

STATEMENT OF L. QUINCY MUMFORD, LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS  
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE LIBRARY OF  
THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

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LIBRARY OF THE  
AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to testify on this proposed legislation. I want to underscore the importance of the depository library system, not so much to the libraries themselves, but to business and industry, to the scientist and the sociologist, to the scholar and the student, and to countless others who find Government publications increasingly useful—even indispensable—in their diverse activities, because today there is scarcely a field untouched by Government publications.

Millions of dollars a year are spent on the research and other programs that result in these publications. To achieve their maximum effectiveness—to insure that they reach as many as possible who need them—is basically the purpose of the depository library system. And the cost of that system, in terms of publications furnished, postage, and so on, is very small compared to the total amounts spent on the programs of which reports and other publications are often the end product.

The depository library system, however, needs modernizing. It has changed, of course, in the years it has been in existence, but the changes have been rather like new patches on an old quilt. That the system needed careful examination and overhauling in the light of the present-day situation has been recognized in the Congress, and, as we all know, extensive hearings in Washington and throughout the country have been held on how the depository library law ought to be revised. Many points at issue have been resolved in those hearings. Admittedly, compromises have been made, and they may not please everyone. I think, however, that the two almost identical bills being considered today, H. R. 8141 and S. 2029, would result, if they should be embodied in law, in a great improvement in the depository library picture.

A primary need—that for more depository libraries to serve new centers of population or study—would be met by each of the bills before this Committee. As I understand it, nearly 500 additional depository libraries could be designated, although it is unlikely that more than 100 to 150 libraries would seek depository designation. Even with these possible additions, it may be that the needs in some areas might not be met. This Committee therefore might wish to consider whether, in addition to designating a regional library, each Senator should not be given the right to designate a depository library in his State. And, to give this bill greater flexibility for the future, the Committee might also wish to

consider the advantages of providing that each Senator may name an additional depository library anywhere in his State that it is needed when the State's population rises by, say three million, or whatever figure seems feasible.

An especially desirable feature of H. R. 8141 and S. 2029 is that, for the first time, there would be provision in law for furnishing to depository libraries not only publications printed at the Government Printing Office but also those reproduced by Federal agencies either on their own facilities or otherwise outside the GPO. These non-GPO publications are valuable but are often difficult to acquire. It has, in fact, been necessary for a number of libraries to maintain in Washington a Documents Expediter, whose mission it is to obtain such publications. Last year, through this cooperative undertaking, about 2,000 titles were obtained and distributed.

An analysis made by the Documents Expediter showed that publications were being obtained from 18 out of 42 Federal agencies checked; and it is estimated that about 55 percent of the non-GPO-produced publications of other Federal agencies reach the Documents Expediter. The requirement that such materials be available for selection by depository libraries is therefore a welcome one and should result in the inclusion in depository collections of much valuable material not now systematically distributed and widely available. If Federal agencies cooperate fully--if this provision is promptly and faithfully complied with--depository libraries, at least, should have no further need of a Documents Expediter.

The provision for regional depositories is also a great step forward. Their very existence should promote economy and efficiency in the whole depository library system, for the depositories served by them would be able to be more selective in their acquisition of Government publications and would be free to dispose of obsolete and little-used material after a period of 5 years.

The provision for furnishing, under certain circumstances, microfacsimile copies of Government publications is, I believe, also a progressive and necessary step. Regional libraries will undertake responsibility for costly custodial care and reference service, and they should not also be expected to maintain all depository publications in ink-print or near-print form, the storage of which would consume vast amounts of expensive and often scarce space. It is only fair, it seems to me, that the Government should assist

them to the extent of supplying--as the Superintendent of Documents determines to be appropriate and as appropriations are available--publications in the more compact, microfacsimile form. The Superintendent of Documents has, I recall, expressed some reservations in regard to this. He has said that there is no agreement among librarians as to what microreproduction process should be used, but I am sure that an appropriate advisory committee would be able to agree upon a recommendation that would be satisfactory.

The bill, as I read it, would not require that the Superintendent of Documents himself engage in the production of microfacsimiles. It might well be more economical and efficient for his office to make a contract for the finished product, just as the GPO now does for some of its printing.

Yesterday, at the hearings, I understand that the question was raised as to whether the Library of Congress would not be a more appropriate agency than the Superintendent of Documents to supply microfacsimiles. I would like to comment on this:

(1) The Superintendent of Documents is charged with responsibility for the administration of the depository library system, and I believe that fragmenting that responsibility would contribute neither to the economy nor the efficiency of the operation.

(2) The Library's Photoduplication Service is a revolving-fund operation. It is not supported by appropriated funds but by fees. The Service has had experience in producing microfilm. In cooperation with the GPO, it now supplies, on order and to certain specifications, the microfilm of U. S. Government depository publications and of nondepository publications which is used by the Readex Microprint Corporation. The Library is not equipped and does not have the know-how to produce the finished product. It could, on contract with the Superintendent of Documents, supply negative microfilm to his Office just as it does to Readex.

The Library of Congress is glad to have "cooperative publications" exempted from the requirements of the proposed act because we participate in many such undertakings with non-Governmental organizations and agencies, which may contribute copy or research or some other service necessary in the preparation of such publications. The Library's authority to engage in such activities is specifically recognized by the Library of Congress Trust Fund Board Act of 1925, as amended (2 U. S. C. 154-163). These cooperative publications are sold; they could not otherwise be undertaken. The price usually covers the cost of preparation as well as of printing, and in those cases the publications are plainly fully "self-sustaining." We believe that those who have drafted and considered

the several bills of recent years to revise the depository library laws meant also to include under "cooperative publications" those sold to the public at a price that would recover the cost of printing but not necessarily the cost of preparation, which may be borne by many agencies or organizations, so many, in fact, that it would not be feasible to try to estimate or recover the cost of preparation. If our understanding of the intent of the proposed law in this respect is correct, in the judgment of the Committee, we have no changes to suggest.

The enactment of H. R. 8141 or S. 2029 would, in my opinion, make more efficient and effective the depository library system of the country and insure the wider distribution and greater utility of one of the Nation's little-publicized but much-appreciated resources--the immensely valuable and informative publications of the Federal Government.