# AN OVERVIEW BY THE LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR OF THE STUDY OF THE LIBRARY SYSTEM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## INTRODUCTION

Library services were established by the territorial legislature in 1909. The goal then, as now, was to provide services within reach of all residents. Between 1921 and statehood, libraries were administered by the county governments. However, financial responsibility for library services remained with the territorial government.

Since statehood, libraries have been a state responsibility, and legislative policies have been directed toward developing an integrated, cohesive system of libraries throughout the State. The more important of these policies include:

- Placement of all libraries, public as well as school, in the department of education.
- Establishment of the position of state librarian who would be responsible for the operation of all school and public libraries.

Consistent with these policies, the department of education's own master plan for libraries also called for the development of a statewide library system, including the coordination of school and public libraries.

Despite the clear policy direction given to the department of education, the goal of efficient and effective library services through an integrated statewide library system has not been fully realized. Our study of the library system of the department of education focuses upon the organization and management problems of school and public libraries. This overview summarizes the major findings and recommendations of the study.

## SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our most fundamental conclusion is that, contrary to state law and policy, there is no statewide system of school and public libraries. Despite the repeated endorsement of the concept of system development, the department of education has failed to make those organizational changes that would lead to a real system.

The components of the library system are school libraries, community libraries, regional libraries, and a state resource center. These components were supposed to be welded into a cohesive, integrated system. Instead, we find that school libraries are fragmented and isolated, regional libraries operated haphazardly and none are given the solid support of a resource library. Moreover, the department of education's failure to distinguish between instructional functions and library functions has led to personnel conflicts among librarians.

**School libraries.** Our most distressing discovery was the isolation of individual school libraries. Although by state law the state librarian is responsible for the operation of both school and public libraries, in practice, school libraries are operated by school librarians who report to their respective principals. School libraries do not cooperate with one another or work collectively as a subsystem within the broader state system. Because each school library is the preserve of the individual school principal, use of school library facilities and resources are limited by the school calendar and to the school population. This results in serious underutilization of the bulk of the State's library resources.

School library instructional programs vary widely from school to school, as do their budgets and collections. There is no agreed-upon curriculum by which school librarians instruct students in locating information, and there are large disparities in the size and quality of school library collections.

The department of education should be required to comply with state law by transferring authority over school library operations to the state librarian. Clear criteria should be developed for staffing and for allocating resources to each school library, and access to school library facilities should be maximized.

**Community/school libraries.** These libraries were initiated as an experiment in economically serving both students and the general public in small communities. However, the experiment had no more than started before the concept was expanded to include experimentation with total media facilities. The number of experimental community/school libraries grew rapidly under the fiction of pilot testing. Creation of these total media, community/school libraries resulted in vastly more sophisticated audiovisual equipment and services being assigned to remote areas than are provided to major population centers. Thus, sophisticated audiovisual equipment is greatly underutilized. Staffing of community/school libraries with both public and school librarians has led to personnel conflicts and confusion over administrative authority.

The concepts of total media and community/school libraries should be divorced from one another. Unless a need can be demonstrated, total media libraries should no longer be constructed. The department of education should devise a plan for redistributing underutilized equipment on an equitable statewide basis.

**Regional and resource libraries.** The 1968 master plan for libraries called for the development of regional library programs and a state resource center. The regional library programs were to provide administration and support to designated regional service areas. Yet, regional programs are still not clearly defined. There are no criteria for delineating regional divisions and program objectives of regional libraries have not been developed. Responsibilities of regional administrators are inconsistent. These weaknesses have resulted in confusion and a lack of progress in regional programs.

The Hawaii state library, the facility on King and Punchbowl streets, was supposed to be the state resource center. It has not developed as such because of uncertainty over its role and its inappropriate exercise of certain statewide functions. Interlibrary loan data reveal that the Hawaii state library is unable to supply two-thirds of the materials that are requested of it.

Community libraries, regional libraries, and the state resource center were supposed to work closely together to reduce duplication and to facilitate the development of complementary and specialized services. However, there are no policies delineating the respective responsibilities of the various kinds of libraries. Consequently, duplication continues and there are conflicting expectations concerning the nature of support which each is supposed to provide the others.

Objectives and criteria should be defined for regional library programs. The responsibilities of regional administrators need to be defined consistently as well. Statewide functions currently assigned to the Hawaii state library should be removed so that it can concentrate on developing as a resource center. A materials selection policy should be adopted which would clearly delineate the respective responsibilities of community libraries, the regional libraries, and the state resource center.

**Staffing and personnel problems.** Much of the controversy surrounding libraries arises from the existence of separate personnel systems for school and public librarians. School librarians belong to the certificated personnel system of the department of education while public librarians are under civil service. Although school librarians contend that they perform a unique instructional function, they spend much of their time operating school library facilities instead of providing instruction. There is, nonetheless, a need for a library instruction program. By virtue of their training in both education and library science, school librarians are uniquely qualified to perform this function.

The department of education has consistently failed to distinguish between instructional functions and library functions. This has resulted in the coexistence of two personnel systems within the office of library services itself. Theoretically, certificated positions are limited to teaching positions and to administrative positions which require backgrounds in teaching. However, there are positions in the office of library services which bear no relationship to instruction but which are nonetheless classified in the certificated system.

Those aspects of the school library program which should be integrated into the state library program and those which should be part of the individual school's instructional program should be clearly delineated. Positions relating to each should be properly reclassified. A statewide curriculum should be developed for the teaching of library skills by school librarians functioning as "resource teachers," and appropriate staffing standards for school libraries should be developed.

**Organizational alternatives for libraries.** The library program was placed in the department of education to reflect the shared educational goals of school and public libraries and to achieve program and management objectives. However, complaints have been voiced that the department of education gives low priority to the library program and that it discriminates against public librarians by paying them less than school librarians for doing the same work.

Alternative organizational placements for public libraries have been suggested recently. Among these are: returning libraries to the counties, placing them in a department of life-long learning with other adult education programs, creating a separate department of libraries, and placing them in the department of accounting and general services.

While it is clear from our study that the department of education has failed to develop the library system as planned, a library system within the department of education continues to have potential for development. The most compelling reason is that students are almost the exclusive users of school libraries and the major users of public libraries. The department of education also has had vast experience in furnishing services throughout the State and continues to have the potential for meeting the goals of accessibility and comprehensiveness which date back to the Territory's first library act in 1909. The problem is essentially one of management and not of placement.

## CONCLUSION

The State has had exemplary plans for the orderly development of library services. However, the department of education has failed to translate these plans into an appropriate agenda for action. It has failed to implement a systems approach. Such an approach must include integrating school libraries with public libraries, developing administrative and resource backup, and developing cooperation and resource sharing. An integrated system will not develop of itself. Legislative stimulus clearly is necessary if Hawaii is to achieve its goal of an integrated library system.

Clinton T. Tanimura
Legislative Auditor
State of Hawaii

February 1977