

The 2007 Legislature Considers Library Issues

By Marc Galbraith, Deputy State Librarian

The 2007 Kansas legislative session got underway on January 8. Shortly thereafter, SB 67 was introduced and referred to the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee. SB 67 combines the Kansas Library Advisory Commission and the Kansas Library Network Board into one library board to be known as the State Library of Kansas Board.

SB 67 is an efficiency measure. The adoption of SB 67 will make it easier for librarians of all types to work together toward better library service for the entire state.

As of the date this article was written, SB 67 had been favorably passed out of the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee and was on the calendar for consideration by the full Senate.

Other library issues before the 2007 legislature are, for the most part, items to be considered by the legislature as part of the State Library's budget. These items are known as budget enhancements. Hearings on these issues will take place in House and Senate budget subcommittees.

The State Library's budget includes four enhancements this year. They are as follows:

Enhancement #1: Statewide library courier system: \$250,000. The State Library and the Kansas library community are seeking \$250,000 in funding to finance a statewide delivery system. The Governor has recommended funding for this enhancement at \$150,000.

There are approximately 500,000 books and other library materials that are shared between Kansas libraries each year. The majority of those items are moved between libraries by U.S. mail at a cost of \$2.00 to \$5.00 each.

One of the tools that helps facilitate all of this intrastate traffic in library books is the Kansas Library Catalog (KLC). The KLC includes approximately 4.8 million books. Using a new "Get me this book" button, library patrons will soon be able to directly request items on the KLC. It is expected that improvements in the KLC and the availability of the statewide courier service will dramatically increase the number of books shared among libraries.

The total cost of the statewide courier is \$500,000. The enhancement requests half that amount in state funding. The remaining \$250,000 will be shared among the Kansas Library Systems, the State Library and libraries utilizing the service.

Funding for this enhancement will result in increased reading among Kansas residents, savings

for Kansas libraries and a more reliable service.

Enhancement #2: Promote Talking Books Library Service to the blind and physically impaired: \$76,500. This enhancement will fund a media campaign designed to inform potential users about the Talking Books service. The Governor has recommended funding for this enhancement at \$50,000.

We know that 7,100 Kansans currently receive Talking Books services. But we also know, via the National Eye Institute, that approximately 39,000 Kansans age 40 and older could benefit from the service. It's also estimated that with the aging of the Boomers, this number could grow to be significantly larger. Funding for this enhancement would provide for statewide promotion of the Talking Books Service. Missouri launched a Talking Books outreach program last year and has increased participation by at least 10%. Successful funding for this enhancement will mean that more Kansas residents who need Talking Books will get it.

Enhancement #3: Expansion of the State Data Center: \$70,937. Requested funding for this enhancement will be used to employ a State Data Center Coordinator. The Kansas State Data Center is a partnership organization between the U.S. Bureau of Census and the State of Kansas. The State Library is the designated lead agency. Three research centers at KU, KSU and WSU serve as coordinating units of the Center and twenty Kansas public and academic libraries serve as affiliate units.

It's the mission of the Data Center to assure that every Kansan is counted in the decennial census and the upcoming 2010 census is the current focus of the Data Center. A complete and accurate count of the state's population is critical. Congressional seats are determined by decennial population counts. Many states are concerned about losing seats and are gearing up to count every single resident. Kansas needs to be similarly prepared. In addition, billions of federal dollars are distributed across the country based on state population counts. Kansas state dollars distributed to local governments are also pegged to population counts and characteristics. On the private side, planning of almost any variety will generally start with demographic data. Good planning requires good data. Census numbers are used by businesses to gauge competition, to make decisions about store locations, workforce expansions and venture capital proposals.

Successful funding for this enhancement will allow the Data Center to be staffed by a professional who can coordinate and spearhead the organization and provide a "one-stop-shopping" site for locating Census information.

Enhancement #4: Statewide reference databases: \$431,267. Funding for this enhancement will help stabilize access to statewide databases.

Presently \$1.5 million is spent for the provision of statewide library reference databases. That total cost is shared among the State Library, Regents libraries, two larger public libraries (Johnson County Library and the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library) and Kan-ed. The portion provided by Kan-ed is in jeopardy because of challenges to the Kan-ed budget. Kan-ed currently provides \$801,664 for its portion of the statewide database suite.

If purchased individually, it is estimated the cost of the statewide databases would be nearly \$35 million. If purchased individually, many libraries and schools could not afford and would not be able to offer the databases.

Because the databases purchased by Kan-ed are continually under threat, there is a sense of uncertainty about whether these resources are going to be available to library patrons and schools and there is a consequential reluctance to use them to the fullest extent possible.

This enhancement would put half the funding for the database costs, currently funded by Kan-ed, in the State Library's budget and provide some greater measure of stability and confidence about these valuable resources. The databases to be funded by the enhancement are World Book Encyclopedia, Proquest Nursing Journals and HeritageQuest (genealogy resources).

An additional library issue, not to be considered as a State Library budget enhancement, is HB 2178. If passed, HB 2178 will provide a 3.0% increase in KPERS retirement benefits. Former library employees, who are also members of the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System, would qualify. HB 2178 has been referred to the House Appropriations Committee.