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IZ 12J  
no. 43  
exp. 2

# University of Illinois Library School

## OCCASIONAL PAPERS



Number 43

October 1955

### State District Library Development West of the Mississippi

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#### The Larger Unit Concept

The philosophy of librarianship which has opened the door to state district libraries is that of the larger unit of service. For years librarians have stressed the idea that everyone, regardless of place of residence is entitled to the same quality library service that is accorded the big city resident. It is this philosophy which has pushed out the geographical walls of the library unit to the county, to several counties, to state districts in order to find the optimum geographic area offering a sufficient population to provide the financial support needed for library service. With the concept of the state district, a new and potent force entered the picture. Libraries in the United States have always been a community project, a local phenomenon. With the appearance of direct state participation a different interpretation of the local role in library service arises.

Of course, the states have always been charged with certain duties toward library service. Until the strong movement for county and multi-county libraries supported by initial state grants and continuing state aid became prevalent, however, most state libraries were limited in their public library function to providing mail service via the traveling library to rural residents. State aid to existent public libraries has now become a recognized part of the state's responsibility toward library service. The amounts currently appropriated by states west of the Mississippi which give state aid are shown in Table 1. The state library of Louisiana has been very active in setting up demonstration parish libraries which later must be voted into permanent status by the area residents. Nebraska has proposed a similar activity. Without exception the state library authorities have played a major role in the establishment of larger unit libraries wherever such libraries are flourishing.

TABLE 1  
STATE AID FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

State	1951-53 <sup>a</sup>	1953-55 <sup>b</sup>
Arkansas	\$150,000	\$160,000
Louisiana	270,000	.....
Missouri	414,000	400,000
New Mexico	30,000	36,000
North Dakota	.....	500
Washington	100,000	.....

<sup>a</sup>American Library Association, Public Libraries Division. State Aid for Public Libraries (1951-53). Chicago, American Library Association, 1951, pp. 1-5.

<sup>b</sup>The Book of the States. Chicago, The Council of State Governments, 1954, p. 263. Whether Louisiana and Washington have eliminated state aid, or whether the 1953-55 figures involve a different method of computation to account for this discrepancy is not clear.

If the now-accepted premise is followed that libraries are an essential part of the modern educational system, then it logically follows that libraries must be provided for the population by whatever means is available. States have always advocated libraries for their citizens. Direct state action can instill the needed impetus to accelerate library development. State districts may be the best and most fair way to accomplish this.

#### Background of the State District Idea

In its efforts to determine a minimum base for successful library operations, the library profession has continually enlarged and broadened its horizon. From the town to the township to the county to several counties, this base has become ever larger in its geographic area. This ever broadening area grew out of the concept of an effective minimum population base as a unit for library service, -- a base which has over the years increased from 6,000 to 25,000 to 40,000 to 100,000. Meanwhile a minimum financial standard for support has been set forth, -- at first \$1.00 a year per capita and at present \$1.50. This standard has been expressed in total amounts also. In the thirties the American Library Association proposed \$6,000 to accompany its 6,000 population figure. Later when the basic population became 25,000, \$25,000 was offered as a minimum income for a single library. As inflation continued, concern shifted from population to income with \$37,500 offered as a basic amount to accompany 25,000 people. The Public Library Inquiry, however, concluded that \$100,000 is the breaking

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point between adequate and inadequate library service. No definite population figure was included with this sum, but the figure of 100,000 population was mentioned.<sup>1, 2</sup>

When one considers \$100,000 income and 100,000 people, or even 25,000 people in a library unit, it is readily apparent that vast areas of this country, particularly in the West, do not contain this number of people or of income dollars within any recognized local unit. As early as the 1930's, therefore, some forward looking librarians were eyeing closely the advantages rendered by state experimentation with health, highway, and agricultural districts based on trade or geographically united areas rather than political units. C. B. Joeckel considered state districts as a possibility for sparsely populated states in his The Government of the American Public Library. It wasn't until the National Plan appeared in 1948, however, that a similar program was embodied in national library planning. The idea of direct library service in state districts has received fresh impetus by the enthusiastic reception it received in Oliver Garceau's volume for the Public Library Inquiry.

The regional office through its book stock, its union catalogue on the regional or the state level, and its nucleus of professional specialists, can convert isolated and inadequate libraries into the operating equivalent of branches and stations of a large library system, retaining the self-respect of local librarian and local board, and the appropriations of local government. The affiliated library unit will gain the advantage of access to a large and centrally-chosen book stock, but will retain full control over local funds to purchase its own books as it chooses. Although the state from its funds, is contributing books rather than money to buy books, its selection imposes no censorship or control of any kind on independent local purchases. For the small library it may bring guidance, and for the group of libraries it can bring help in achieving an economical integration of book selection policies.<sup>3</sup>

With the larger unit many of the advantages of large city libraries are available to a widely scattered population, one of the most important of which is the availability of a large staff of professional personnel. The Public Library Inquiry suggests:

As a minimum, the staff for such a modern public library service will include seven persons with professional training: a general executive, a specialist each for reference, circulation, acquisitions, technical processes, children's work, adult groups and audio-visual materials, plus at least ten clerical and technical assistants, and a transportation and maintenance staff of three persons or more.<sup>4</sup>

Terminology regarding this type of library administrative unit is in an unsettled state. "Regional" is a favored term, but because of its many connotations in library usage, it will be avoided here except as necessary in direct quotes or paraphrases from state plans. "State branches" has been suggested, but this term seems to leave out the functional area idea of the unit. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the term "state library district" has been chosen to designate a library unit which is actually a part of the state library system, although its duties and jurisdiction may vary from state to state.

The state library district may take and has taken several forms. It may be apurely supplementary service to existing libraries which may or may not utilize its services. It may be a purely complementary service limited to areas without local existing service. It may combine the two of these services with existing libraries retaining the right to remain autonomous. Or it may offer complete coverage of the state, whether served or unserved, with all existing libraries a part of the district.

No matter what the administrative unit of a library or the administrative authority of a district, all library service at the state level is predicated on certain aims and objectives. Those set forth by the South Dakota plan are succinct:

1. All people residing within the state of South Dakota should be able:
  - a. To borrow easily the books and other library material which they desire to use,
  - b. To receive answers to requests for information submitted to or thru local libraries,
  - c. To have services of professionally trained librarians.
2. All elementary and secondary public schools should be able to receive the same services enumerated for individuals of the state.
3. All children within the state should be able to secure well-selected materials and reading guidance.
4. Existing library service should be supplemented and strengthened by the state and not supplanted. Extension of library service to unserved areas should be encouraged by local effort.<sup>5</sup>

#### GENERAL SITUATION WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI

Since population is the essential ingredient for determining both the area and income of the library unit, it seems a logical place to start. Most of our less populous states are west of the Mississippi. However, total population is not the sole decisive factor in determining the adequacy of library facilities. A second and most important component in the West is the density of this population. The average United States' density

in 1950 was 50.7 people per square mile.<sup>6</sup> California, the second most populous state in the country and the most populous of the Western States exceeds this figure by 16.8, while only two other states west of the Mississippi, Louisiana, and Missouri are in excess of this average. The population, area, and density of the twenty-two states west of the Mississippi are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
POPULATION STATISTICS FOR STATES\*

State	Population	Area	Density
Arizona	905,000	113,909	6.6
Arkansas	1,845,000	53,104	36.3
California	12,087,000	158,693	67.5
Colorado	1,456,000	104,247	12.8
Idaho	598,000	83,557	7.1
Iowa	2,587,000	56,290	46.8
Kansas	2,005,000	82,276	23.2
Louisiana	2,817,000	48,523	59.4
Minnesota	3,052,000	84,068	37.3
Missouri	4,056,000	69,674	57.1
Montana	618,000	147,138	4.1
Nebraska	1,358,000	77,227	17.3
Nevada	199,000	110,540	1.5
New Mexico	756,000	121,666	5.6
North Dakota	598,000	70,665	8.8
Oklahoma	2,220,000	69,919	32.4
Oregon	1,630,000	96,981	15.8
South Dakota	645,000	77,047	8.5
Texas	8,397,000	267,339	29.3
Utah	750,000	84,916	8.4
Washington	2,520,000	68,192	35.6
Wyoming	317,000	97,914	3.0

\*U.S. Bureau of the Census. Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1954. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1954, pp. 10, 11, 14. Population is estimated for 1953; area and density are for 1950.

Some western states have been very actively organized into county libraries. Outstanding examples are California, Wyoming, Utah, and Louisiana. However, if one looks at population from almost any of the figures suggested as a library standard, he will see that county library organization will not solve the problem. To take the older figure first, of the 1,500 counties west of the Mississippi, only 364 or 24 per cent

have a population over 25,000. California and Arizona are the only states with over half of their counties in the 25,000 or over bracket, although Louisiana and Washington are close enough to be considered. If one takes the suggested figure of 100,000, he finds only 69 or less than 5 per cent of the 1,500 counties meeting the requirement. Here once again California leads the way with a lofty 39 per cent from which there is a sharp drop to Arizona's 14 per cent. Table 3 indicates the number of counties in each state meeting the required numbers and their percentages. The figures and percentages in Column A include those in Column B; thus Arizona, has 7 counties (or 50 per cent of its total of 14 with a population of over 25,000, of which only 2 (or 14 per cent of its total of 14) are over 100,000.

TABLE 3

## COUNTIES MEETING POPULATION REQUIREMENTS\*

State	Counties	25,000		100,000		Per Cent	
		(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)
Arizona	14	7	2	50	14		
Arkansas	75	25	1	33	1		
California	58	37	20	65	39		
Colorado	63	12	1	19	2		
Idaho	44	5	0	11	0		
Iowa	99	23	5	23	5		
Kansas	105	17	3	16	3		
Louisiana	64	31	4	48	6		
Minnesota	87	25	3	29	3		
Missouri	115	25	4	22	4		
Montana	56	5	0	9	0		
Nebraska	93	9	2	10	2		
Nevada	17	2	0	12	0		
New Mexico	31	8	1	26	3		
North Dakota	53	4	0	8	0		
Oklahoma	77	26	2	34	3		
Oregon	36	16	3	44	8		
South Dakota	68	3	0	3	0		
Texas	254	58	12	23	5		
Utah	29	5	1	17	3		
Washington	39	19	5	49	13		
Wyoming	23	2	0	9	0		
Total	1,500	364	69	24	4.6		

\*Data compiled from: U. S. Bureau of the Census. County and City Data Book: 1952; a Statistical Abstract Supplement. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1953, pp. 90-434.



The over-all picture is even less heartening when viewed from the point of view of income. If one applies the latest total income figure of \$100,000 advocated as necessary to provide library service, California provides an impressive total of thirty-two library systems which meet this standard of adequacy.<sup>7</sup> The other western states present the following picture: Arizona, two with an income of \$100,000 or over; Arkansas, none; Colorado, one; Idaho, none; Iowa, five; Kansas, one; Louisiana, four; Minnesota, three; Missouri, four; Montana, none; Nebraska, two; Nevada, none; New Mexico, none; North Dakota, none; Oklahoma, two; Oregon, one; South Dakota, none; Texas, seven; Utah, two; Washington, six; Wyoming, none. Even with the older figure of \$37,500, still widely applied by the profession, those states with no libraries in the \$100,000 class fare little better. Arkansas offers one with an income of \$37,500 or over; Idaho, one; Montana, two; Nevada, one; New Mexico, two; North Dakota, two; South Dakota, one; and Wyoming, two.

If one looks at the present library picture in these states west of the Mississippi in terms of the figure of \$1.50 per capita considered as essential to provide minimum library service, one sees only Washington (with its 1.36 per capita) even approaching this standard. Figure 1 shows the per capita expenditures as reported in 1953 for Washington and the other states in the western half of the country.

At the state level, the West shows every phase in the development of state libraries and commissions, from those existent virtually in name only to the more fully developed systems of California and Louisiana.

The formation of larger local unit libraries exhibits a similar wide range of development and often follows closely the degree of importance of the state library or governing board. It is difficult to determine how many libraries are county units and how many multi-county, for in its general summary information for each state, the American Library Directory lumps them together. Table 4 shows the number of county or multi-county libraries in each state.

Even states with well-developed county systems still have large numbers of the population without local library service. Figure 2 offers a graphic presentation of the situation for the western states as of October 1954.

It seems evident from the foregoing statistics that a new approach to library development is imperative in most of these states, based on the assumption that the formation of state district libraries may prove the most feasible solution.

FIGURE 1

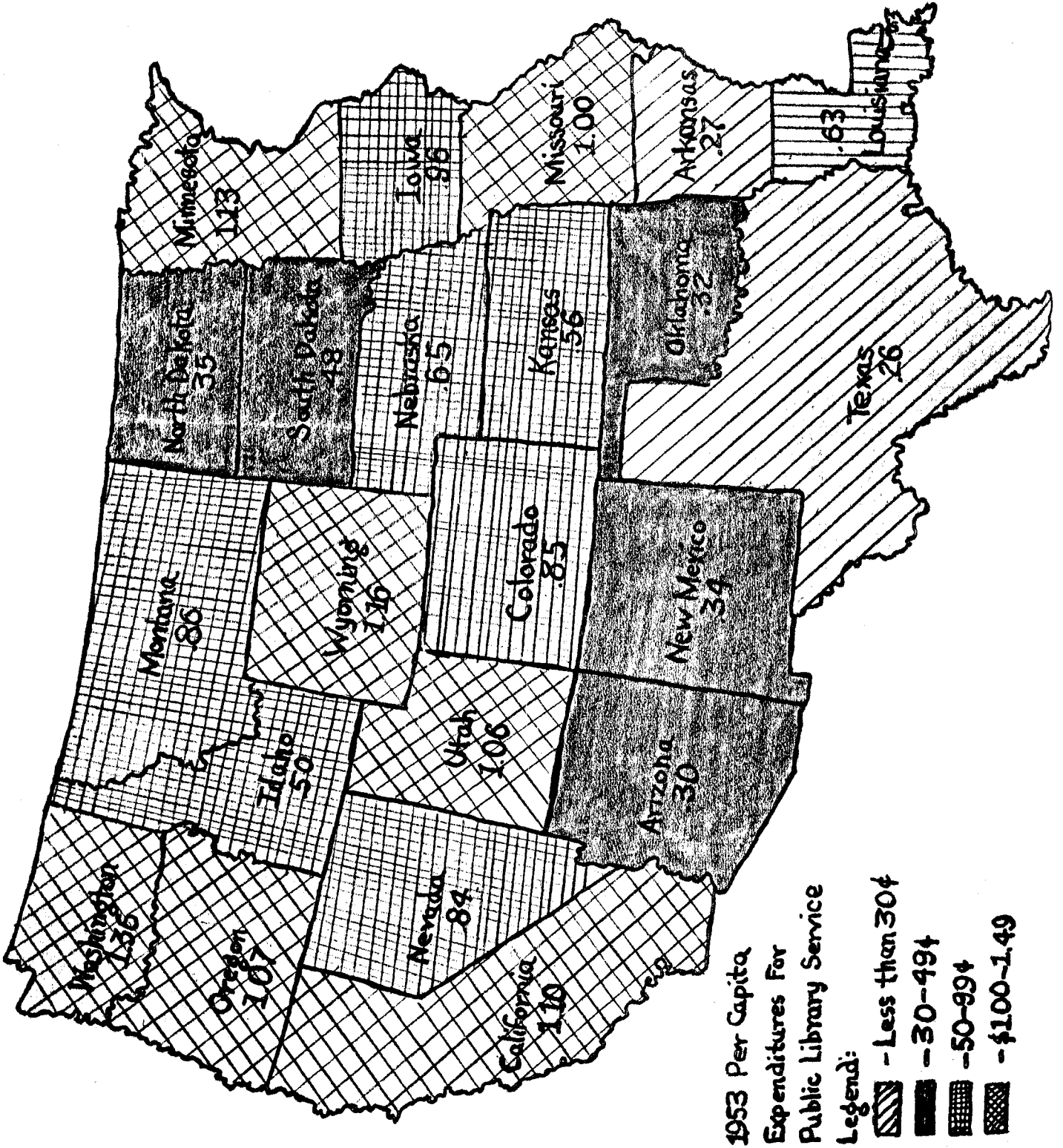


FIGURE 2

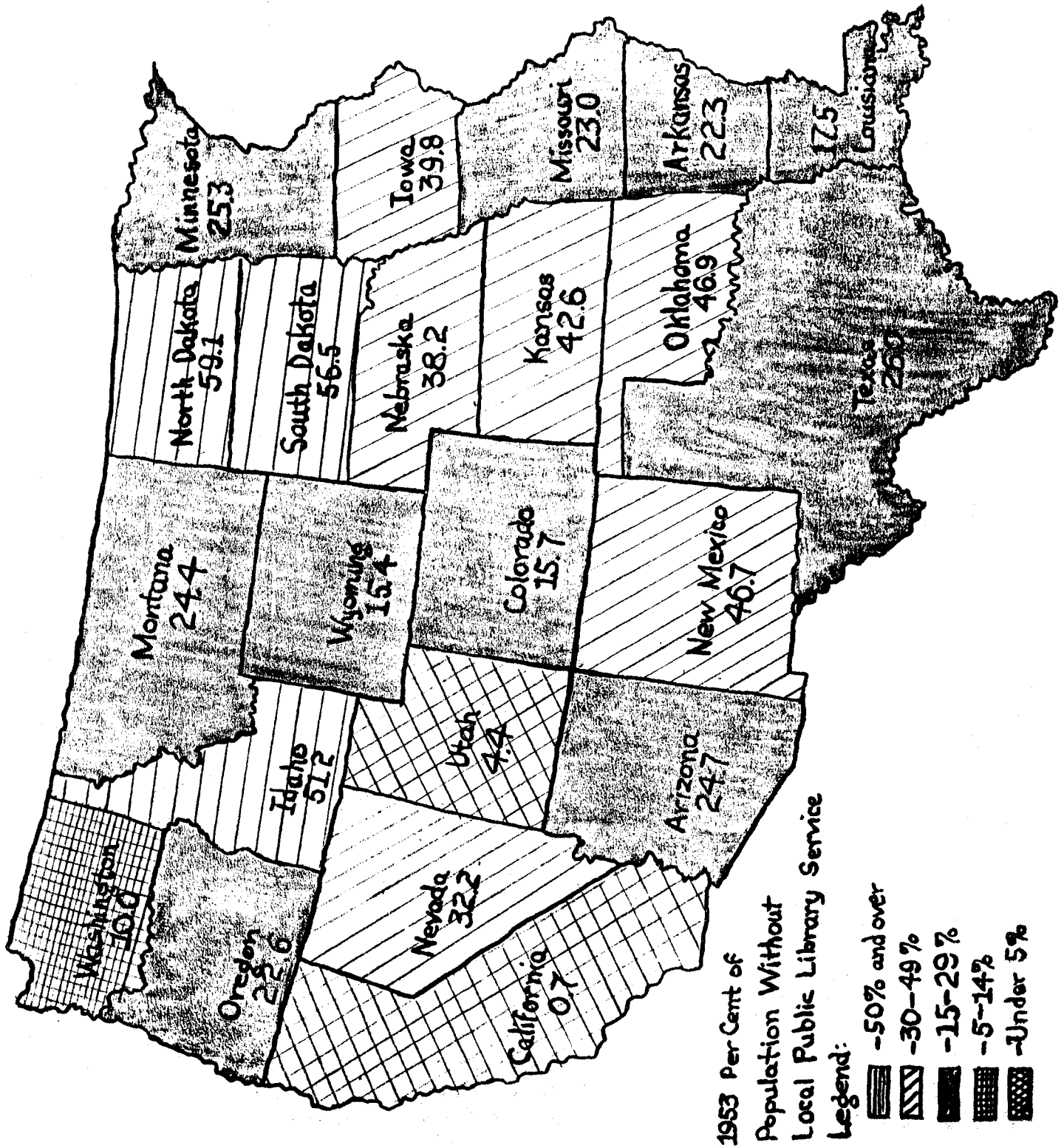


TABLE 4

## COUNTY AND MULTI-COUNTY LIBRARIES\*

State	Number
Arizona . . . . .	2
Arkansas . . . . .	36
California . . . . .	51
Colorado . . . . .	22
Idaho . . . . .	none
Iowa . . . . .	4
Kansas . . . . .	25
Louisiana . . . . .	37
Minnesota . . . . .	8
Missouri . . . . .	43
Montana . . . . .	26
Nebraska . . . . .	6
Nevada . . . . .	7
New Mexico . . . . .	1
North Dakota . . . . .	2
Oklahoma . . . . .	4
Oregon . . . . .	12
South Dakota . . . . .	6
Texas . . . . .	197
Utah . . . . .	7
Washington . . . . .	30
Wyoming . . . . .	22

\*Data compiled from: American Library Directory (20th ed.; New York, R. R. Bowker Co., 1954. Please refer to Table 3 for total number of counties in each state.

## SPECIFIC STATES AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT

State districts offer the possibility for complete planning for an adequate library system. Geographic factors, economic centers, social units, transportation, and communication facilities are all considered. It is also interesting that all the plans thus far presented in the western states use the established boundary lines of counties for their boundaries. The county is always the building block of the unit, because a portion of library support still comes from local taxation and a recognized taxing unit is therefore needed. It is conceivable that far-reaching changes in legislation might make it possible for the states to administer all taxes directed to library use, and thus allow for an even more realistic division of the state into units which constitute geographic, economic, transportation wholes rather than still relying on political subdivisions.

As implied above, several states have already devised plans either for state districts or multi-county libraries which could easily be the basis for state districts. Some states have merely mentioned the possibility of such a procedure; others have developed complete long-range programs. The most precise and well-developed of these is that of Colorado, but because New Mexico was the pioneer in the field and the only one to have put its plan into action, its plan will be presented first.

### New Mexico

New Mexico in 1948 was the first western state to establish a plan for state district libraries, and it is the only state so far to have put the plan into operation. The plan was based on a ten year program of a gradual over-all increase in per capita support of libraries as well as an increase in the total population coverage. The original plan was to increase per capita support from \$.18 in 1946-47 to \$.75 over a five year period.<sup>8</sup> This increase would be achieved by increased state aid to existing libraries and the introduction of state districts to facilitate total coverage. In the five years following this first phase funds would accrue to provide the American Library Association minimum of \$1.50 per capita.<sup>9</sup> Thus by ten years time a minimum library system would be in operation all over the state.

New Mexico's state district planning was done in the days when 25,000 population was considered a minimum base. It is interesting to note the population involved as well as the total areas. Region 1 has a population of 80,662 and an area of 20,346 square miles; Region 2, 95,443 people and 31,862 square miles; Region 3, 134,280 people and 26,147 square miles; Region 4, 63,967 population and 12,097 square miles; Region 5, 62,378 people and 16,409 square miles; Region 6, 88,308 people and 13,379 square miles; and Region 7, 145,673 population and 1,163 square miles. This last region consists of the single county of Bernalillo (in which is located Albuquerque) and is the only county library in New Mexico at present. These regions as proposed are shown in Figure 3.

Full details of New Mexico's progress with its plan have not been published. Undoubtedly because of a struggling financial situation, New Mexico library officials have hoarded their dollars for library service rather than publicity. A general over-all mode of action was set forth, however, in the 1948 summary. Participation by established libraries would be voluntary. (This seems to be a necessary component of most state plans.) Unfortunately it weakens the strength of the library program, particularly in these areas which need every bit of local support they can get. The governing board would be regional with representation from every county in the region. There would also be a county headquarters in each county in an already established library, when possible. It will be seen then that there is here a carefully evolved hierarchy of control--from the state library to the regional library, a branch of the state; to the county library, a branch of the regional--each with its own board,

although in the latter two cases one surmises that the board will serve mainly in an advisory function. The success of the program is based on a combination of all library resources, materially or financially from municipality, county, state, and nation, when federal aid is provided.<sup>10</sup>

New Mexico library authorities were realistic in developing their plan. They realized that it could not be put into execution all at once. Therefore they suggested a beginning with two regional supervisors for the southern regions, to work out of an already established library. Although it is difficult to evaluate how far and how well New Mexico has developed its plan, by a perusal of the Report of the State Library Commission which appears annually in the July issue of the New Mexico Library Bulletin, this part of the plan, at least, seems to have been done. It is, however, evident from Figure 1 that New Mexico has not reached its \$.75 halfway quota.

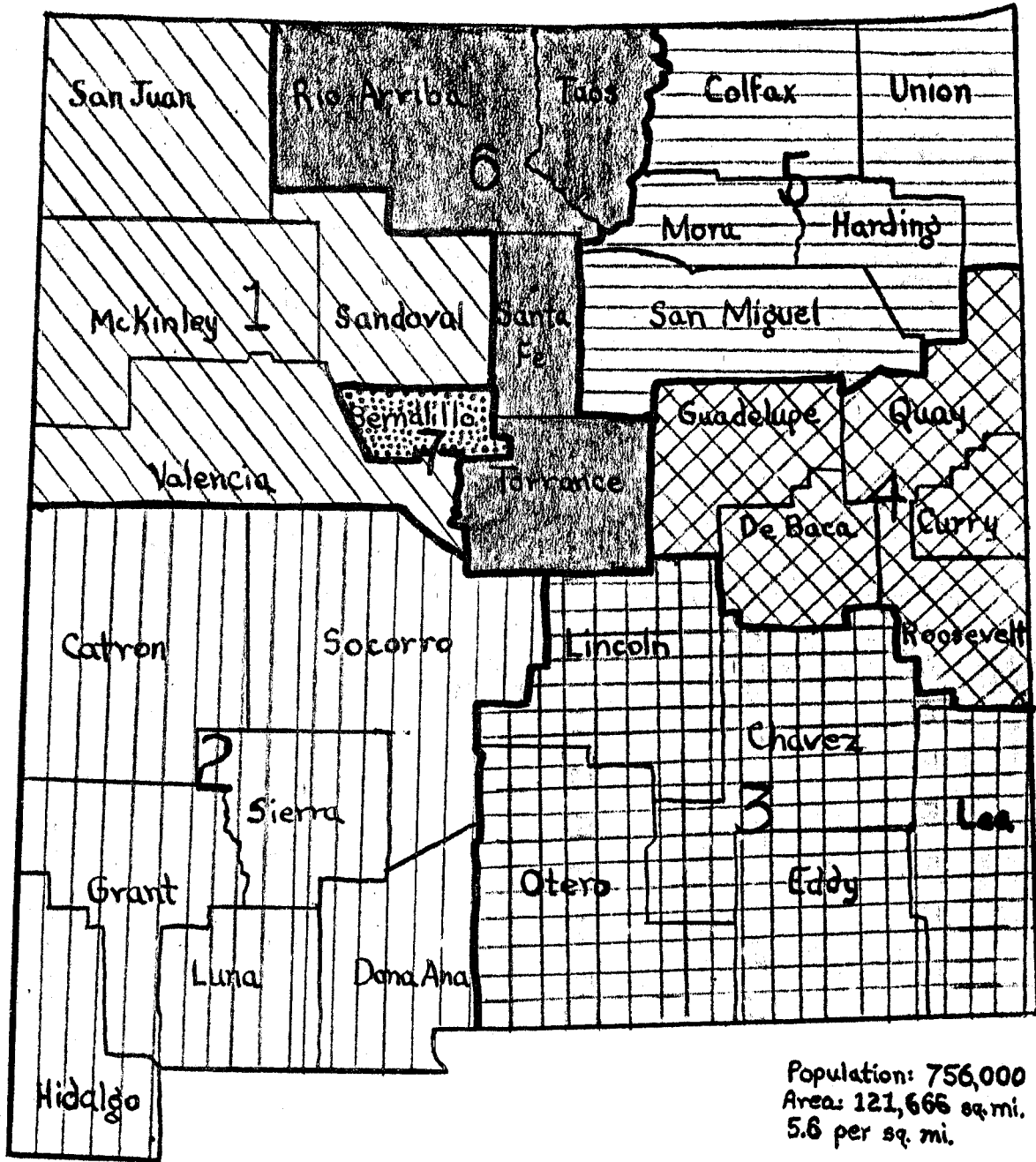
### Colorado

The most fully developed state district plan is presented by Colorado. However, as yet, none of its recommendations have been put into effect. Once again, voluntary cooperation with existing libraries is stressed. In considering the increased income which will accrue from the larger unit, Colorado librarians have based their suggestions on the proposed percentages for support of the National Plan. Since there has not yet, however, materialized any federal aid, they have realistically transferred this portion to the local unit, thus providing a 75-25 ratio for local and state support. Figuring with a 2 mill levy, currently proposed by most librarians as a reasonable tax rate, Colorado regions could offer the following monies: I, \$210,952; II, \$562,257; III, \$156,415; IV, \$1,189,473; V, \$185,551; VI, \$697,849. The Colorado plan covers ten years with the established goal of \$1.50 per capita expenditure for libraries by 1962.<sup>11</sup>

Sizes of the regions and their populations are as follows: Region I, 19,115 square miles and 42,792 people; Region II, 16,612 square miles and 222,981 people; Region III, 12,774 square miles and 83,717 people; Region IV, 6,168 square miles and 575,955 people; Region V, 15,808 square miles and 77,564 people; Region VI, 32,056 Square miles and 308,757 people.<sup>12</sup> Figure 4 shows these proposed regions and their headquarters.

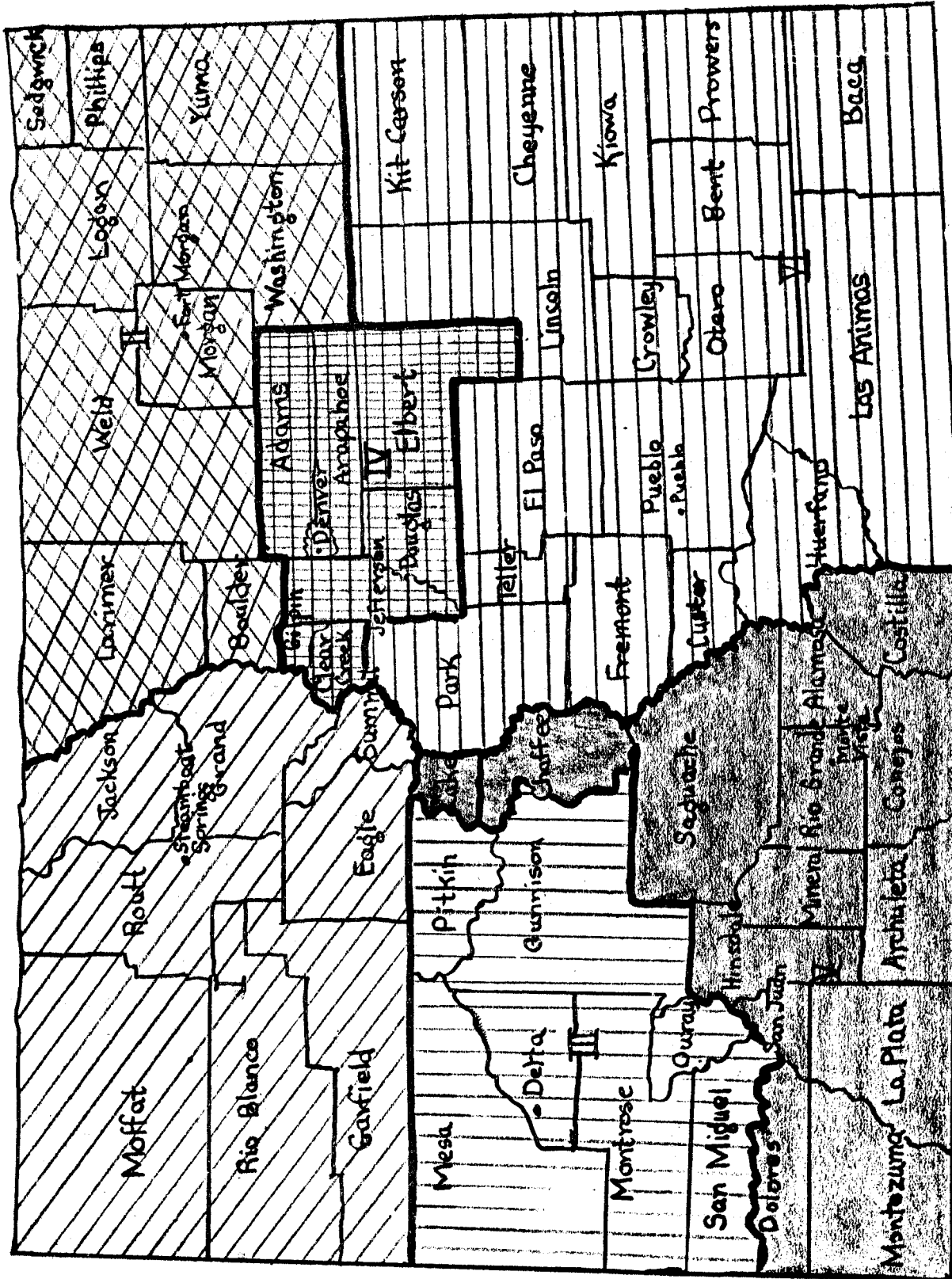
Exact duties, functions and organization of the state district libraries in Colorado have been spelled out definitely and are quoted here verbatim in their original outline form:

FIGURE 3



# NEW MEXICO

FIGURE 4

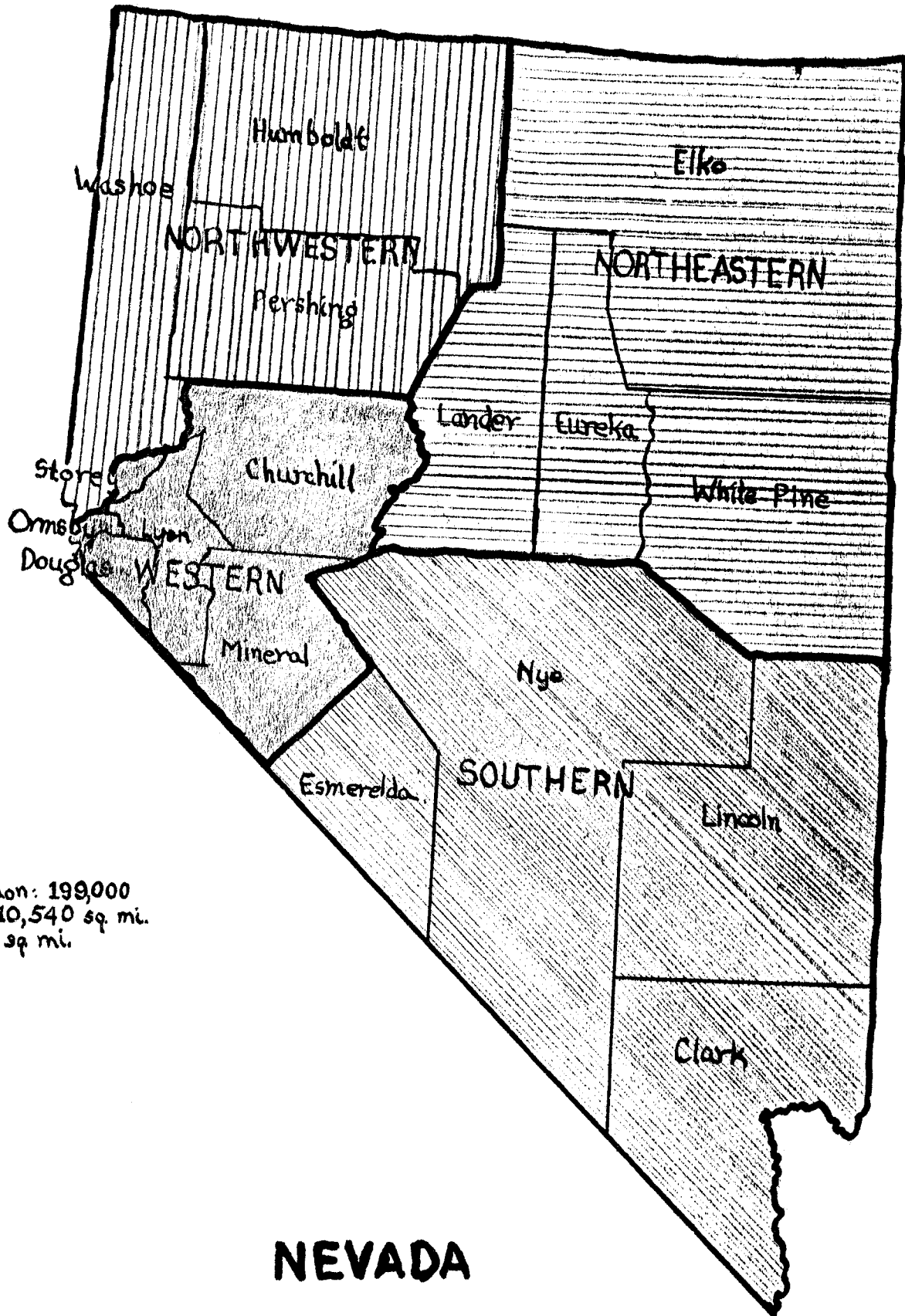


Population: 1,456,000  
Area: 104,247 sq. mi.  
12.8 per sq. mi.

# COLORADO



FIGURE 5



## **FUNCTIONS OF DISTRICT LIBRARIES**

Service out of the District Branches will include:

- 1) Direct assistance through bookmobile and deposit services to areas incapable of maintaining local libraries.
- 2) Supplementary assistance in the form of loans to all libraries in the district, a phase of work which will greatly reduce circulation activities out of Denver headquarters.
- 3) Establishment of large-unit libraries, federations of libraries and contractual arrangements between existing agencies, selecting patterns of service suitable to local conditions and needs.
- 4) Advisory and counseling service, available to all libraries in the District, in connection with matters of professional procedures, public relations, administration, etc.
- 5) Supervision of use made of grant-in-aid money.
- 6) Development of a well-defined educational program to inform citizens of the benefits to be derived from regular patronage of libraries.

## **ORGANIZATION OF DISTRICT SYSTEMS**

- 1) District libraries
  - a) State-paid staffs
  - b) State-owned and operated bookmobiles
  - c) State-owned book collections
- 2) County and regional libraries as branches of District Libraries, administrative functions excluded. (Optional with existing libraries.)
- 3) Town and school libraries as branches of county or regional systems, administrative functions excluded. (Optional with existing libraries.)

## **ADMINISTRATION OF DISTRICT LIBRARIES**

- 1) Councils of County Representatives. Comprised of one member from each county in Districts, appointed by the County Commissioners of each county from library trustees or key citizens, and an alternate appointed in the same manner.
- 2) Chairmen of Councils elected annually by Councils from their memberships.
- 3) District librarians who shall act as secretaries of Councils.

## **DISTRICT LIBRARY WORK PROGRAMS**

- 1) Each District Library will operate a bookmobile or some type of mobile equipment, and utilize facilities for shipping loans by parcel post, motor freight, etc. Regular scheduled trips will be made in the bookmobile throughout the entire District.

- 2) Each will be administered by a trained librarian under the direction of the State Librarian in Denver and with assistance in administrative problems from the Council of County Representatives. Other personnel will include clerical assistants and bookmobile or truck drivers.
- a) It shall be the duty of District Librarians to establish and maintain deposit stations, staffed by volunteer workers, in unserved areas of the Districts.
  - b) They shall work with librarians, library boards, public officials, school officials and teachers, the Councils of County Representatives, and other interested persons in an effort to organize new libraries and consolidate small libraries into more effective units of service.
  - c) They shall advise librarians and trustees in connection with all types of professional problems.
  - d) They shall visit all libraries within the region at regular intervals, and hold institutes or short training courses for the benefit of library workers in the Districts.
  - e) They shall supervise the use of state or federal funds allocated to libraries in the Districts.
  - f) They shall assist teachers and school librarians and when the demand for such assistance becomes excessive, school library supervisors will be employed to work under their direction.<sup>13</sup>

Colorado's plan also envisages development on a realistic basis with one or two districts suggested first in order to discover needed improvements in planning.

#### Nevada.

Nevada is the only other state to offer a complete plan. Only the initial proposal has been published, and it would appear that the whole program is presently in a state of stagnation. The Nevada plan would divide the state into four districts with participation by all local existing libraries as part of the system. There is not mention of option in this case. As with the plans previously cited, support would come from local taxes and state aid, although no definite division of responsibility is outlined.<sup>14</sup>

If one applies the 2 mill figure to valuations given by Edwin Castagna,<sup>15</sup> the library districts would offer the following amounts: Northeastern, \$145,000; Southern, \$128,000; Western, \$68,000; and Northwestern, \$199,000. It is a happy fact that all but one of these districts would surpass the Public Library Inquiry Figure of \$100,000 even though these districts were set up under the older American Library Association \$37,500 income base. Of course, few states allow a 2 mill levy, but if Nevada did, it is reassuring to know that before state aid all but one district would be adequately financed.

Sizes of regions and population are: Southern, 40,210 square miles and 55,851 people; Western, 11,780 square miles and 22,272 people; Northwestern, 21,976 square miles and 58,146 people; Northeastern, 35,823 square miles and 22,824 people. Nevada presents the interesting case of a state which, when divided, does not meet the now standard 25,000 population in two of its districts, and yet is able to provide a good financial base. This may afford an illustration of the reason for the Public Library Inquiry's reluctance to use population as a yardstick for adequate library service and its strong emphasis on total income as the measure of adequacy.

Figure 5 shows the proposed Nevada regions.

### Other States

Idaho. --As far back as the 1930's Idaho had suggested "organization of experimental branches of the State Traveling Library in various parts of the state."<sup>16</sup> However, present thinking centers on local multi-county organization. The districts are sufficiently well-conceived, however, to facilitate easy conversion to a state district plan. The planning has been done since the Public Library Inquiry, so takes into account the \$100,000 figure. The lowest income, based on a 2 mill levy, is \$116,292. Six districts are cited as "possible (not proposed)."<sup>17</sup> The state district idea has been mentioned as something to watch in the Colorado case, but that is the only mention of state districts in current thinking in Idaho.

South Dakota. --Whereas Idaho has a well-defined scheme embodying geographical districts which could later become state districts, South Dakota has a state district scheme but without definite geographical divisions as yet. The literature mentions eight regions, but there is no map showing them or any enumeration of the specific limits included in each. The same general set-up as outlined in earlier plans is followed with the district library to be the central library and the county and local libraries the branches of the system. However, service from the central library would go only to other libraries, not individuals; it is envisioned as essentially a supplementary service to existing libraries rather than an added service for areas now without libraries. The South Dakota plan stresses that regional organization in the state is not new and is a logical set-up for certain public services. South Dakota's plan envisions that the "Regional Library Service Centers would provide local libraries, county libraries, and schools the free services listed below and would be authorized to contract with county or local boards for additional services." These services would consist of:

- a. Books bought, cataloged, maintained and distributed to local libraries, county libraries and schools.
- b. A union catalog in each region to facilitate the exchange of books through Regional Library Service Centers.

- c. The services of regional librarians upon request from local and county libraries and schools.<sup>18</sup>

Oregon. --In 1938 a survey of Oregon library service offered the following solutions to the lack of library facilities in the state.

'What can be done to bring a more nearly adequate service to all the people of Oregon? Three methods are possible. 1. Establishment of a county library in every county in the state. This would have been the ideal method suggested 10 years ago, but now it is recognized that many counties are too small in population and resources to maintain adequate library service. 2. Establishment of joint county districts in which several counties, grouped by natural trade districts, may unite in the maintenance of a regional library, thus providing sufficient population and resources to give high-grade service over a wide area. These districts may be achieved by contract between several counties, or by union into a library district. 3. Establishment of not more than 10 regional branches of the state library, these branches to be strategically located to serve as administrative and service headquarters for a complete library system which would penetrate every part of that area with its network of branches, stations, and book autos, under trained personnel, these regional branches of the State library to be supported by the State, with some participation by the region.'<sup>19</sup>

A skeleton plan was offered in 1953 to divide the state into ten regional library systems. It was felt that six of these systems would raise enough money on a 2 mill levy to provide \$2.00 per capita for library service. The other regions would require supplemental funds provided by the state.<sup>20</sup> It is not clear, however, whether the regional systems of this plan would embody the earlier suggestion for state districts or whether it is merely another plan similar to the Idaho one.

Iowa. --Iowa library leaders have suggested six branches of the state library "which would establish and administer small library units or stations in rural centers and rural schools and in addition, aid and coordinate the existing libraries of the towns and smaller cities."<sup>21</sup>

Texas. --Texas librarians have suggested that a demonstration library be established first. This library would be similar in nature to the New York demonstration, since it is indicated that service by state districts would go only to libraries, not be a supplementary service for people now without library service.

It is recommended that a regional state library be established to provide advisory, reference, and lending service to libraries in that region, and also to house and care for state archives originating in that region. The staff of this library would be employees of the State Library. This first regional state library would serve as a demonstration of the services that might be expected from a state library branch. If this type of state library service is found to be satisfactory, other regional state libraries should be established.<sup>22</sup>

Oklahoma. --At the time the Brookings Institute made a professional study of the Oklahoma state government in 1937, it included certain recommendations regarding the reorganization of state library agencies, wherein was embodied the concept of state districts: "With due regard to financial conditions, careful consideration should be given to the question of establishing regional libraries in rural sections, these to be maintained partly by the counties and partly by the state and to be closely coordinated with and supervised by the State Library Commission."<sup>23</sup>

Washington. --The only other western state which at present has offered any plan which might conceivably develop into state districts is Washington. While C. E. Bowerman took into account the possibilities of such a system, in his proposed regional library plan he deliberately dropped the state district in favor of multi-county organization. However, since the state is divided into only twelve districts, should library thinking become favorable to state districts, a change to that form would be relatively simple.<sup>24</sup>

#### Joeckel's Divisions

When Joeckel published his classic work on the public library, he offered the first suggestion to gain nationwide attention for state library districts. He even offered proposed possibilities for the division of the state into larger units, whether multi-county or state districts. Table 5 gives his figures. It is interesting to compare them with what plans have already been developed and notice how closely current thinking parallels Joeckel's minimum figures of twenty years ago. The only marked deviation occurs in Iowa, where very little has been done to spell out state districts in detail.

TABLE 5  
NUMBER OF LARGER UNITS IN EACH STATE\*

State	Minimum	Maximum	Current Plan
Arizona	6	10	
Arkansas	5	20	
California	15	40	
Colorado	9	20	6
Idaho	7	15	6
Iowa	15	50	6
Kansas	15	40	
Louisiana	6	30	
Minnesota	10	50	
Missouri	14	50	
Montana	10	15	
Nebraska	12	50	
Nevada	4	5	4
New Mexico	5	10	7
North Dakota	10	10	
Oklahoma	10	30	
Oregon	10	25	10
South Dakota	10	15	8
Texas	30	50	
Utah	4	15	
Washington	10	25	12
Wyoming	5	15	

\*Joeckel, C. B.: The Government of the American Public Library.  
Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1935, pp. 321-322.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

State library districts are still a somewhat new and startling idea to both librarians and the public. Only one state west of the Mississippi, New Mexico, has actually made the scheme a part of its library law. The legislation for such a plan seems to be the major deterrent to its initiation in most states. Most state libraries have very carefully defined duties in the state statutes. So far as could be determined from a perusal of state laws regarding the powers and duties of the state library, in no other state would state districts be feasible until further legislation is enacted.

In any system of larger units the state agency is probably the most important single factor contributing to better service. Improvements in state library commissions are a necessary first step in any state district plan.

In discussing state library districts it has been an unstated assumption that the establishment of this larger unit is a good thing. It is recognized of course that such organization may not be the most desirable or even the most logical in all cases. However, it seems obvious from even a brief look at the county population statistics that there are several states west of the Mississippi for which no other logical unit for effective service exists. And without being completely radical, one might even suggest that all states could offer a better, more complete library service if organized into an efficient state library system which is composed of state district libraries and their branches. Such a system would offer service on an equal basis to the total population of a state with a sufficiently large income to provide all the advantages of a large and well-organized library system.

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 FOOTNOTES

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