
Documents

Less Access to Less Information by and about the U.S. Government

A 1983-84 Chronology: November 1983 — June 1984

What was first seen as an emerging trend in April 1981, when the American Library Association Washington office first started this chronology, has by June 1984 become a continuing pattern of the federal government to restrict government publications and information dissemination activities. A policy has emerged which is less than sympathetic to the principles of freedom of access to information as librarians advocate them. A combination of specific policy decisions, the current administration's interpretations and implementation of the 1980 Paperwork Reduction Act (PL 96-511), implementation of the Grace Commission recommendations, and agency budget cuts significantly limit access to public documents and statistics.

The accelerating tendency of federal agencies to use computer and telecommunications technologies for data collection, storage, retrieval, and dissemination has major implications for public access. To identify a few: contractual arrangements with commercial firms to disseminate information collected at taxpayer expense, increased user charges for government information, the trend toward having increasing amounts of government information available in electronic format only and eliminating the printed version. While automation clearly offers promises of savings, will public access to government information be further restricted for people who cannot afford computers or cannot pay for computer time?

ALA reaffirmed its long standing conviction that open government is vital to a democracy in a resolution passed by council in January 1984 which stated that "there should be equal and ready access to data collected, compiled, produced, and published in any format by the

government of the United States." With access to information a major ALA priority, members should be concerned about the following series of actions which create a climate in which government information activities are suspect.

The following partial chronology from November 1983 to June 1984 supplements three previous 1981, 1982 and 1983 chronologies prepared on the same topic.

November 1983. The House passed HR 2718, Paperwork Reduction Act Amendments of 1983. The bill establishes new goals for further reduction of the burden imposed by federal paperwork requirements. Federal collection of information would be reduced by 10 per cent by October 1, 1984, and by an additional 5 per cent by October 1, 1985. The House bill would explicitly prohibit use of funds for functions or activities not specifically authorized or required by the Paperwork Reduction Act. (November 7 *Congressional Record*, pp. H9271-9273).

December. In a December 12 letter to Rep. Augustus F. Hawkins (D-CA), chair of the Joint Committee on Printing, OMB Director David Stockman, protested the stipulation in the proposed JCP *Government Printing, Binding and Distribution Regulations* that the Government Printing Office would be responsible for the distribution of all government publications. In her letter commenting on the proposed regulations, ALA Washington Office Director Eileen D. Cooke commended the JCP for its development of regulations which provide for technological changes and for increased support for the depository library program. Cooke said, "The expanded definition of printing is extremely important for the continued effective operation of the depository library program. An increasing number of government agencies are creating information which is only available for distribution in an electronic format. In order for libraries, specifically depository

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tory libraries, to be able to provide information in this format to the general public, it must become part of the depository library program." The proposed JCP regulations were printed in the November 11 *Congressional Record*, pp. H9709-9713.

December. On December 28, 1983, the United States government gave the required one-year notice of its intention to withdraw from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) effective January 1, 1985. (Press release #98-158, "House Hearings on U.S. Participation in UNESCO," Committee on Science and Technology, U.S. House of Representatives, March 8, 1984).

Note: ALA Council passed a resolution in January 1984 on continued U.S. membership in UNESCO. Thomas Galvin, chair of ALA's International Relations Committee, testified in Congress on March 15 and urged the U.S. to stay in UNESCO and continue to allow U.S. scientists "full, prompt, and ready access to ... research results of their counterparts ... throughout the world."

January 1984. The *Second Annual Report on Eliminations, Consolidations, and Cost Reductions of Government Publications* reports the elimination of 3,287 publications and the proposed consolidation of another 561. The total of eliminations and consolidations equals 3,848 publications or one-fourth of the total inventory. These publications account for over 150 million copies, or 15 per cent of all copies printed. In addition, federal agencies proposed 5,020 cost-reduction actions on 3,070 other publications including reducing the volume, frequency of issue, use of color, and other printing and distribution cost reductions. Meanwhile, the Office of Management and Budget is revising OMB Circular A-3, the permanent procedure for the government-wide review of publications. When the circular is revised, OMB plans to establish new publication elimination and cost reduction goals for the remaining 9,000 publications in the government inventory of 15,900 publications. (Office of Management and Budget, *Second Annual Report on Eliminations, Consolidations, and Cost Reductions of Government Publications*, released on January 6, 1984)

January. A photograph in the *Washington Post* showed Presidential counselor Edwin Meese III and OMB Deputy Director Joseph Wright surrounded by trash bags stuffed with government documents at a White House briefing. The accompanying story said

Since President Reagan took office three years ago, the

administration has eliminated one of every four government publications then printed. Most of them were distributed free to the public by the Agriculture and Defense departments.

Meese ridiculed the publications, calling a pamphlet entitled "How to Control Bedbugs," for example, a real "best-seller." But the doomed publications included several offering advice about serious subjects, such as solar energy, radioactive fallout, income taxes and drug abuse. Meese said those publications are being eliminated because the information is available elsewhere. Eliminating the publications will save \$85 million annually ... (Pete Earley, "U.S. Tightens Tourniquet on Flow of Paper," *Washington Post*, January 7, 1984, p. A5)

February. For the third year in a row the administration proposed elimination of library grant programs. Education Department justification for the zeroes indicated no new rationale, but once again noted "the program's past success at establishing the highest practical levels of access across the country to library services ... and at developing models of interlibrary cooperative arrangements to stimulate further expansion of the concept." In addition, "any further need for training of professional librarians can be met through state and local efforts as well as student aid programs." In the past years, Congress has continued to fund library grant programs, in some cases, at the highest-ever levels. (Department of Education, *The Fiscal Year 1985 Budget*, released February 1, 1984)

February. The administration's FY 1985 budget request for the Consumer Information Center is \$349,000, a million dollars less than the FY 1984 appropriation. The budget proposes that one-half of CIC's staff be redirected from traditional consumer information activities to undertake new marketing programs financed from increased user fees and other charges. The CIC's function is to promote greater public awareness of existing federal publications through distribution of the quarterly "Consumer Information Catalog" and various media programs.

In May, when the House Appropriations Committee recommended \$1,149,000 in new budget authority for the CIC in FY 1985, it expressed concern that the recent user charge increase has substantially reduced consumer demand for publications, with the result that lower volume has raised unit distribution costs. Therefore, the committee directed that the charge to consumers not be raised above its current level of \$1 and that the CIC charge other federal agencies only the actual cost of distributing publications. (H. Rept. 98-803 on the Department of Housing and Urban Development-Independent Agencies Appropriation Bill, 1985; May 23, 1984, p. 34)

February. The administration requested for FY 1985 only \$452 million of the \$801 million needed to keep nonprofit and other subsidized

postal rates at current levels. Under the President's proposal, a 2-lb. book package mailed at the fourth-class library rate would increase from the current 47¢ to 66¢, a 40 per cent increase. However, the House Treasury-Postal Service-General Government Appropriations Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Edward Roybal (D-CA), recommended \$801 million, the full amount needed. The full House Appropriations Committee approved that recommendation June 7 in HR 5798; the Senate subcommittee has not yet acted. (House Treasury, Postal Service and General Government Appropriations Bill, 1985 (H. Rept. 98-830))

February. Following the administration's request for substantial revisions to the Freedom of Information Act, the Senate passed S. 774 amending the FOIA. The bill would provide increased confidentiality for certain law enforcement, private business, and sensitive personal records. It promotes uniform fee schedules among agencies which could recover reasonable processing costs in addition to the current search and copying costs, and could keep half the fees to offset costs. The public interest fee waiver would be clarified. Many of the substantive and procedural changes proposed by the Senate to the FOIA are controversial. Rep. Glenn English (D-OK), chair of the House Government Operations Subcommittee on Government Information, Justice, and Agriculture, has indicated that the subcommittee "must proceed very carefully and thoughtfully in considering amendments." (February 27 *Congressional Record*, pp. S1794-1822, and "Statement of Rep. Glenn English on the Passage by the Senate of Freedom of Information Act Amendments," News Release from the House Committee on Government Operations, February 28, 1984)

February. The Department of Agriculture announced that it will issue a request for proposal (RFP 84-00-R-6) on March 15, seeking contractors to provide a computer-based system to support electronic dissemination of "perishable" data developed by USDA agencies. (February 28, 1984, *Commerce Business Daily*) Examples of the type of data to be disseminated in the system include *Market News Reports* from Agricultural Marketing Service, *Outlook and Situation Reports* from Agricultural Marketing Service, *Outlook and Situation Reports* from Economic Research Service, *Weekly Export Sales Reports* from Foreign Agricultural Service, and USDA press releases and crop production reports from Statistical Reporting Services. Users will pay for the direct cost of accessing the data from the computer-based system. However, USDA does not plan to exert control over the fees which contractors or

sub-contractors will charge the public to access the on-line data. The Office of Management and Budget considers this RFP a prototype for the federal government's distribution of electronic data.

March. The Patent and Trademark Office has signed agreements with private companies for the automation of agency records at no cost to the government. One aspect of these agreements requires the agency to deny Freedom of Information Act requests for the records in automated form. In a statement in the March 14 *Congressional Record* (pp. H1614-1615), Rep. Glenn English (D-OK) asked, Is the agency obtaining services at the price of limiting public access to some of its records? The Securities and Exchange Commission has issued a request for proposals for a pilot test of an electronic filing, processing, and dissemination system. The Federal Maritime Commission is also considering an electronic filing, storage, and retrieval system for tariffs.

March. On March 15, Sen John Danforth (R-MO) introduced S. 2433, the Senate version of the Paperwork Reduction Act Amendments of 1984. The Senate bill would require reducing the paperwork burden by 5 per cent in each of the next five fiscal years, beginning in FY 1984. (March 15 *Congressional Record*, pp. S2789-2793)

April. OMB published the third and final version of its controversial "Lobbying" revision of Circular A-122, "Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations" in the April 27 *Federal Register*, pp. 18260-77. The revision which is scheduled to go into effect on May 29, 1984, makes unallowable the use of federal funds for the costs associated with most kinds of lobbying and political activities but does not restrict lobbying and political activities paid for with non-federal funds. The new version is still drawing fire from some groups and from members of Congress who contend that the bookkeeping requirement would require contractors and grantees to tell the government how much they spend on lobbying and identify those costs separately from other expenses. (*Washington Post*, April 30, 1984)

April. The Justice Department concluded in an April 11, 1984 memorandum for the counsel to the director of the Office of Management and Budget that the proposed regulations published by the Joint Committee on Printing in November 1983 "... are statutorily unsupported and constitutionally impermissible." (Memorandum for Michael J. Horowitz, Counsel to the Director, Office of Management and Budget. Re: Constitutionality of Proposed Regulations of Joint Com-

mittee on Printing under *Buckley v. Valeo* and *INS v. Chadha*, April 11, 1984)

May. When the National Farmers Union recently asked for a listing of payment-in-kind (PIK) participants and amounts of the PIK commodities they received, the U.S. Department of Agriculture responded that a printout would cost \$2,284.87, with half of the money required up front. (*Washington Post*, May 25, 1984, p. A21)

June. Thousands of government employees are currently being required to sign prepublication censorship agreements and to submit to lie detector examinations despite President Reagan's suspension of these controversial programs proposed in his March 1983 National Security Decision Directive 84. According to a General Accounting Office report (GAO/NSIAD-84-134) released on June 11, 1984, every employee with access to sensitive compartmented information (SCI) is being required to sign a lifelong prepublication censorship agreement, Form 4193. In March 1984, the President had promised Congress he would suspend the censorship and polygraph provisions of his directive for the duration of this session of Congress. The President's censorship contract and Form 4193 are virtually identical. Since the issuance of Form 4193 in 1981, approximately 156,000 military and civilian employees have been required to sign such agreements at the Department of Defense alone. The GAO reports that employees in 22 other federal agencies have also signed these agreements. (U.S. House of Representatives, news release, "GAO Update on Administration Lie Detector/Censorship Status Reveals Reagan Promise of Suspension Has Little Effect: Brooks Calls for End to Programs, Prohibition by Law," released June 13, 1984)

Instructions for the Preparation of Manuscripts for North Carolina Libraries

1. *North Carolina Libraries* seeks to publish articles, book reviews, and news of professional interest to librarians in North Carolina. Articles need not be of a scholarly nature, but they should address professional concerns of the library community in the state.
2. Manuscripts should be directed to Robert Burgin, Editor, *North Carolina Libraries*, School of Library Science, N.C. Central University, Durham, N.C. 27707.
3. Manuscripts should be submitted in triplicate on plain white paper measuring 8½"x11".
4. Manuscripts must be double-spaced (text, references, and footnotes). Manuscripts should be typed on sixty-space lines, twenty-five lines to a page. The beginnings of paragraphs should be indented eight spaces. Lengthy quotes should be avoided. When used, they should be indented on both margins.
5. The name, position, and professional address of the author should appear in the bottom left-hand corner of a separate title page.
6. Each page after the first should be numbered consecutively at the top right-hand corner and carry the author's last name at the upper left-hand corner.
7. Footnotes should appear at the end of the manuscript. The editors will refer to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 13th edition. The basic forms for books and journals are as follows:
Keyes Metcalf, *Planning Academic and Research Library Buildings* New York: McGraw, 1965), 416.
Susan K. Martin, "The Care and Feeding of the MARC Format," *American Libraries* 10 (September 1979): 498.
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Issue deadlines are February 10, May 10, August 10, and November 10.



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