knows – was established back in 1970 to be a permanent agency within the government to provide policy advice to the Congress and the President on the library and information needs of the public. Well, it's pretty hard to make policy recommendations if you don't know what is going on.

I am, I guess, a pretty shy and retiring person and usually I let five or six minutes go by when I meet someone new before I let them know that I am an avid Lincoln collector. I have been studying Abraham Lincoln since I was in high school, which is more years ago than I care to recount. Some of the people in this room know what quote I am going to play because I used it just last week. One of the quotes that I have been looking at a lot, which Lincoln opened a speech with, is from the speech when he was nominated to run for the Senate against Stephen Douglas which led to the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates. The opening line of his acceptance speech said:

If we could first know where we are and whither we are attending, we could then better judge what to do and how to do it.

To me, that captures the whole spirit of why statistics are important, because we have to know where we are and whither we are attending before we make plans to go further. And, for the Commission, with its statutory assignment, to make plans, we **really** rely on statistics. Now, I could, given the opportunity, spend ten, twenty, or thirty minutes talking about my belief in statistics. But that isn't the purpose today. The purpose today for those of us inside the Beltway, those of us who are bureaucrats, is to listen. We have assembled just an astounding collection of individuals whose experience and perspectives on the library world is unparalleled. So, we want to give as much time as possible to **you** to share **your** perspectives with us.

We do have what I have characterized as sort-of a 'seed for conversation' -- a consultant report. I want to stress this consultant report, which Paul has already mentioned, is not an action plan. It is **not** an adopted position of the Commission; it is simply something that has been put together by a talented individual who has taken the time to talk to a lot of people. But it is only the first step. So, today we want to get just a very quick – I'll say

that again, *a very quick* – overview of the report, which Howard will do. Then, we'll turn it over to Judy. Judy's role today will be that of a facilitator. Again, for those of us in Washington, obviously we will, if there are questions in fact or something along those lines where we can make positive contributions, clearly we will participate in the discussion. But, primarily the discussion is for those of you who have traveled here to be with us today.

With that, I will turn it over to Howard Harris.

Harris: I am going to turn it immediately over to Judy Russell. Are there any questions? What will we do for wrap-up? (Laughter). Since I know what the next order of business is, we realized that we really should get out to all of you a participant list; it is a notable lacking. We would like it if we could go around the room quickly. Because of the geometry of the room, there are probably some people who literally can't see others and don't know who may be in the room. If you could say your name and what area you come from, recognizing that we are all pressing forward to get to the business at hand, which is to hear **you**. We are looking to note who's at the table. I'll just say, "Howard Harris, Consultant to NCLIS," and pass it off to my left.

Russell: Judy Russell, Deputy Director, NCLIS.

Miller: Kim Miller, NCLIS

Naylor: Ron Naylor, University of Miami Libraries.

Norman: Carolyn Norman, Coordinator of Libraries and Learning Resources Programs for the California Community Colleges.

Long: Sandi Long, Utah State Library.

Rowland: Gerry Rowland, State Library in Iowa.

Carty: Diane Carty, Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

Long: Sarah Long, Director, North Suburban Library System in Cleveland, Illinois. I am also President-elect of the American Library Association.

Challinor: That's good enough for us. (Laughter) After that, I am nobody. I'm Joan Challinor, a Commission at NCLIS.

Kroe: Elaine Kroe from NCES.

Lance: Keith Lance, Library Research Service at the Colorado State Library, University of Denver Library School.

Shubert: Joe Shubert, New York State Librarian-Emeritus.

Wilkins: Barrett Wilkins, State Librarian of Florida.

Abramson: Why don't we let the observers in at this point?

Tope: Diana Tope, Director of the Public Library in Northwest Georgia. I just finished a three-year term of serving on the Steering Committee of FSCS.

Waggoner: J. D. Waggoner, West Virginia Library Commission; also serve on the Steering Committee for FSCS.

Garner: I am Pat Garner, Library Programs Manager at Census.

Zimmerman: Alan Zimmerman, Wisconsin State Library Services, Data Coordinator. I am also on the FSCS Steering Committee.

Abramson: My name is Abe Abramson. I am a real estate broker from Missoula, Montana; an NCLIS Commissioner; and a long-time public library trustee. I was "Volunteer of the Year" in my public library.

Lynch: I am Mary Jo Lynch, Director of the Office for Research and Statistics at ALA.

Montgomery: Paula Montgomery, Publisher, School Libraries Media (unintelligible)

Weeks: I am Ann Weeks, Director of Libraries for the Chicago Public Schools.

Berry: June Berry, Chair of the American Association of School Librarians, Research and Statistics Committee.

Chute: Adrienne Chute, NCES.

Scepanski: I am Jordan Scepanski of the Triangle Research Libraries Network in North Carolina.

Treacy: I am Mary Treacy, Director of Metronet, a Multitype System in Minneapolis-St. Paul.

Rossi: Ed Rossi with the American Institutes for Research working with NCES.

Williams: Jeff Williams of NCES, Project Officer for the Academic Library Survey and School Library Media Center Survey.

Bingham: I am Rebecca Bingham, a Commissioner on NCLIS.

Agruilar: I am William Agruilar. I am Vice President of Information Resources and Technology at the California State University, San Bernardino.

Wedgeworth: I am Bob Wedgeworth, University of Illinois at Urbana.

Russell: One technical thing before Howard does his summary. As you can see, we started off with the idea of doing a power point presentation and the technology, as it sometimes does, failed, but we had a back-up plan. And, so, all of you have at your seats (and for those of you who are observers, they are on the side table), copies of the slides that we were going to be using to talk from. So, if you want to follow along and use those as a place for taking notes or something, that's fine. There are also a couple of other handouts on the side table, including copies of Howard's report. I think all of you have seen it at least once. But, if anybody wanted a copy to refer to, we did bring some along today and that will help with Howard's very rapid summary of his report, which is probably not going to give it justice given the amount of information that's in it.

Harris: I think that we are here primarily to hear what is to be said. Let me just say that we are glad to have brought together this group. We are looking for your review and your consideration of future directions and to see what next steps should be taken to strengthen the program.

On page 3, if you will, at the bottom right-hand corner they are numbered, you will see a numeration of the topics that were the subject of the report. These were as commissioned by NCLIS of me, the consultant, and they focused on the improvement of the Library Statistics Cooperative Program and, actually, the component of that which NCES performs which, to those on the outside had been known as the Library Statistics Program:

- Long-term goals for the cooperative program;
- A framework for short-term and long-term planning;
- Directions for future NCLIS involvement;

{the next two items really focus on how a number of groups relate to each other}

- Comments on training; and
- Other directions

Let me try to highlight very quickly a few items from each of those areas.

If you are on page 7 of the handout, you will see that there is a condensed version of the recommendations. It's helpful; at least it's in front of you in kind of a 'boiled down' version.

In terms of the Cooperative Program and the LSP, there is a great concern with timely processing and distribution of survey results. A real concern is that NCLIS and NCES achieve a more equitable partnership and, probably, because of the importance of this to NCLIS, that NCLIS share in some of the funding and support of the program. The notion

to extend some of the work that NCLIS has done with respect to policy-oriented work; notably, the Public Libraries and the Internet survey in which NCLIS has been involved as a kind-of prototype of that. The need to keep some concurrence between what is going on with respect to data collection federally and, also, what happens in terms of national standards. And, really, the bottom items, to call attention to the data and really support illustrative types of use of the data on the part of the administrators who are researchers.

On the next page, in terms of long-term goals, just highlighting a few of these. A lot is going on with respect to network information. Apart from what happens in buildings – which I think is really the focus of a lot of what data we now have in hand – and to focus on that as well, given the change in legislation in the library area and the creation of the IMLS. To look also, then, at virtual institutions in addition to those that are brick and mortar and to look at the impact of not only technological areas but to make sure that attention is paid to both technological and non-technological areas.

If you look internationally, there has been a lot of opportunity to see how people are doing what we are now doing in quite different ways. And sometimes the size of this country hasn't always worked to advantage, and there can be some models that can be looked at in other countries where people are actually able to move more quickly on some of the topics that now confront us. Just as so, we can make sure that we are not disadvantaged by the strengths that we have as a country.

In the panel at the bottom, I think there is a definite interest in maintaining what has been done in terms of what's called here, "Technical Working Group" and what many of you know as a Cooperative. The focus, also, to take a look at what's happening inside the federal government without recapitulating this, a lot of things has changed and there is a need, you know, for people who are at this end of the stick, if you will, to know what is happening with respect to data collection – many things: IMLS; NSF; NCLIS; NCES – one could go on.

The next point would really be to make sure that, in some way, that citizens, as well as experts, can have a bearing on what's done. The ultimate beneficiaries of all this are users.

Again, to take a look at the type of investigations that are done and to look to researchers as, perhaps, the people who can best tell us about some items that might well be asked in routine surveys or non-routine surveys. Again, taking a look at the public library and the Internet.

In terms of future involvement, on the next page, to really look at the prospect of some change in the organizational structure as a group like this might look at it and see as the need for such change. To be able to work on documenting exemplary uses of the data and really calling those people's attention. To be able to identify future trends that are on the horizon, if you will, and find some ways in the near term to really pay attention to them in terms of surveys and data collection and research.

At the bottom, again, really emphasizing the notion of working with a single group, not trying to create many different groups, but trying to find a modality that will allow the most effective way of bringing expertise to bear on these problems. And, to really have that group, if you will, focus on the needs and purposes of the data and to leave, in every case, to the experts, the people who are actually collecting the data, the detailed questions about how items are to be asked and so forth.

To supplement the membership of the group with expertise that may not necessarily be in place with respect to new technologies or other specialties.

On the next page, again emphasizing in terms of the relationship of groups, the key relationship between NCLIS and NCES. To be able to use an event – such as the policy forum, which has been an event; one that has brought people together, and there may be another event in the future – to use some congregating event as both the source of input for the program as well as the way of disseminating information about what is going on in the program. Many of these reports that some of you know so well probably don't receive much attention in the library field just because, maybe, people don't stand up and talk about them.

To look, also, at the prospect of making some monetary awards for exemplary uses of data.

In terms of training, I think I'll step over that. That is an area, I think, that should receive a lot of attention and there is one at the end here about, "Other areas." I am going to skip over there because we are pressed for time and we want to hear rather than talk. That is just to orient you to some of the recommendations of the report. I think I'll take it back to Judy at this point in time.

Russell: Thank you. Actually, it is appropriate that you stop there because the next appendix is Appendix B, the description, primarily, of the characteristics and responsibilities of the library statistics Fellow, the Fellow for Statistics and Surveys. I think all of you have seen the press release that we put out seeking either nominations or expressions of interest in the fellowship. It is impossible to replace John Lorenz. Since his departure, we have stopped and taken a look at the program and how we should staff it in the future. We created the concept of a fellowship as a way of opening that up, not just to somebody who might come and be willing to take a permanent position (although that is still an option), but also to others who might want to come out of the community for a period of time, spend some time at the Commission (either on an intergovernmental exchange or some other method) and then return. Therefore, maybe bring some breadth of experience to us.

We did bring more copies of the press release with us, and we are hoping that all of you will share that and scratch your heads and nominate people that you are aware of that might be appropriate for us because it is really key to NCLIS' involvement in this to have



a very strong staff person in place. Howard has been very helpful in sort of acting on an interim basis and helping us with the recruitment, but that's not a long-term solution, and we need to get that person in place. We are hoping that all of you will participate in that both by providing comments back on the characteristics and responsibilities, but also by helping to find the person who fits those characteristics. Thank you.

The other thing that is going on right now is that NCLIS has for several years now jointly with the American Library Association sponsored some surveys of public libraries and access to the Internet. The newest survey has just been completed, and the results will probably be published in October. We have already begun using some of the results in congressional testimony, and it shed some light on very current policy issues. I'll give you this one quick example of why this is timely. I think you are all aware that there has been a lot of legislation pending on the filtering issue and on mandating filtering in schools and libraries. It happened that there were questions on both access policies for public access Internet terminals and filtering, and we were able to cross-tab that information and come up very quickly with the information that 97.1% of the public libraries have either an acceptable use policy or filtering software, or both. So, we really have a problem here that Congress is trying to solve: only 2.9% of the libraries that haven't done anything yet. It is that kind of thing that is really of concern. When we talk about the timeliness and use of these statistics for policy-oriented decision-making, the ability to have sound data, not just anecdotes, to take in to the legislative process is really important.

Howard mentioned NCLIS' increased financial contribution. We are putting more money from the NCLIS budget, even though our budget has not grown, into the statistics program so that we are adding to what NCES is able to give us for the Fellow, for example, in order to have a larger pot of money available to recruit a more senior person. So NCLIS is acting not just as a recipient of NCES funds, but as a partner in a truer sense then. Assuming we can increase our appropriation over time, we would expect to put more money in the program.

And, then, finally, we are seeing a lot of other groups, ourselves included, in this ALA-NCLIS survey and the Public Library Association, ACRL, announcing they expect to do an academic library survey. One of the things that is striking us is that we're scattering our resources. We are not coordinating what we are doing, and really, maybe, organizing our resources to get the most bang for our buck. And, so, it is just something to think about in terms of the environment that we are operating in in terms of how do we address the information needs in such a way that we are not duplicating each other or collecting comparable data over and over instead of investing and getting data that nobody else is getting.

That is just some background to the discussion. We have talked to the people at NCES and came up with several themes that we wanted to use as a way of organizing the discussion. They appear on slide #8. One was the theme of establishing a full partnership between NCES and NCLIS. And, as I mentioned, that is underway, and there

may not be a lot of discussion other than maybe comments that you might have about the distinct roles for the two organizations or how you feel about the change in relationship that we have.

We also want to talk about taking a new look at the existing cooperative program. It's been ten years; a lot of progress has been made. It's always sort of a good time to take stock and see where do we come from, and where are we going? What's working, and, therefore, should be strengthened or kept? What may not working so well and could use some 'tweaking.' As Paul mentioned, what we really want to do is strengthen the program, so we are not looking at change for its own sake but, rather, trying to capitalize on the access we have.

There has been some discussion, as an outcome from Howard's report, about handling cooperatives to other types of libraries. It seems to be working very well in the environments where it's working, and we want to examine if that is the right model to take into the other types of libraries we are surveying.

There has been some discussion about having a coordinating body. In effect, you are sort of a microcosm of that because all five of the different survey groups are together at the same table at the same time so that each of the communities is represented. One of the questions is, "Is there is a real benefit to that?" To having some sort of an organized way to communicate.

We are seeing e-rate and other things drive us to the point where we are going to need to be able to carry data between public libraries and school libraries. If we want to talk about common data elements and how to move forward, is that a way to approach it? If not, how do we increase that communication? There may be other mechanisms besides coordinating body and catalysts for that discussion.

And, finally, the issue of developing mechanisms to address cutting-edge policy concerns. Our little study that ALA and NCLIS did took eight months from contract to publication. It took five months from contract to the point where we were actually on the Hill testifying, using some of the data. In order to respond to cutting-edge issues, timeliness becomes critical. But you don't want to sacrifice accuracy, so there are some real issues about how do we do that? How do we gather the data quickly to respond to the issue or have the data ready when the issue comes so that we can document it?

Those were the themes that we had come up with. Before we actually start discussing them, I want to see if any of you saw something that was missing from this group that we should add to the list. That would help us parse our time a little bit. If not, we can start with these themes and try to spend about 10 to 15 minutes on each one. I will cut off discussions so we can move to the next one and be sure we covered them all. If there is one that really needs a lot of attention, we will try to come back at the end and pick it up. There is some overlap between this so the lines are not crystal clear.

Anybody have something else they think should be added to this list for discussion? It's a lot to cover, I know.

Long: I'm not sure; maybe it fits in here somewhere. My big concern is timeliness. The statistics that I need are...I need newer statistics than you are able to give me. I think that is one of the reasons that the Public Library Association got into their data service. They wanted something that is more timely, too. Does that fit in here somewhere? I know it was mentioned in the report.

Russell: Right. I think it comes up a little bit in the mechanisms to address cutting-edge policy concerns, and maybe even in terms of the structures. Paul said one of the things that can be looked at overtime (obviously it is very hard to shift budgets in the near term) is reallocating resources. It may be that we want less regular major surveys and more quick-response surveys that take smaller amounts of data that get them turned around more quickly. That is the kind of resource allocation issue that overtime could be identified. But, I think it can fit within one or more of these.

Harris: Where would we put it so people know when to comment?

Russell: To me, it sort of fits in the cutting-edge policy concerns.

Rodger/Lynch?: Cutting-edge policy is one thing, but getting basic data out fast is another thing. I think that belongs under the second: Taking a new look at the fields.

Russell: OK, we'll put it there then. OK. That's great.

Harris: We need to help people navigate. You are referring to something. I think this is on page 4, 8-1/2X11, there is something called: Themes for discussion. There are really five items there; one of which may or may not receive any comment, which is the partnership of the NCES and NCLIS. The other four have been laid out in potential ways to organize the discussion. Sara's comment was, "Where would I get something like timeliness." If everyone is happy with fitting it within the existing items, that's OK unless it. . .

Rowland: Unless there is a broader theme, it's kind of hard to come up with a theme on this at the spur of the moment. A broader theme might be, "If this is a solution, what are the problems?"

Lynch: What's 'this'?

Rowland: If this, the report, is a solution, then what are the problems? One problem is timeliness of publications. Are there other problems?

Russell: Maybe what would be helpful is to even identify some of the problems that we think are there and then, at least, we could have them in framework as we talk about each

of the other issues. Are there problems other than timeliness that you think are critical that we need to be kind of looking at with each of these issues as we go through them?

Shubert: Earlier somebody mentioned 'cycles.' I think one of the major problems is the lack of the really current information on school libraries.

Russell: OK.

Shubert: Has there been discussion? Is there a recommendation for annual cycles for schools?

Russell: Not within the report, itself. But that is the kind of feedback that we want to get from the group and, obviously, it becomes a resource issue.

Other things besides timeliness and just the periodicity, or the cycles, of the surveys? I think, maybe, what we'll do is try to keep those as factors in each discussion in each element.

Rowland: Another problem is the lack of standardization. You can't go to the shelf in the library pull off a NISO report and find out what circulation means in the library world.

Russell: Data definitions. Anything else we should add to that list, and then we'll just be sure we touch on that as we go through? OK.

Rowland: Another problem would be that the library world, in general, doesn't seem to know about, or have much respect for, the various statistical publications. How do we market this?

Russell: Is it the question of making them relevant? Making the people know of their relevance as a utility.

Rowland: Yes, all of the above. People aren't going to use the data if they don't know about it or if they don't respect it.

Norman: I believe that goes beyond the data. As I look at the themes for discussion, and the first one is for the partnership between NCES and NCLIS, before I became involved with the library rep's and the advisory committee, I had no idea what NCES and NCLIS (unintelligible). I have been a practicing librarian for eleven years, and the co-op is new to me ..... I think that the library community, as a whole... I work with 106 community colleges in the State of California and you are sort of nebulous to them. You see a survey that I know I prompt them on to get back to me so that I can turn it in, but they never see the results. My survey, that I provide to them each year, is more relevant than this one. They have no idea who you are, what you do.

Sarah Long: Public Relations.

Lynch: I want to make a comment on the two things that Gerry said. On the one hand he indicated a problem in getting the word out about what is happening, and then he said that there is no standard for library statistics. In fact, there is. It comes from NISO, and it was created by a committee that used the NCES surveys. So, that has happened but the word hasn't gotten out.

Rowland: No. We don't use NISO. We changed our definitions. But it hasn't kept up with our changes to the data elements.

Lynch: No. No.

Rowland: So, if somebody goes to the shelf, a public librarian goes to the shelf, to see what the current definition of expenditures for electronic services (something along those lines), they are not going to find it.

Russell: You are saying that you think the NISO standard needs to be updated for new data elements?

Rowland: Right.

Abramson: This may be too specific because I'm talking about a type of statistic, but I'm talking from a trustee perspective, if you will. I don't have any confidence when I'm asked by a governing body or legislator when I'm lobbying. All I can tell them is how much we spend on electronics. I can't tell them any statistic that is meaningful to a funder about usage. What does it mean how many people sat down? What does it mean how many people logged in? What does it mean how many clicked through? I think we are spending a lot of money in that area, and the statistics have to have more meaning than people who are deciding whether they are going to continue funding them or increase funding.

From my perspective, as a basic public library user-type person, it needs to be tied to successes that libraries are having in serving patrons. I know on an international level (I was exposed to the fact at IFLA) that there are some countries, as it was suggested before, are doing better than we are. In fact, I think, the Danes specifically, are hoping to come up with meaningful statistics in that area.

I had breakfast with one of my senators this morning and he said, "Well, what kind of bang are we getting for our electronic buck?" I said, "We are spending a lot of money." If I could have told him how many people sat down at Internet stations in the Missoula public library, that wouldn't have been meaningful.

Lance: For the record, you probably shouldn't have even told him that. (Laughter)

Abramson: I do have that figure, but it doesn't really mean anything. Some of them were checking Hotmail.

Lynch: Maybe they were reading the Starr report.

Rowland: Yea, they were reading the Starr report.

Abramson: That may be implicit in a lot of this. As I say, it may be too specific because I'm talking about a type of statistic. But I think we really have to be able to tell governance structures, who are funders, that the reason that it's a good idea is because happy taxpayers are leaving the libraries satisfied.

Russell: I think that's a real point, and we have talked about that in other meetings, too. We need to move to more performance measures, not to throw away, we still need those, output measures. But, we have to find ways to do the performance.

Having identified some of these issues and problems, can we take this into the themes and see how these things will fit practically within that structure?

Are there any comments on the theme of the partnership between NCES and NCLIS, other than the comment that we need to increase our visibility individually and jointly? Any other particular comment on that? Otherwise, we can move on. OK.

Let's talk a little bit about the existing structure of the LSCP and what some of you think in terms of how that is working, how it might be improved, or that serves you, and how it helps with the process.

Lynch: I wonder if people around this table really know what that is? LSCP is a convenient acronym to describe a set of surveys that I don't know if everybody knows what the current structure is.

Russell: Do you want to give us a one-minute synopsis to be sure that everybody is on the same page?

Lynch: I'll try to do that. There is the FSCS: the Federal-State Cooperative System for public library data, and that really is fifty surveys. The fifty states do the same survey on public libraries in their state. I mean, the same in that there are certain elements which are the same. They feed it into NCES, which then comes out with an annual report. It is cooperative in that the states do the data collection according to some guidelines from a committee, which is made up of the state people.

Then, there is the State Library Survey, which works in a similar way in that the state library people are on a Steering Committee that sets the definitions and the procedures, and NCES collects the data. However, that survey does come out from NCES. So that is a typical survey in that it is created in NCES and then it goes out.

Those two are every year.

Then, there is the Academic Library Survey, which is every two years, and it is part of the whole system of surveys that are done on higher education. We talk about the IPEDS survey, but it is really the IPEDS-Academic Library Survey, and it is done as part of this big system of surveys to higher education. There is an Advisory Committee for that which, really, I have small contract to do that after being on the Advisory Committee twice a year. Carolyn and Ron are part of that. We have this as a two-year.

Then, you get to some very different surveys. The School Library Survey is done, I guess, about every five years. The current data has just come out from the survey done in 1993-1994. Ann Weeks and I had a contract to develop that instrument and pretest it. There was some money left from that so I convened a small committee to look at what's going to be done in 1999-2000. Those are really spaced out.

Then, there is the Cooperative's Survey. We are going to have a meeting at the end of this week on the data that was collected this spring. I think the previous one of those was done in the 1980's? Nineteen eighty-five? A long time ago.

And, then, you have the Federal Library Survey, which was really managed by the Federal Library and Information Center Committee. I was involved, I got drafts and I could have gone to their meetings, but I didn't want to come to Washington just for that.

So, you have a range of surveys, and NCES is very much involved in all of them. The extent to which NCLIS is involved in all of them varies a lot. I'm going to stop.

Wilkins: I'd like to say, some of that structure, as far as the directorship of the LCP within NCES... I read that fellowship thing, and I really have some concerns about it. One, being it is a 1 to 1-1/2 year type of appointment, I think someone at NCES or NCLIS has to be on a long-term type of appointment. I just don't think someone coming in every one year annually, somebody new every year, is going to hack it with the library community. I just don't think it's going to be very useful.

Another concern I have with the fellowship is anybody that is a 'seasoned' senior official is going to have difficulty getting away for six months, much less a year or a year-and-a-half, and still expect to come back to a job at their state or another federal position. It might be easier at a federal-level position, rather than state or local or another organization. I am glad to hear that you are putting some more money to it because \$72,000 is not a very attractive salary to live in Washington. To really attract a senior seasoned executive, unless the executive happens to be retired. Unless the person happens to be retired and has a home here already, like John Lorenz, and is well connected with the Washington community.

I really believe that those are the things that you really need to... I think you really just need to find somebody that can be long term; you can pay them well; and you are not looking at somebody that is not going to be just coming in...

Russell: As I indicated for the fellowship, that is a minimum. We are precluded from doing any of the others.

Wilkins: I know you are not.

Russell: So, we are just trying to throw the net as broadly as we can.

What other kinds of things do you see about the structure? Is the way of having the meetings a workable way? Are you finding that you are actively sharing documents, things like e-mail, and doing that kind of network communication? What is going on with the structure that you can comment on?

Naylor: I am a member of the Academic Library Survey, which Mary Jo referred to, and we meet in conjunction with ALA twice a year. That structure seems to suit us extremely well. We do exchange e-mail documentation between meetings. I would not want to change that procedure because it happens to fit the way in which I, and I think most of the rest of the committee, worked in relation to ALA.

Russell: And, the school libraries, June, are doing the same thing, right? They are meeting, rather than having a separate survey group that meets?

Berry: We have a regular committee of the American Association of School Librarians, but it is not directly involved with the survey process. However, many of the members of that particular committee have served on the working group that has come up with the examination of the survey. We have lively discussions about the survey when our committee meets twice a year. So, it has an **indirect** involvement but not one in which we meet here.

Russell: So, because your survey is so far apart you create a working group and then dissolve, and then create another one as you get closer to another survey?

Berry: Jeff can probably answer better about how the survey group works at NCES. We do not have one through AASL. They overlap; the members of the Research and Statistics Committee and persons on the Survey Working Group are many times the same persons to some extent.

Williams: We work with Mary Jo Lynch on this. It's been kind of an ad hoc committee; there was one for the 1985-1986 survey. We put together another small committee for the 1999-2000 survey. We did have a separate meeting in Chicago in November 1997. So, its been that and then combined with... I have been able to attend, for the last several



years, twice every year, meetings. Again, it's similar to the Academic Library in that your official committee of the AASL...

Russell: Could you take this, maybe, to a less operational level; try to get it a little higher off the ground? Talk about the structure, maybe, in a more theoretical way.

Williams: OK.

Challinor: I have a question for you. Listening to the report that you gave on the number of people who are collecting statistics, I want to ask the library community – it seemed fragmented to me, I don't know, maybe it's not – Does the system work?

Wilkins: Yes.

Challinor: As fragmented even as it is?

Wilkins: Well, it depends on how you think it works. It may not work from a federal perspective, but it sure works from a state and local perspective. If you want to be a top-down, it probably doesn't work.

Challinor: No, no. I am just asking.

Wilkins: If you want to be a grassroots and democracy and have the locals making decisions, it works great. And we're happy.

Challinor: Even with...

Lynch: I'm not completely happy. I'd like the results (?) faster.

Wilkins: Well, I mean except for the things like timeliness, which we all are not happy with.

Lance: That applies to the public and state library agency surveys. It happens every year; it is structured in a certain way. It certainly doesn't apply to the School Library Survey where there is no ongoing group like that that has the bottom-up input.

Weeks: And there is no interaction because there is no ongoing structure for school libraries, there is not that kind of sharing of information among all of the people collecting statistics. So, the school folks are just sort of out there by themselves. And, we don't have good statistics. It's funny because you were talking about people are not looking at the other statistics. People really look at the schools statistics, bad as they are, because... By the time the information comes out, it truly is almost raw because it's so old. But, it's a real serious problem.

Abramson: That's a question I had here. Planning another 1999-2000 survey. Do you plan to see those results in the year 2004?

Weeks: I have no idea. What is the plan for the publishing of the data?

Planchon: I can predict. (Laughter) There were extraordinary circumstances that led to the delay this last time. We fully expect to have the survey data processed within a year. We hope to have the report within six to nine months after that. That's our goal.

Russell: This is a good opportunity to take that comment from Ann and talk a little bit then about...

Rowland: Could we just say that the Public Library Cooperative is a well-oiled machine and, basically, it's all boiled down in the Bible, right here? Our manual that talks about the organization structure and the way our Steering Committee works -- the way the 50 states all work together, the electronic instrument that we use to collect our surveys, the kinds of data quality checks -- it's all in here, and that's the reason why this thing chugs along like a fine-tuned machine.

Lynch: It also does because there's a lot of new buy-in from the states.

Rowland. Right. And, there has to be because all 50 states plus DC have to report in order for the survey to go forward.

Russell: Is there a good process for getting involvement so that you keep bringing new people in and getting more people to buy in.

Rowland: You bet ya'.

Russell: The intake process, it seems to me, is critical to this.

Rowland: You bet ya'. The first year we had a lot of angry people, and we didn't want to be there. By about the third year everybody was on board and things were moving along. Other than: (A) Not getting things out within, say 8 to 10 months after all of the surveys are in; timeliness is an issue; and (B) Not adequately addressing the strategic electronic access output issues. Those are our two problem areas. But, basically, we have a comprehensive universe of all public libraries.

Lynch: Public libraries are moving along pretty well. I think the academic library survey meeting every two years is a real problem. There are two problems with it: (1) it is too widely spaced. People forget what they did, and (2) I just had a workshop for the 1998 collection. There are people in all of the states who work with us; sometimes they are from the state agencies, sometimes they are from other places within the state. But they did not have the report from data collected in 1996. And, they are getting ready to do it 1998. It is hard for them to go back and get cooperation from the libraries in their state.

Wilkins: Does that mean that NCES and NCLIS need to form a coordinating group to get the school libraries and academic libraries and make sure they get on the track, as the public libraries and the state library agencies have gotten?

Lynch: It would be a very different promise/process(?)

Wilkins: They were talking about the generalization of structure. I said that we were generally happy with the structure, because I heard from Ron Naylor they were happy with the academic world.

I said we were talking only of the structure.

Naylor: No. No. Of our meetings, Barratt.

Wilkins: You're not happy with the structure?

Naylor: I am not happy with the results. I would echo Mary Jo's point, and I would also add to the point that was made earlier: the comment about fragmenting ourselves, the ACRL survey. The ACRL survey is being conducted as a direct consequence of the fact that NCES has not been able to conduct the ALS survey annually. ACRL libraries want annual collection of statistics for the very reasons that we are here. NCES has not been able to do that with the IPEDS ALS survey, and so ACRL is stepping in.

Russell: I understand they are not, and maybe I'm wrong, but it is my understanding that they are not stepping into the breach and saying, "OK, in the odd year, when NCES isn't collecting, we'll collect and they we'll have a full picture." They are stepping in the same year, and they are stepping in with slightly different data definitions, which seems like it isn't filling the gap, it's doing something else.

Naylor: That's right. It's partly filling the gap. It's not completely filling the IPEDS gap, but it's filling the gap that they perceive as existing in the data.

Lance: The reasons there are separate surveys in the public and academic is because the purposes of the data are different. None of the federal surveys, I don't think, were ever intended to provide direct access to individual case-by-case data. None of the reports are organized that way with the exception of the state library agencies survey, obviously. But, public, school, academic -- there never is, and I can't imagine there ever will be, a report published by the federal government that list case-by-case data. That's what the ARL and ACRL surveys do. That's what the public library data survey does. It's for a different purpose.

Lynch: The ACRL survey hasn't happened yet; it's just a plan.

Lance: It's happened before in other ways and provided case-by-case data, which is what it's for. What local libraries want to do, more often than not, is peer comparisons. We don't necessary care if we have data on every single, solitary library, but we'd like data on most of the libraries that are the most like us. What the federal government has to be concerned about is getting data on everybody, or at least being able impute data for everyone, so you can look at things like year-to-year trends and things like that. That's why all of these surveys are going on, they are going on for different purposes as well as being on different schedules.

Long: When I was first a librarian, a long time ago, I was taught that every year you did an annual inventory. Then, after a few years, I was taught, reading professional literature, that that was out. We don't do inventories anymore. I wonder if the way we are collecting statistics has gone through a sea change. I mean, national organizations, the government, and even politicians don't do surveys like this anymore. They do polls, and they get things quick. Isn't that what we need? Aren't we going about this some old-fashioned, arcane way? Don't we need to take a fresh look at what we are doing and do it some different way, and get information in a more timely fashion? Put out the instrument. Let people on local level and co-ops collect the information, compare widely if they want to. I love the idea of having the different kinds of libraries look at each other and learn from each other and have statistics that cross over type of library boundaries. I think that's what we need in the profession.

Shubert: Sara, I think we need at least two things. I think we need the timely data, the flexibility. But I think we also need to build on the strengths of the successful surveys. There are several elements that have made some surveys more successful than others. You can't have a successful survey on a five-year basis because you are always bringing in a different group of people. The respondents can't hardly even look at the previous report. So, in Mary Jo's elucidation of the three groupings here, the two which are annual have some built-in advantages. The academic one has a biennial schedule. But the last three... If you are talking about five years, it is hopeless.

The key to a successful information system is an annual collection or, it might be necessary for reasons of budget or something to have a biennial in some cases. But, you have to have some kind of on-going steering committee for that study so that you can bring together people who have some experience with it, and who know the kinds of libraries surveyed, and people who have kind-of a national outlook. Then, you have to have some kind of system for collection and aggregating at certain levels. And, you have to have training for people who do that. I think the FSCS Public Library Statistics is probably the eminent in that. You have to have timely publication and opportunities for discussion.

There are some other things that are needed when you look at this. You have to put this in some kind of perspective. What are there? Ninety-nine thousand school libraries?

Williams: More than that, actually.

Shubert: You have ten thousand public libraries and you have thousands of academic libraries. The citizen, or the legislator, when you say “library,” has one or two instant images. He or she either remembers the public library or the school library. Those are the only two images that I have ever heard a legislator ask questions about. In New York State, there is the largest state-aid program in the Nation. It supports all kinds of libraries through different ways. But, uniquely, the chief staff member in the Ways and Means Committee, says, “How are my public libraries doing?”

So, you need to have some kind of forum where you bring together people from all of those several steering committees and have some discussion and exchange of information. I think the key to the successful studies is having a regular steering committee for each of the several studies. Out of that discussion of all of them will come some of the ideas for some of the special studies that need to be done.

I think NCLIS is to be congratulated for its leadership in special studies over the years. It is not just the Internet studies and the introduction of technology – it goes all the way back twenty years ago when NCLIS supported very important studies on the financing of public library services and revenue sharing. Those kinds of things will always be in the curtains somewhere, and you need to have special studies for that purpose. Sometimes they have to be over a series of years, and then move on to something else.

Russell: It seems to me that we have – and you might have them because the themes are so overlapping – the need for extending cooperatives, sharing that model with some of the other ones. Joe just touched on the issue of a coordinating body.

Bob, I think you had something that you wanted to throw into the mix a few minutes ago.

Wedgeworth: I think Joe has really stated it very well. One of the reasons for having some of us old drones around is to try to get people to remember that this ship wasn't created yesterday. It is helpful to reflect on why the Public Library Survey is successful. One is that you have a state agency that you are able to enlist in the data collection. I remember it very well – it was about 15 years ago when we had a meeting similar to this, only it was a smaller meeting; Joe will remember those times because we were having the same kinds of questions about public library statistics. The lack of timeliness of this data; the lack of usefulness because the data were old by the time you received it. It was a very simply construct. We said, “Why don't we let the people collect the data who are closest to it?” Then, you created a different role for NCES built on top of the fundamental data collection. And, it has been successful because of the participation of the state library agencies and the public libraries directing what happens at the local and state level, and then having the NCES compile...use these 50 surveys to produce this information.

I think the community would welcome NCES producing studies that have different purpose, as was suggested. But the same problem exists. And, that is, that the studies that are produced are too late, and they don't focus on the questions that are of primary

interest to the people who need to make use of them. I think if we forget about that, we're not going to get very much out of this meeting.

The NCES performs an important function at the federal level. I think NCLIS, as Joe has indicated, has performed an important function in stimulating and goading both NCES and the community to do some things that would be most helpful.

Where we are now is that we have part of this operation that is operating very smoothly. The question is, "How do we get the other parts?" That's not so easy because dealing with the state library agency is not the same as trying to deal with the state departments of education, which have a large 'other' agenda that very seldom includes school libraries. If we are going to be effective, however, we can't ignore that, and we can't ignore the problems in dealing with them. But, we are going to have to get the school media professionals involved in some kind of intensive consultation that will result in something better than what we have now. When we get the basic statistics on a regular basis – and I agree, you can't do this if they aren't produced annually. When you do have the basic statistics produced for those basic types on an annual basis, then you have the ability for agencies, like NCLIS and NCES, to do some specialized study that cut across types of libraries and address some of the more current issues, perhaps on a different basis. We need to look at the structure from that perspective, recognizing that we have had these problems before and they have been resolved in one sector; they haven't been resolved in other two primary sectors.

Long: With all due respect, this is the latest Public Library Survey, and this is the one we are pointing out as the model. It came out in August 1998; its statistics for 1995. This is too late! The model we are working on doesn't work.

Wedgeworth: But, Sarah, here again, I think this is an education of professionals. You cannot produce broad-based statistical compilation – and I have done them at all levels, I've done them internationally, and people complain, "Why does your World Encyclopedia come out in 1980 with data that's 1993?" – on a time-current basis. You have to use other things. But, without that baseline data – and the baseline data over a period of time shows it doesn't change enormously from one period to the next – you are missing the fundamental building blocks for real policy analysis.

Lance: There is an 'Emperor's Clothes' issue about timeliness. The federal government is relentlessly honest. These numbers are called 1995 because that is the year for which they were collected. The Public Library Data Service comes out each year looking one year newer than it actually is because the date on the cover is the date of the year of publication, not the year of the data. So we need to bear that in mind.

Lynch: There is also something going on that I think you need to recognize.

Russell: Carol wanted to say something.

Henderson: Just following up on Sarah's point. The ability, in a way, to do specialized fast surveys... The partnership between NCLIS and ALA that produced, for instance, just coming out on public library outlet Internet connectivity data with the help of NCLIS and the OITP at ALA, those were questions that we knew in the public policy environment were being asked every day. So, we needed to get the answers to them quickly --more depth about public library Internet connectivity and data about how many libraries are filtering, and so on. To do a sample survey of that sort and have it be reliable, relies on some underlying structure that comes from the basic surveys and the database of public libraries. How you contact each of those public library outlets? That is ongoing in this NCES-NCLIS partnership. While trying to improve the basic structure, I think we have to realize that there is a sense in which we need it to do the fast, specialized sample surveys for public policy...

Russell: Actually that NCES data was the baseline that allowed selection...

Long: But can't it be faster? We hear so much about new technology. Are we using that?

Rowland: They are in Illinois. Right?

Long: Yes. We get a disk and send our stuff in on the disk.

Rowland: Cool. And you have, what? About \$56 million in state aid.

Long: Something like that.

Rowland: In Iowa, we have nothing. So? (Laughter) We go around with a little red wagon and beg people....

Wedgeworth: That is exactly the reason why you can't be defeated in terms of trying to press for more timeliness. But you have to understand why it's difficult to get more timely data. That is because all of the states are not organized in the same way. You have to be able to normalize this data, and that takes a lot of time, Sarah. I agree with you. I'd like to see these baseline surveys more frequently, as well. And, I'd like to see them more timely. But I do understand the underlying problem that make it more difficult.

Lynch: I want to make a point. I am always arguing for timeliness. But, I have seen something happen over the years in both the public library sector and the academic libraries sector that I think is very helpful, and that's what is happening at the state level. Because of the national effort, better data are being collected. At the state level, they get cross-sectioned, right away. And they get used at the state level. That's a payoff that I want us to recognize even though I'm screaming for faster national data. We feel good about that, I think.

Long: Not in every state.

Lynch: But in many states.

Lance: Another thing we should notice. Even though that publication takes a while to get out, the data file in the back of that publication has been out on the Web for several months before that becomes available. It's certainly out there for research and for other kinds of purposes, although, of course, it is a challenge because you have to have the skills and the technology to get to it.

Rowland: When I try to give the impression that just because we are a 'well-oiled machine' we are sitting back fat and happy and don't think there is any need for improvement... As a Steering Committee, we meet three times a year and what we do during that time is to knock our heads against the wall thinking of ways where we can speed all this up, make it better, get 100% participation, and set up mentor groups to call any states that hadn't sent their data in. We are a hard-working, hard-driving group. I am chair of the Data Collection Committee for another couple of months, and I have proposed the Holy Grail Award for data collection. The Holy Grail Award will go to the state that completely and utterly automates their data collection process for their public libraries. It's got to be web based, right? We are not quite sure what the criteria will be – but utterly and totally automates that process and makes it seamless. And, then, make that available for all 50 states. When all 50 states get the Holy Grail Award, then I think you will see your statistics within a few months after we send out the survey. The survey will be up on the Web.

Wedgeworth: But the 'specifics' of how you do that is what, I think, the people in the field are looking for. One of the reasons the ARL data is so successful at this -- I don't have to wait for the ARL publication to come out. As soon as that data is compiled, it's up on the Web and I can use it. I can analyze it any way I wish because it's an interactive Web site. Those are the kinds of improvements that will get at what Sarah is talking about. But, we have to really have some competence that it's really important to do these comprehensive baseline surveys on a regular basis.

Abramson: As a former State Library Commissioner, I can tell you that it was very helpful in the process of lobbying, in the best sense, legislators in my state to have real statistics that I had confidence in that had been presented in a way that I could present them. As a school trustee, which is not one of the things that is only my list to ever do, I wouldn't have any confidence... I wouldn't share a five-year old report with anyone. I wouldn't let them present it to me.

Agruilar: One of the things I wondered about. What are the incentives for people to participate in the surveys? What are the penalties, other than trying to get all of the information appropriate to the profession? Are there any kinds of incentives, penalties, if someone says, "I don't want to do this?"



Lance: In most states, no. Another difference between this and the association surveys, not one of the association surveys tries to collect data from every single, solitary library in every single state of that type. That's what the federal surveys do. There's a reason the census only happens once every ten years. We are at the mercy of the very last library in the very last state as far as timeliness goes. Part of it is data processing on the federal level, but we have seen the enemy and they is us. We are at the mercy of that last case when we are collecting data from everybody. In the case of public libraries and academic libraries, that's just the way the things are set up. It's not a sample survey; it's a census.

Wilkins: I am just going to say that there is a kind of peer recognition. There are awards, not only in FSCS. We are just instituting one in the State Library Agency Survey. It is peer recognition. As chair of the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies' Research and Statistics Committee, I tried my very best among my peers to get them to respond and get a timely response to the State Library Agency Survey this last year. Finally, it got down to a lot of friendly embarrassment to get them to respond. Those that did respond in a timely fashion and were successful, we're going to have a reward ceremony at the state library meeting in October in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Those that didn't do it, I hope will be somewhat embarrassed about it.

Agruilar: Would it be appropriate to place in the report, "The following institutions did not respond?"

Wilkins: I think that's not a bad idea.

Agruilar: I can imagine that our president at our university would not find that acceptable if we did not participate. One of the questions is, "Why didn't you?" Maybe we need to incorporate that?

Wilkins: That's a good idea.

Abramson: Didn't you say in the first survey, two states never did respond?

Wilkins: And, then, the 1997 State Library Agency Survey, the States of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo responded so we couldn't even publish that through NCES. We had to publish it through the University of Illinois occasional paper. You know, you just have problems, but I think it's embarrassment, and it's cajoling. I think it's worked well in FSCS; it may not meet Sarah's definition of timeliness. The one thing, I think, from a structural and broad viewpoint is that it's a thing that has worked well in bringing buy-in by the people, by the states, by the public libraries, and by the state library agencies. And, we're in charge of it. NCES publishes it. NCLIS has played a very leading role through John Lorenz in getting it done. We bought it; this is ours. We have an ownership of it, and I don't want to tear that apart maybe because the schools can't do it, or the academics don't do it, or somewhere else. Let's not tear everything down just because some other sectors may not be able to get it together.

Shubert: One of the really important things that NCLIS has brought to a ‘system’ – if we can call it that – of collecting statistics has been the kind of service that John Lorenz provided in that office because he was kind of a constant point of communication, hand-holding, and problem resolution. When you are collecting data from the 100,000 school libraries or the 10,000 public libraries, you are talking about lots of places where the system will fail. John Lorenz, with the help of his FSCS Steering Committee, was able to call somebody up and say, “I know you are behind. Is there anything we can do?” Sometimes that call caused the state librarian to, first of all, find out that they were behind. It sometimes caused the state librarian then to find out why they were behind. And, maybe, John Lorenz was able to provide \$2,000 in a grant to enable them to buy some temporary help just to do some keyboarding. New York State, which is one of the largest state libraries in the country, at a couple of different times since the recession of 1990, has been so strapped for funds and so hedged in by regulation, there was no way you could hire somebody to come in and do 18 days of work, except when John Lorenz made a small grant we were able to do that. That kind of office that is a facilitating office, a helpful office, that beats the drums and points out when the publications are coming out, is very important. The numbered memos from FSCS (I don’t know whether they are still there are not) reporting what was happening and came out every few weeks were very important. That is part of the structure. Whatever we do to the existing LSP structure, I think we need that kind of assistance.

Wedgeworth: I think this moves into two of the other themes for discussion and comes back to the proposal for the fellow. How do we extend the success that we have had in one area into the other areas in terms of this cooperative, recognizing that the model has to be attuned to the particular constituency that we are trying to change? How do we achieve some kind of coordination overall as we recognize the need to have data that cuts across institutional types? That relates to some kind of coordinating body where the representatives of the people who are involved in the several surveys can come together and look at this picture as a whole, rather than always seeing just one slice of the pie?

Now, where this bring me is that I have seen the proposal for the fellow, but the question that I would raise... This is a substantial agenda, and I think the field recognizes that to be an important agenda. I think that the indication of the resources that you are prepared to put behind it is substantial. But, when it comes out to the field as a fellowship, it doesn’t look like a real sustained commitment. We think that the idea is very good, but the concepts that we have of a fellow in an academic institution is somebody who is here today and gone tomorrow. I don’t think we want to give that impression about the way we feel about statistics for the field. I think what we want to do is to say, “These statistics are extremely important now; they are going to be even more important. How do we make a sustained commitment to assure that things are done that will improve our ability to produce these statistics?”

Abramson: We may have over thought it, if you will, at the Commission. I asked the question, like the one you are suggesting, when I first heard the suggestion of a fellow. Actually, some of the thinking was that it might be easier for someone who could fit the

bill to come take a look and decide to stay longer than if it was a ‘quit what you’re doing and come over here for the rest of your life’ type of thing. We may have...

Wedgeworth: I do understand that, and I appreciate the thinking that went into it. We have, of course, the remarkable facility of hindsight that the initiators of this concept didn’t have. But, I think, that is a part of this consultation, which is to say it’s a very sound idea, but, I think, it conveys an image to the field that you may not wish to convey. I think the field can be helpful in identifying people who would be willing to come. These days, if you get somebody to come and stay for three-to-five years in a job, you are very lucky, I think the field can be helpful in identifying people who are willing to come, do those kinds of jobs, and have the experience and the technical skills to be able to carry them out.

Abramson: There are no key people. John Lorenz was pretty close to a “key” person. He graduated from library school the year I was born, but he had already retired three times. It would be difficult to be an ad out for someone who had retired at least twice.

Wedgeworth: Right. Joe Shubert sounded like he might...

Wedgeworth: I did want to point out that we are really covering the bulk of the states in these conversations.

Wilkins: Right.

Weeks: Whatever the coordinating body or whatever the structure is going to be, I think one of the most important things that it needs to do is to set up the expectation that somebody is, on a regular basis, collecting statistics about school libraries in every state. It almost doesn’t matter who it is – rather it’s the state library, or the education department, or whoever. But, somebody needs to take responsibility for that because it’s not happening. In Illinois, it’s not happening; nobody does. In the city of Chicago, they haven’t collected information about the school libraries in Chicago in at least twelve years. We have no idea. I don’t know for sure how many libraries there are.

Challinor: We were having a little conversation here. If you don’t know how many there are, it’s hard to collect statistics.

Weeks: How many people are working in them? It’s real difficult. I think that one of the most important things that can happen is setting up this expectation that somebody in every state is collecting some information about school libraries regularly. I think that’s going to take some time, and it’s going to take some concerted work to have somebody at the state level to buy into it in a lot of places. But that doesn’t mean it doesn’t need to be done.

Lance: I think it’s important to know that of the three major sectors: public, academic and school – school libraries are far, far and away the most profound disadvantaged in

terms of the way the business of school libraries are structured, especially at the state level. If there is anyone at all, they might be at the state library, they might be at the department of education, the state library might or might not be in the department of education. There is no telling where the person is you have to go find to poke.

Abramson: What if we snuck-up on the state librarians' and as part of their survey started adding a few school questions?

Lance: Many of the state library agencies have responsibility for nothing but public libraries - period. It's not realistic to think we can impose responsibility for the academic or the school sector across the board on state agencies. That is just not going to happen.

Lynch: But Ann's comment suggests something interesting, I think, about how NCES and NCLIS might work together to create a short, simple instrument that could be used at the state. Not worry about collecting national data every year for schools. But, make sure that data is collected at the state level in a similar way.

Wedgeworth: The other important point she said is that you're not going to solve the school's problem in some generic way. You have to have some kind of intensive effort to identify some agency, or some individual, and it will vary from state to state.

Lynch: Yes.

Wedgeworth: But that is the structure that will have to be created.

Russell: Somebody who wants to take ownership.

Berry: A lot of times it comes down to the state law, also. In Texas, we cannot gather information of any statistical information unless it is legislated that we do that. You cannot just do a survey going through the state department of education or the state library unless you have a legislative mandate to do so. So, gathering information would just be at the goodness and kindness of a person's heart to send that in. I'm sure other states have similar types of situations.

Harris: There are a couple of people with hands up.

Naylor: Many of these same comments that are directed at school libraries, I think, can be applied to cooperatives of various kinds and may be even more difficult to identify. At a time when cooperatives of all kinds are just exploding in numbers and importance, we have very little handle on where they are, what they do, the types of things you are talking about here. I am not sure there is an easy answer, though. I, too, look to the state library agency as they expand their responsibilities as possibly among the institutions that can identify these. But, in some ways, that's even more difficult than the school library issue.

Challinor: I just want to get a handle. You are conveying to NCLIS that John Lorenz was just below God, right? And that you would like us to have something at NCLIS that is at least comparable to John because he was so useful to you? Is that right?

*[end of tape 1, side A]*

*TAPE 1, SIDE B*

Norman: With respect to the school libraries, I think you already have a feel from the states. There is something about schools having to report on a regular basis to their state agencies, to their federal agencies, and why can't we incorporate information on their libraries? When you have the school report card that comes out every year, the library should be an integral part of that. That is what we have done with the academic libraries. It is part of the IPEDS report, which comes to the federal government. You have that same capability for state schools. It is just something that we have not utilized, and actually [it takes] the arm of NCES in order to access that.

In looking at the school libraries as a separate entity, they are part of the larger structure.

Berry: It has been addressed in some places. I think some states have that ability to include it in their reporting that occurs annually. Not all states have that. Let's not deny that it is a good thing to do.

Norman: I think if we look through the law, it's there. It may not say, 'survey.' As an example, for the state of California it says that we have to provide an annual report on the status of 'conditions.' Conditions of the survey could mean how you get the survey underway. I think we have to go back and look at the legislation, not only for education as a whole, but for, maybe, the library as a separate entity in a K-12 school. The information is there; it is not outside of the educational system. That is what I am saying. I think it is there from a federal perspective because they do receive federal money and there are certain guidelines. And, if that information is not there, that becomes a policy issue that takes it to the next level.

Lance: If the wish is to create a advisory structure for the other sectors, as similar as possible to FSCS, one way to start might be to go to the states where there is something already going on for schools or for cooperatives. Start where there is some 'there' there. And, then, maybe, that idea can be encouraged to spread based on the experience of whoever is already doing that.

Rowland: That is how FSCS started, right?

[Lunch Break, discussion continued]

Sarah Long: Is it Carolyn? I would like to follow up on her comment. Let me paraphrase what I think I heard you say. You said that "Schools all across America have to send in reports now, and why can't the law be changed to work with that and

incorporate libraries because that is a ready-made mechanism.” What is the barrier to doing that?

Naylor: There are several, and that is the reason I said you cannot make a generic rule. You have to have someone who will look at each state individually and determine what the existing situation is that might hold barriers and solve that problem and move on to the next state. You really have something that you can bring together because there are many different situations that pertain in the several states.

Lynch: What is, “common core of data?” I keep hearing that, and I have never actually seen it, but it is about elementary and secondary education. There are some things that aren’t handed in.

Bingham: My comment is we, in Kentucky, use to have a very good reporting, but when we went to school-based decision making (and that was about the time that I retired), so many of those things were being re-thought and so many of the regulations that compelled people to have the staff and to have certain collections were relaxed, and decisions given to the local, school-based government. That happened at the state level, and I am sure that we are not the only state that has experienced that greater degree of autonomy being given to, basically, non-professional people who serve for a very temporary time on their school-based decision making. They know they have to move on. I think we have just one year on and one year off. It makes it almost impossible, compared to what we were accustomed to, in monitoring what was happening in the school libraries.

Agruilar: Would it be possible to speaker with the state superintendents of schools to address that population on the importance of this in schools, and to try, perhaps, to coordinate the methodology?

Weeks: They may not want that information available because in one respect it could embarrass them on the national level or even on a statewide level.

Williams: Common core of data is collected by NCES, and it provides a little bit of information on every school -- a very small amount of information on every public school. It is strictly a public school district collection. It doesn’t touch private schools. There is some more information at the school district level and, actually, most of the data items are collected at the state department of education level. That is a census that NCES has done for quite a while.

Rowland: And each of those individual state files are available on the NCES web site. You can download it; you can pull them up. That is how we did our e-rate work in Iowa.

Williams: It does ask a couple of questions at the state level that involves school libraries: (1) The number of school libraries; and (2) The number of library aides? There actually have been some things put out. One of the striking things I remember is that they

do librarian-to-student enrollment ratios. And, it is an extremely low ratio for California, for instance.

Norman: But can't the survey be enhanced also?

Williams: It is annual. It is possible for a few items, and it is annual. There is a different cooperative. One of the three cooperatives that NCES has is the Elementary and Secondary Statistics. The biggest part of that is operating with the common core of data collected.

Russell: So that may be a place where you have some of the people from the school library groups try to meet with them; to try to share. Would that be a very positive approach?

Rowland: A more direct approach might be similar to what school library cooperation throughout the web site, and send out a notification to all 100,000 school libraries. The web site is there; here are the questions; answer them on the web. The database is there, people can download it, and use it.

[Several conversations concurrently]

Sarah Long: And you would certainly have to have the definition group...

Rowland: Yes. Hopefully, that is the direction the Academic Library Survey will go. We talked about that. Actually, the Public Libraries can do the same thing.

Russell: When you speak of the survey being up on the web, are you speaking like a ACRL survey, or are you speaking of the NCES survey?

Rowland: NCES, yes.

Williams: There are plans. We will probably have a web-based survey option for the year 2000, which is actually the next one. The 1998 is going on now. The year 2000 IPEDS Academic Libraries will be a web-base. The Census is already looking into that.

Rowland: I think Sarah is exactly right. It is kind of silly to have all of this technology and be doing things the same old way. We have lots of interesting projects going on where people are trying to tap into the latest technology.

Berry: Just out of curiosity, where does the data dictionary stand? Is it finished?....

Rowland: Well we have one here...[laughter]

Wilkins: The man responsible for the data dictionary is sitting right back there, Mr. Rossi.

Russell: Do you want to comment about the state of the database?

Rossi: Well, I am not sure of the name of it. What I set out to do was to simply compare the procedures and content across the six surveys and to array that on multiple pages so as you look through it, you begin to see areas where the coverage across the surveys is quite different. Areas where the surveys are collecting information are no means comparable, and begin to think about what kind of a system do you really have. If you are serving the needs of each of your individual consistencies, that's great, except at some point it might be nice to be able to take stoke and have the national level of FTE staff in libraries who have one type of degree or another. At the moment, you are not able to do that. And, there are many areas where there is not coverage across the libraries. In some cases, it is because of idiosyncratic differences in the nature of the institutions being surveyed; in other cases, I don't have the answers. I don't know the rationale.

If you want to call that a "data overview" in preparation for thinking about what can we learn from one another; what are the areas of coverage that we might borrow from one another; what are some interesting ideas and questions that we should consider including in our survey. It can be a starting point for that kind of discussion. It is by no means, however, complete. It needs to be complemented by that. If you want to decide, "Yes, we all should collect information on total staff in a way that could be comparable," then the next question might be, "What sort items should be collected?" Most of these surveys use a different format. And, it is not clear that we have had sufficient study of which of the formats is easy to fill out; which of the formats provides more reliable information; which of the formats, perhaps, enables you to be efficient in collecting a lot of information in a relatively short period of time.

Russell: This may take us back to the theme we touched on a couple of times then of the need for a coordinating body. Clearly, if you were going to take that data and try to come to some decisions that would affect the multiple surveys, there has to be some organized way to bring those groups together, then each of them could go back and build consensus within their own groups.

Planchon: I would like to comment on that. I think you have that just a little off. I think there could be a utility in coordinating bodies, but not one that would make the determination and then others go and attempt to implement...I think it would be a body that could come up with good ideas. And, if those ideas are good, people will adopt them.

Russell: Well, particularly given what Barratt and Joe mentioned about the "grass roots." Clearly, there is work to be done together to look at how the surveys are being conducted and where there could be common data elements. Is there a consensus; are people feeling that? Or?

Sarah Long: Does a draft exist yet?



Rossi: There is a draft, yes.

Sarah Long: When do you anticipate that it will be available for people to see?

Rossi: I am not quite sure of the answer. It is available and it is in draft form. I would envision that with some comments from NCES and others, in two to three weeks it could have something put together to send around.

Sarah Long: Fairly soon?

Planchon: If there are any of you that would like to help us with that document, could you please leave your name with Adrienne. We have peer review for all of our publications. This is not a document that will have wide distribution, but an early look would be useful.

Henderson: I wonder if as NCLIS thinks about its role in sort of a coordinating function, or fostering communications and cooperation, whether it might be doable, but we talked earlier about the other kinds of library data being collected by other groups, and they may well be for other purposes, but you certainly have issues of multiple resources being expended, if there are different definitions -- whether or not that is a problem adding to the burdens at local levels, or whatever. Perhaps NCLIS is in a good spot to foster some regular communication among all the groups collecting library data.

Harris: Carol, I wonder if you could repeat that in a minute. I just happened to notice that the entire academic sector seems to be out of the room. I think it is a good point.

Russell: Can we come back to the issue of developing a mechanism for addressing cutting-edge policies? Sarah talked about wanting some kind of a "holding" mechanism so that there could be almost an instantaneous response. Carol earlier made the point that we rely on the baseline data but that some of these shorter studies, like the one ALA has recently done, still don't match the specific policy concerns that gather data. But, it would be interesting to hear from the group about whether you see a need for the mechanisms for cutting-edge policy concerns to be within the framework of the NCES program or whether you are comfortable with the fact that it is being done by the various associations external to that.

Lynch: I am comfortable with that. I like the connection. I think the connection is essential, but extra organizations can move a lot faster. I think NCES needs to move faster, but there are limits to what they are ever going to be able to do. I think having an outside group use the database and the assistance of NCES, but not be limited by some of the regulations, is healthy.

Berry: I got to looking at the whole report. I thought, why do we do surveys in the first place? That was my original thought. And then I thought, why is the information

important? It is important if it is current. So, I would like to have current information. I would like to have current information; have that information analyzed in a way that it's got trends that are showing up; and, then, I would like for someone to look in their crystal ball and forecast what these trends portend for the future. That is what I would like to see because that cutting edge may be a move beyond the simple gathering of data.

Montgomery: I would like to see just the data available and then separate out the trends because there's too much opportunity for valuing and bias. I want to know the predictions someone is willing to say, "I predicted", and I want to see current data.

Challinor: Sarah and I were just having a consultation here, and we want to give more support to what Abe said. We need statistics to go to the legislators and get our money. It comes down to ... I am sorry to be so blunt about it. But, that's the way the world works. I agree with everything that Abe said. I couldn't imagine going to a legislator with something that is three or four years out of date. Six weeks would be about it. I mean, I don't know how many of you know the legislators but they are only in there for two years. You know. They are working on a two-year cycle. So, I would say that anything that comes out ought to be useful in going to the people who fund the libraries.

Sarah Long: The other piece that Abe said (he's chewing, that's why we have to speak for him).

Wilkins: That's probably the best time to talk. [Laughter]

Sarah Long: The other point that you made -- and I am sort of paraphrasing -- and that is that we ought to think about statistics at a higher level. That it is no longer useful to say, "One hundred thousand people sat down at the computer..." We have to be more sophisticated about what happened as a result of that. How are libraries affecting people's lives? What kind of a difference have we made?

Lance: That is an incredibly radical change. Not because you doing inputs and outputs to outcomes, but because inputs and outputs belong to libraries. Outcomes belong to users. The unit analysis is different. If you want data, real data about impact, about outcome, you don't survey libraries. You survey users. We are into a whole other business when we get into outcomes.

Shubert: One of the most encouraging developments in the last decade has been both NCES and NCLIS work to see the library use information being collected in the National Household Survey. That is really a very important part of this whole feature.

Abramson: I know people come into the Missoula public library when they are looking for a job, and I know they even look at the local newspaper classified ads on the computer. I would love to be able to go to the county commissioner as a member of the Public Library Foundation, and say, "Twenty-eight people got jobs after the went to the

library to look for one last quarter.” That is impressive. And I know that is going on all around the country.

Lance: The new planning results process just came out from the Public Library Association. For every one of the new service responses that are taking their place on rolls, for every one of those, there are three different kinds of statistics they recommend. One is: total units of service. We are home free. That is the kind of stuff we do, circulation. Another one is (and I love this one; this one is a real challenge to those of us who collect data): the number of unique individuals who use the service. Think about what that really means. We don’t want to know how many times somebody checked out a book; we want to know how many people -- how many individuals -- checked out a book once, or ten times, or one hundred times, during the year. Nobody is set up to count that. That is almost impossible to count. But the third thing for every one of these new roles is, something along the lines: the extent to which it met the user’s needs. And the phrase that occurs over and over again in every one of those across all the roles is, “according to a user survey.” So what we are talking about is creating a whole new culture of data collection in libraries, at least public libraries, maybe the others, too, making user surveys as regular a thing as the sort of data collection they do to fill out our surveys. That is a mighty tall order.

Norman: Beyond user surveys, ... the academic library goes to the institutions. One of the initiatives that the California Community Colleges have is student’s success that forms partnership in excellence. We have to show direct impact of our services on students. The number of students that have transferred, the number of students that get certificates or degrees. I am racking my brain trying to figure out how we can show the library impact on students transferred, students getting certificates or degrees, or needing job placements. And, so, looking for those kinds of elements within the larger structure can also place a factor, not just users, but the whole performance activity.

Wedgeworth: All academic institutions are increasingly being held accountable for being able to demonstrate that kind of impact. Whether we like it or not, we are going to be in the business of collecting that kind of data.

Henderson: Following up on some earlier discussion of the possibility of a coordinating body of ...in thinking whether, perhaps, the National Commission is in a good spot to think a little more broadly, and whether there are a variety of both governmental and non-governmental bodies collecting library data. And whether parts of ALA, whether other library associations, other organizations, for purposes of communication, coordination, cooperation, sharing ideas about what works and what doesn’t, what new data is needed, what new ways might be used to collect or distributed. Perhaps as NCLIS considers its role, in this transitional time, there might be some thought given to whether it would be a good idea to enhance communication across all the bodies of organizations collecting library data. Questions of definitions; questions of duplication of burden at the local level, some of those. Even if they serve different purposes, there certainly are issues where things like that kind of communication in sparking of ideas would be useful.

Russell: When we talked yesterday, you had some comments to share not just about the local burden of answering, but how to get that data to play back that is so useful. . .

Rossi: How does this survey help contribute to the success? What is the purpose? Why should we invest time to do this? If there isn't an answer to those kinds of questions, then I think you are going to get less buy-in in terms of people taking the time to fill in the questions in the first place.

Wedgeworth: Well, from a fuller dimension from an academic library perspective, so that is the reason why the librarians expect to participate... Carol referred to a number of academic library surveys, the ARL, ACRL, ASERL, most of these build on the ARL surveys. The ASERL is a direct replication of the ARL, and the ACRL, I understand, is to also be a replication of ARL, but with five different data elements.

Rowland: For public libraries, one of the rewards of filling out a survey is that state libraries generally produce an annual compilation of statistics, and that generally gets out within a few months after all surveys are collected. Except now they are saying that there is a new wrinkle in all of this. It used to come out in paper and be mailed out. Illinois puts their's out on the web site in PDF format and we no longer mail out a paper copy. We have several states that are going to collect the data through a web-based form and put up search engines that will allow peer comparisons. So, we are starting.

There was a direct result. It was a paper publication that came back from the library, but the technology is intervening. The paper publication will go away. There will be an electronic version of those results, and, probably, it will be available instantaneously. You will be able to see the results for those libraries at the state level that have submitted their information. I think that is what we really need to get to, is that kind of instantaneous reporting and allow the software, the power of our technology, to do the collecting and do the interpreting and the predicting that we talked about.

Wedgeworth: But we very rarely use the ARL statistics as they are produced. Mostly what you want to do is to customize it to reflect your peer group, and customize it to reflect the specific kinds of questions that are important in your institution. Without that capability it is limiting. And, we will never be able to predict all the different ways that people want to use the information. So, that is another reason for moving rapidly to make this information available on the web site and interactive so that people can use it and customize it the way that is most helpful for the institution.

Rowland: We saw a real exciting product from the Census, an easy to use GIS product that will be available on the web that lets you look at any data set and could be done at national level or could be done at the state level and see it on a county-by-county basis trends in data.

Wilkins: One of the things I wanted to mention was the strength of your report, Howard, is the really push for LSCP to foster research and dissemination and to really work with the research community to identify issues and get some buy-in from the research community into really doing some studying. This would be very helpful. Maybe this is where NCLIS could put some of its money -- into coming up with some research funds to look at some of these burning issues like we have. I think that is one of your strong points in your report, particularly page 23 and page 24. I would like to see NCLIS move that way in their partnership with NCES.

Russell: I was thinking that we have some observers, and that we have heard from the one gentleman, it would be really useful to hear from the other observers and to see if they have something they wanted to add to the discussion and people at the table could respond to what they have to say. Don't be shy.

Zimmerman (Observer): It is the relationship of this new national, overriding advisory group and its relationship with the survey groups that are now existing. I wonder how this will play out? That is what I was hoping to hear a little about.

Russell: What aspect of it were you particularly concerned about?

Zimmerman: To hear whether or not the bigger group would be listening to us and taking ideas, or whether they would be telling us what to do.

Lynch: That is an important point. For those of you who read the report, there is an implication in that report that is not too common in this room; and I'm very pleased. What we have been talking about here is the need for coordination, and it sounded very much like that would bubble-up from the communities' responding interests in the different kinds of surveys which would get together and share information. I am very comfortable with that.

I am absolutely not comfortable with the kind of thing, I think, Alan was asking about which seems to be in the report and that is that there is sort of a governing body that would be imposing on the different surveys. I don't think that would have a snowball's chance of hell in succeeding. I was interested in Alan asking the question, and I know why he did -- because he read the report. And that comes through the report. But it wasn't in this room today, and for that I am very pleased.

Wedgeworth - I would like to echo Mary Jo's comment and add a "The" word. I was troubled by the concept of an establishment of a bureaucracy within NCLIS for the gathering of library statistics. Almost to the point -- I mean we are talking about suggesting establishing an overall coordinating body, the establishment of the citizen-experts group, which I haven't heard any comment on so far this morning. And it almost becomes as though library statistics were the *raison d'être* for the establishment of the organization rather than the counting of service outcomes in libraries, which I think we

should be most concerned about. Let's not establish a big bureaucracy to collect numbers.

Russell: Thank you, Robert. Anyone else have any comments?

Abramson - Wasn't Census thinking of doing sampling for a while?

[unknown man] It is still being debated.

Tope: Everybody has been talking about timeliness, and I just want to say that our experience with the public library steering committees in getting the information from the states is generally fairly efficient. There is always one or two, for whatever local reasons they've got, are late. Census can't do anything with it until we get it in. Census has a lot of requirements they have to deal with, and that is also a time-consuming process. In terms of timeliness, we need to work on that from both sides. I think the good will is there, and I think everybody is working on it to see it improved.

I am also very concerned about this concept of an overall super-steering committee or governing organization. I think that would be a bad mistake. We need to focus on getting accurate statistics, and we need to focus on getting it in a timely manner. I think it is already big enough; timeliness is one of the results of how big it is. There are so many states; there are so many libraries responding. Just adding another bureaucratic route seems like a mistake.

GARNER: I am from Census and my perception of the processing side. This is a lot of work. I hear there is an important priority here but, in actual fact, making some of these surveys annual instead of, say, biennial or every five years is going to require priority budget wise.

Abramson: Doing it annually probably costs more than twice as much as doing it every other year.

Agruilar: This reminds me, within the CSU, one of our sister campuses, does house the Bureau of the Census tapes. Most campuses have the ability to go in and search and use, extrapolate, manipulate information. Would we have the same kind of capability if the information were collected from NCES or NCLIS?

Planchon: Are you referring to the state library survey that the Census Bureau. . .in each state? We don't a similar data repository for varying states. .

Agruilar: I guess what I am asking is, "Would the broad data be available to an institution that an individual could go in and look at it, massage the information, and to analyze it in ways that may not be done in publication?"

Planchon: Yes. Simultaneous to the release of the publication is the release of the data of the micro-records on whatever the institution is. We don't give personal data. We have always made those tapes available. Now, all of these products are up on the web. We are working very hard to develop tools that enable you to manipulate the data on the web, do your peer searches, do data mining, etc.

Agruilar: Maybe that is an area we could use some assistance in then in terms of the training programs. Because something that Bob said a little bit earlier in terms of being able to do comparisons with comparable institutions. We use the acronym CASH frequently for statistics for Comparisons, Analysis, development of Standards, historical Perspectives.

Abramson: In order to get cash. [Laughter]

Planchon: We are making a very serious effort this year to upgrade our web site for library statistics. If you go to our NCES homepage to a section called Partners, to a section called Educational Finance, this is a web page dedicated to statistics. There is a peer analysis tool. It is live data, multiple databases, linked databases, that allow you to select a variety of variables that you are interested in comparing for your group. It is an on-the-fly approach very powerful ... [cannot hear due to coughing]. We could certainly put up public library statistics, academic library statistics...for most of the data sets I expect them to be up in a couple of months.

LANCE: I would like to be on the record. I would like the school people to chime in, too, if they want to. What struck me as a really, profoundly serious mistake that was made with the school library survey the last time around is because there are two surveys (one of the school library and one of the school librarian). Because the one about the school librarian had, understandably, to be under confidentiality rules, the entire thing is under confidentiality. And it seems that the school libraries as institutions are being afforded privacy rights basically. So, if you want access to that data, it is extraordinary difficult to get. Right now, it is difficult enough to access some of the files on the web sites simply because of their size. The issue of any kind of access at all for future data about school libraries surveys is one that, hopefully, we will address.

Planchon: Let me address this question. That survey has school library data and information about the librarians. The rationale for doing the survey that way was to be able to look at characteristics of the schools, of staffing, etc. In order to do this the data sets were linked, which created the problem of having the institution data confidential. In upcoming surveys we are not doing the librarian portion of the survey, but it will be school-level data....

Russell: I think we are just about out of time, and we need some time to wrap up a little bit.

Wedgeworth: Just one quick comment to reinforce something that Barratt Wilkins said earlier. We have a very small group of researchers in this field, and we have a very small group of specialized research agencies that do research in our field. It would be helpful if there were some kind of coordinated mechanism that would periodically bring the individuals and some of those agencies together to help advance our ability to do research on statistics and on other things. I think this is an area where NCLIS could be very helpful because you have contracted with individuals or individual agencies. But since the group is so small, it would be helpful if there were some effort to try to coordinate the view of what research needs to be done; whose doing what that ought to be of interest to NCLIS and to the community, and the like.

Lynch: Something Keith said alerted me. He said something about getting it on the record. Is there any record?

Wilkins: There is a microphone.

Lynch: Oh, I missed it.

Russell: One of the outcomes of the meeting will be that there will be a report by Howard, which will go back to NCES about the meeting.

HARRIS: I have said to Mary Jo that one of the things that I think would be important -- I would like to see if we could get a wrap up to identify a process by which we can get some representation from various groups to have some sense that we really have reflected the discussion.

Russell: A review when the draft report becomes final.

HARRIS: Yes.

Russell: We will be back in touch with all of you.

SHUBERT: Throughout the morning I have heard two currents: (1) data related to policy questions; and (2) technical questions related to consistency.

I am still uncomfortable with the matrix of organizations suggested in this report. I think that if the idea is to have more comprehensive library data, we need to do something about the three surveys, which are not annual. And for however many surveys there are going to be - whether they are going to be annual or biennial, I hope they are going to be annual - there needs to be a steering committee for each of those. That steering committee needs to include a range of people. It includes people who supply information; people who use information; and people who know that sector. There should be five steering committees; I would hope it would be five because you identified five for the five individual studies.



There should also be some kind of an arrangement whereby, whether it's called the Library Policy Forum or whatever it might be, that people who are concerned about libraries come together and examine the data that are there from the policy point of view and make some recommendations.

There should be another group that draws people from each of the steering committees that should address some of the technical things that are being identified in the data dictionary and some other things, and be able to make some recommendations. But, the decisions on a particular survey should stay within the steering committee for each of the surveys. And, through a process of continuing consultation and exchange of information, some of the problems that we have been talking about are going to be worked out.

I think that the question...I read something in here about where policy is discussed. You can't talk about data and the enormous cost of collecting data without talking about the policy question. So, policy has to be discussed at each of these coordinating steering committees. There should be some provision for everybody to come together (not everybody, but representatives). But, the decisions need to be made at the survey level.

LONG: I want to get this on the record the business about the occasion surveys that you would do. I feel real need for data related to diversity issues. We don't have good national data on language collections, cultural programs, immigrant populations, special services, and service needs. Literacy is another area where don't have much national data. All kinds of things that relate to what our profession needs to be doing in this area. We don't have baseline data to know where we need to work.

Russell: Paul, will you do part of the wrap-up.

Planchon: Thank you. I just love working with you library people. One of the things you have done is that you have followed the four steps in a fundamental group process. The 4 G's: the greeting; the griping; the groping; and, finally, the grouping. I think we have the "grouping" here at the end. Clearly, some of the things that you mentioned -- the issue of timeliness is a big issue. The one comment I would like to make on that is that there are delays that have been acknowledged as not necessarily being part of the process, but part of those delays are part of what we view as value-add that we provide. Clean up of data sets, etc., which take human intervention. We will never reach the Holy Grail. Those are not easy issues to resolve. The periodicity of the surveys is clearly an issue and not an easy one to resolve. I am particularly interested in the idea of possibility annual school library surveys. That is a challenge. I also thought it was important to recognize that it was pointed out that the National Household Education Survey provides a rounding-out of the suite of surveys, institutional surveys, and policy issues. By survey research terms the fast response survey is fairly fast. The importance of doing the household survey is getting to the people and that is the only way you can answer certain kinds of questions that is recognized.

I am really pleased with the support for the notion of extending the idea of cooperative systems to the other survey areas. When our legislation was reauthorized two or three years, there was language there in extending it to all libraries beyond the initial language in 1988. So the authorization is there, and I am very pleased to see the interest in doing that again. I am sure we will follow up on that. And, also, the recognition that it probably has to be public school libraries and networking. A hybrid structure may be needed to pull that off. I think that is an interesting challenge.

I did see lots of support for providing vehicles for communication across various library sectors, be that some fully constituted committee or a revised version of Howard's recommendation. I don't know. But it is clear that that is recognized. I heard a lot of emphasis on the importance of giving quick information on emerging issues. That is probably one of the biggest challenges on the agenda. Perhaps there are other vehicles that can be extended to make that happen. I also see in Howard's paper about something to "further the research agenda" and "getting information disseminated." Somehow to work to improve the personnel infrastructure structure, if you will, of library research and statistics program. I guess those are the main things that I heard. I didn't hear anything that I disagreed with. There were a few things that, in my point of view, would be more successful. I hope that we can develop some ways to follow up on the ideas at this point in time.

Willard: We are delighted that this all took place. Let me just hit a couple of highlights in terms of what I think the next steps are. First of all, we made reference to the fact that this meeting was being recorded. I really hope that when we get the write up, and I want that to be done on a fast track, and I recognize that you are all very busy people, and some of you may have more or less time to devote to looking at it, but I think we ought to count on everybody having a chance to look at that.

I also want to say that my bottom line approach to information that is created by the government is that it belongs to everybody. So, I want this report to be also widely shared beyond the people that are in this room, and I want to do that quickly.

Some practical things, with regard to the Fellow, I certainly urge any comments both about the nomenclature and, more importantly, the substance of that job. I can assure you we want to move as quickly as possible on that. Again, I ask your help in conveying to the world that the opportunity exists and conveying to us your recommendation on who would be appropriate to fill that position.

With regard to the governing issue, let me assure you that the recommendation for this over-arching working group, or whatever it is, is definitely not intended in anyway, for example, to tell you what to do. It is more to recognize that the Commission has a strategic obligation in the field of policy development and needs to be assured that when we are relying on statistics that they have been developed well. We want to have some sort of mechanism to provide support to the Commission so that, beyond the expertise of that already resides in the Commission itself that we also can reach out to the community

to get input. Whether that is a formal mechanism or informal mechanism remains to be seen. But, I can definitely relieve you from any concern that we are intending to put in some over-arching governing body over the existing structure.

I heard a little bit about timeliness, but I don't have time to say anything about that.

[Laughter]

The one theme that if I were not biting my tongue early on, and saying, "No. We are listening. We are not talking." The one theme I would have added to this -- I can characterize it in two ways -- the word I wrote down is "outreach." But the other word I was sort of staying away because of this still-political sensitivity on the word is "marketing." It's the idea of interacting. Marketing done well is not just communicating a value proposition; it is getting from the market (or from the customer base) what are the values you want to handle. So, I think we do have to be engaged much more in an outreach effort on the value of statistics. We have to do more in the area of training, both on the data collection and how you use them. We also need to remember that the Commission, in our shorthand description of it we always talk about providing policy advice to the President and the Congress, but if you read the law more carefully, it does empower us, to the extent we have the resources and the spirit to do it, to provide policy advice to state and local governments and to other institutions throughout this country. The mandate for the Commission is broad. To the extent that we can use that mandate to do a better job of outreach, marketing of the values of the statistics program, I think we are well off.

Finally, thank you, again. We appreciate your time. We appreciate the support we have gotten out of the NCES leadership and staff. Our special thanks to Howard, Judy, and Kim (my staff), and to all of you for being here.

I started with a Lincoln quote. In one of his messages to Congress he said, "As the case is new, so we must think anew and act anew." I think that we need to recognize that there are new things happening. The newness brought about by John Lorenz's final retirement, a new executive director, obviously new people coming to the Commission. This is a time for us to take advantage of that newness and say, "Let us think anew and act anew." So, again, thank you very much.