

Mission

The mission of the Nebraska Library Commission is statewide promotion, development, and coordination of library and information services. As the state library agency, the Commission is an advocate for the library and information service needs of all Nebraskans.

General Statutory Authority

The Nebraska Library Commission's statutory authority is set forth under Article 4, Chapter 51 of Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, 1999². In addition to the powers granted in Chapter 51, state statutes provide that the Commission is the state agency designated to receive federal library program funds appropriated for the Library Services and Technology Act.

Trends and Issues

Economy – The Nebraska economy grew at a steady pace throughout the 1990s. Economic gains allowed state funding increases to support statewide library service objectives. With the start of the new century, the economy has softened and tax revenues have fallen short of projections. In line with declining tax receipts, budget growth has yielded to budget reductions. The Library Commission's state funding was reduced three percent (3%) in fiscal year 2002, eight percent (8%) in fiscal year 2003, and is likely be reduced further in the next biennium. As a result, it is necessary for the Library Commission and local libraries to explore alternate, innovative and collaborative funding sources to ensure growth and development of library and information services.

Library Personnel – Nebraska's LSTA Five-Year Plan Evaluation³ reaffirms that *people* make the significant difference in determining the quality of library services. Significant numbers of library personnel will reach retirement age in the coming decade⁴. A priority need is the successful recruitment of talented library personnel, provision of professional and continuing education (CE) opportunities, and improvement of a support system that places value on the work of library personnel and provides significant improvement in compensation.

Demographics – The 2000 U. S. Census affirmed the trend toward declining population in many of Nebraska's rural counties. Overall, state population grew slightly, but continues to shift from smaller rural communities to larger and urban metropolitan areas, with continuing movement of younger Nebraskans from rural to urban communities and out of state. These population shifts create a challenge for maintaining effective community services and for community survival. Nebraska has experienced population growth in several ethnic groups, increasing the need for diversity in library resources, services and personnel.

² statutes.unicam.state.ne.us/

³ www.nlc.state.ne.us/mission/lstareports/2002-eval/index.html

⁴ www.ala.org/pio/presskits/recruitment/facts.html

The 2000 Census counted Nebraska's population at 1,711,263 persons in a 76,872 square mile area (22.3 persons per square mile). This was an 8.4 % increase since the 1990 Census count. Overall, forty of Nebraska's ninety-three counties added population during the 1990s. Between 1983 and 2000, Nebraska has taken in 8,714 refugees. In 1988, 166 refugees were resettled in Nebraska, 365 in 1989, and a peak of 1,032 in 1991. Refugees have come from thirty-two different countries over the past eighteen years. During the past five years, eleven new groups of refugees have come to Nebraska, the largest numbers coming from Vietnam, Iraq, Bakongo (Africa), Ukraine, Russia and Cuba. According to the 2000 census Lancaster County experienced an increase in Asian population of 3,944 people, almost as big an increase as in Douglas County. Lincoln has resettled more than half the total number of refugees in the state – 5,479 people – since 1983. Overall the state's white-only, non-Hispanic population grew by just 2.4% (34,399) compared with an 83.3 % growth (98,479) in minority population. These changes reflect growing linguistic and ethnic diversity in Nebraska, particularly in counties where large meat packing plants are attracting non-white or Hispanic workers, or in counties hosting refugee resettlement programs.

Library Technology – Nebraska libraries have made significant strides in acquiring and implementing information technology. However, there remain large gaps between needed technology resources (hardware, software, online content, telecommunications, training, and support) and access to those resources. Nebraska's telecommunications infrastructure is fragmented, with varying availability of pricing and broadband services. With Nebraska political leaders pointing to electronic government as an effective public service strategy, libraries are the primary public access points in many Nebraska communities for citizen access to government services. Further development of electronic library and information resources will increase the viability and value of Nebraska libraries.