

APPENDIX 9. NCLIS PRESS RELEASE ANNOUNCING THE COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION DISSEMINATION, JUNE 26, 2000

NCLIS PRESS RELEASE

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NCLIS LAUNCHES COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S PUBLIC INFORMATION DISSEMINATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES²⁹⁴

Washington, DC - The U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) announces the launching of a major study to identify reforms necessary in the federal government's public information dissemination machinery. The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, chaired by Senator John McCain, requested the study. Other Senate and House committees have expressed an interest in the matter.

The comprehensive study grows directly out of earlier work done by NCLIS regarding the National Technical Information Service (NTIS). In August 1999 the Department of Commerce announced plans to close NTIS and transfer its collections, functions, services and assets to the Library of Congress. Following the announcement, both the Science Subcommittee of the Senate Commerce Committee, as well as the Technology Subcommittee of the House Committee on Science, held hearings on the subject.

Subsequently, NCLIS held three public meetings involving over 100 individuals, representing a wide variety of interested groups. On March 16, 2000, the Commission submitted its "Preliminary Assessment" report to the President and Congress. That report was completed quickly because of the effects of uncertainty on the staffing and operation of NTIS. The NCLIS report recommended that NTIS be temporarily retained in the Department of Commerce at a minimal satisfactory level of service until the core issues could be studied more thoroughly by the Commission and an optimal permanent solution be developed.

In the course of these efforts, it became apparent that the "NTIS matter" should not be addressed as an isolated event, that is, simply as a "routine" government reorganization in the scientific and technical information (STI) arena. Issues raised by the proposed actions with respect to *NTIS are part of a framework of reforms needed in public information dissemination overall.*

The "Preliminary Assessment" report's recognition of the need to streamline and simplify the government's overall public information dissemination policies and practices was consistent with findings in an earlier Commission study, "Assessment of Electronic Government Information

²⁹⁴ Available at <http://www.nclis.gov/news/pr2000/assess1.html> and at <http://www.nclis.gov/govt/assess/assess.appen9.pdf>.

Products," completed a year ago at the request of the Government Printing Office. The accelerating agency migration of governmental information products and services from paper-based formats to web-based and other electronic formats is principally driving this critical need for basic reforms. Additionally, there is the need to assess the economic equation resulting from the shift in the benefits and the burdens among the providers, intermediaries and users. The roles and responsibilities of the public and private sector need to be refined also.