

ALA - Washington Office - Testimony

VERTICAL FILE

LIBRARY OF THE State Librarian and Assistant Commissioner for Libraries, The  
AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION New York State Library, Albany 1, New York; Member of the  
Executive Board of the American Library Association; Chairman  
of the Council of National Library Associations

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION  
OFFICIAL FILE

on H. R. 5836

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Before the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service  
April 9, 1957

My name is Charles F. Gosnell, and I am the State Librarian and Assistant Commissioner for Libraries in New York State. I am here representing the American Library Association, being an elected member of that organization's Executive Board. I am also here as Chairman of the Council of National Library Associations. I have spent many years guiding, advising, and administering to College or University libraries, large or small public libraries, and representing the library profession on a state, national and international level. The American Library Association is a professional organization that speaks for over 20,000 librarians, libraries, trustees and friends of libraries interested in the development, extension and strengthening of our nation's library service.

I can assure the Committee that our profession is in general accord with the intent of this bill as it stands in relation to the increased postal rates for first, second and third class mail, even though the first class increase, in particular, will raise the operating expenses of libraries. We are pleased to note that no increase is recommended for the library book rate. We are, however, greatly disturbed by Section 107, which increases by 25% the book rate.

We all are aware that the postal services were created "to unite more closely the American People, to promote the general welfare, and to advance the national economy." And further that throughout the years this service has become "a nationwide network of services and facilities for the communication of intelligence, the dissemination of information, the advancement of education and culture..." Is it any wonder then that we who are bending all of our efforts to these same general goals are disturbed when we learn that the provision in the

postal rates which most nearly meets these stated goals is, in essence, breached.

#### The Library Book Rate

Librarians and users of library resources have long been gratified by the aid given by Congress to the communication of ideas and information by establishing a special postal rate for books and a special library book rate within fourth class. Congress has set its responsibilities well with this enlightened public policy which has materially assisted libraries in extending their services by mail. Many people make use of the services of their state library agencies which supply books, digests, pamphlets, periodicals, films and clippings by mail upon request. The library book rate contributes greatly to the economical provision of educational materials to rural people from local, county and regional libraries as well as state libraries. In addition it saves tremendous amounts in local taxes by encouraging interlibrary loan of rare, expensive and little used resource material among the libraries of this country.

#### The Book Rate

The present low book rate has served as an equalizing influence in the democratic byplay of ideas between urban and rural people in our great country. In the urban situation books are almost universally available to the individual, but the resident of the vast expanse of rural areas has relatively limited access, or none at all to books, and consequently, must depend on the very inexpensive book rate to make available to him and his family the same ideas and resources enjoyed by his counterpart in the city. These ideas, and particularly free access to them, is basic to our democratic culture, and must be encouraged if this country is to remain the stronghold of the free world.

The importance of the existing book rate can be viewed in another way. In New York State almost 60% of our towns cannot receive Express shipments. By mail, then, books sent to these communities must go in small packages by post. A 25% increase in this book rate would tend to abrogate the fundamental provisions of

the postal service.

Cost of Additions to the Book and Library Book Rate

It is my understanding that Mr. Stans, Deputy Postmaster General, has stated that Section 107 of this Bill "will produce no net gain in revenues." Evidently then, the Post Office is not anticipating or counting on increased funds, but they do expect a considerable loss from the admission of certain additional materials such as educational tests, sheet music, academic theses and manuscripts to the book and the library book rates. We believe these estimates of the Department are far too high.

A year or so ago this very question came up with the Senate Post Office and Civil Service Committee, and the Chairman of that Committee wrote to the American Library Association and a number of other organizations concerning the volume of shipments of these various materials. The ALA made a questionnaire survey on this point to supplement the information already available from the nationwide library statistics collected and published by the U. S. Office of Education. There was a great discrepancy between Post Office Department estimates, based on experience, surveys and samplings made by reputable professional groups in this country. For instance, the Department estimated a loss of \$350,000 if bound academic theses were admitted to the library book rate. Based on a survey of actual interlibrary loan of these theses by mail, the American Library Association estimated the loss at \$5,000. Another glaring over-estimation had to do with the removal of the geographical limit on the book rate. The Department estimated a loss of \$950,000, while ALA, basing their estimate on a sampling survey and data in the U. S. Office of Education from regular nation-wide library statistical surveys showing that the total number of interlibrary loan shipments is now only 440,000 per year, suggested a loss of only \$65,000.

Still another estimation had to do with admitting bound volumes of periodicals and miscellaneous library materials to the library book rate. The Department

estimate was a \$70,000 loss; the ALA estimate, based on a survey measuring present volume and the extent to which express is now used for these shipments, listed the loss at only \$55,000. Summarizing these three instances, the Department estimated a loss of \$1,370,000, while practicing librarians who actually handle these things, estimated the loss at only \$125,000 -- an over-estimation of approximately one and a fourth million dollars. It would seem logical that the Post Office Department might exercise more care in presenting estimates of this type to the Congress and make an effort to utilize existing statistical data such as the library statistics surveys of the U. S. Office of Education.

There is attached to this statement a summary of the estimates of the annual revenue losses from changes in the coverage of the book and library book rates made by the American Library Association and other organizations.

Data Costs on Books Received

The New York State Library, as with all other libraries, pays the postal charges on all books purchased for its collections. Under the proposed increase in the book rate, there will be a 25% increase in these costs to libraries. For our own library this would be approximately \$500 more annually.

As librarians, with the duty of getting really worthwhile knowledge out to people all over the country, we see many discrepancies we cannot understand.

I have here in my hand a book issued by the New York State Library, illustrating some of our great historical documents. It is of real interest to school children and adults alike. It costs us 12¢ in postage whenever we send it out. But here is a famous magazine, the same size and weight, that goes for a quarter of that cost. Ours is a non-profit, educational operation. The other is purely commercial enterprise supported largely by advertising.

Permit System for the Library Book Rate

Section 107 of the bill also contains an administrative provision which seems to us both burdensome and unnecessary. The non-profit institutions using the

library book rate for books, films and other materials would be required to secure permits from the Post Office Department. No such permit is now required for the shipment of educational films at the library book rate under legislation approved by this Committee and enacted in 1953. We see no reason why the permit requirement should now be added. The non-profit institutions authorized to use the library book rate are clearly identified by the address or the return address on the shipments themselves. If there should be any use of this rate by persons not authorized to use it - and we have not heard of such cases under the 1953 law - the Post Office Department should take appropriate legal action. It seems unwise to set up a cumbersome system of permits to deal with a problem which to our knowledge has not arisen.

#### Conclusion

Demands on libraries continue to increase as a result of expanding population, the rise in the educational level of our people, and the growing complexities of our civilization. To meet the information and book needs of people everywhere, with or without libraries, interlibrary loans or direct loans by mail are becoming an increasingly important but costly part of good library service. Most libraries want to share their informational resources. They should be encouraged to remain a part of our national network of information. The Congress can provide this encouragement by continuing its present book and library book rate policy. So long as the rates on magazines and newspapers are maintained at a very much lower level than the rates on books, we believe the book rate ought not to be increased above its present level.

I certainly appreciate the opportunity which you have given me to present the views of the American Library Association on this bill. It is a gratifying experience to appear before a committee which has already recognized the educational responsibilities and purposes of libraries and will continue to aid them in the dissemination of their resources so that our great country will maintain its rightful place in the free world.

Statement by Chairman E. Gruendel  
of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
House of Representatives, Library of the House

Estimates of Loss of Postal Revenues under Section 1  
of S. 1292 (as introduced in 1955) and the Changes  
Proposed in Section 167 of H.R. 5836 (1957)

1. Section 204 (d) - marked educational tests and authors' manuscripts

Estimates prepared by the Conference of State Testing Leaders on marked education tests (\$88,000) and the Authors' League on authors' manuscripts (\$250,000) \$338,000

2. Section 204 (d) - printed music and unused educational tests

Estimates of Music Educators National Conference on sheet music presented in the House hearings (\$420,000) and of the State Testing Leaders Conference on unused educational tests (\$125,000) \$545,000

3. Section 204 (e) - admitting bound academic theses to the library book rate

Estimate of the American Library Association based on a survey of the volume of interlibrary loans of academic theses and the fact that over 95% of interlibrary loans of theses are now shipped by express \$5,000

4. Section 204 (e) - admitting bound volumes of periodicals and miscellaneous library materials to the library book rate

American Library Association estimate based on a survey measuring present volume and the extent to which express is now used for these shipments \$55,000

5. Section 204 (e) - removal of the geographical limit on the book rate

American Library Association estimate based on sample survey plus U. S. Office of Education data from regular nation-wide library statistical surveys showing that the total number of interlibrary loan shipments is now only about 440,000 per year (including loans within the present geographical limit and academic theses, already counted above) - 300,000 shipments a loss of 22¢ per shipment \$65,000

TOTAL \$1,008,000