

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1436

As Reported By House Committee On:

Energy & Utilities

Title: An act relating to electronic information access for public libraries.

Brief Description: Authorizing electronic information access for public libraries.

Sponsors: Representatives Van Luven, Veloria, Keiser, Morris, Wolfe, Scott, Cole, Mason, Dunn, Quall, Lantz, Cooper, Gombosky, Murray, Costa and Anderson; by request of Washington State Library.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Energy & Utilities: 2/8/97, 2/25/97 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Crouse, Chairman; DeBolt, Vice Chairman; Mastin, Vice Chairman; Poulsen, Ranking Minority Member; Morris, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bush; Cooper; Honeyford; Kessler and B. Thomas.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Mielke and Mulliken.

Staff: Margaret Allen (786-7110).

Background: Increasingly, information is becoming available in electronic form. It is estimated that within three years, 98 percent of all new federal documents will be available only electronically.

Libraries are considered to play an important role in making electronic information available to the public, particularly in rural areas. However, resource-sharing between libraries tends to be on an ad hoc, or regional basis. Also, there is little joint purchasing, or joint acquisitions of licenses to electronic data bases, to take advantage of economies of scale. Local public libraries report that they not only need the technology to access and use electronic information, they need to train their staff in its use, in order for their staff to, in turn, train the public.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 requires telecommunications companies to provide discounted rates to libraries, but does not provide for library equipment or data-base acquisitions, or for training.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature finds public access to a wide variety of information to be vital, and that public libraries are a primary source for information, educational opportunities, and serve as centers for community activity. Much information, including government information, is rapidly becoming available in electronic forms, in many cases electronic form only. Also, the Legislature finds the state library has a responsibility to encourage and facilitate access to electronic information and to help develop local library service.

The Legislature expressly intends for each public library outlet to have walk-in access to electronic information through a centralized, coordinated project; for libraries to collaborate and share resources; and that access to electronic information products be managed and promoted through a resource-sharing consortium.

Connectivity Pilot Project. The state library, in cooperation with Washington public libraries, must design and implement individualized local electronic connections in all Washington public library outlets. The number of connections is to be based on population, and expenditures are to be made for workstations, telecommunications connections, technical support, consulting, and training.

The design and implementation of the project is to take into account the following considerations: (1) stakeholder cooperation; (2) use of public and private sector expertise; (3) local circumstances, opportunities, and solutions; (4) minimizing duplication of effort through centralized and coordinated support; (5) emphasis on statewide and local benefits; and (6) to the extent possible, technical standards developed by the K-20 telecommunications oversight and policy committee.

The state library must submit a report on the project to the Legislature by December 1, 1999.

Resource-Sharing Consortium: The state library, in cooperation with all public and private libraries in the state, must design and implement a pilot plan for a resource-sharing consortium. The consortium plan is to include, at a minimum, provisions for the following activities: (1) an information clearinghouse; (2) the wholesale acquisition of access to electronic information products (licensing); (3) a home page; (4) providing information on individual library subject-specialties; (5) providing information on the location of the last available copies of books and documents; (6) fast delivery of library materials by the most cost-effective method; (7) training; and (8) centralized help in locating information for individual libraries.

The plan must also include a means for the resource-sharing project to be self-supporting before July 1, 1999; the act's provisions regarding the project expire June 30, 1999.

The state library must submit a report on the project to the Legislature by December 1, 1999.

Sections 2 and 3 are null and void if no funding for the project is provided in the biennial appropriations act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless sections 2 and 3 are funded in the budget.

Testimony For: There is a gap between information haves and have-nots that this bill will help narrow. This bill will revolutionize access to electronic information. Recommendations for the K-20 network assume libraries will be primary sites in local communities for accessing electronic information. Connections will complement, rather than duplicate, the K-20 network. Participation by local libraries is voluntary. This bill stresses local solutions, and recognizes the restricted budgets of small libraries. Resource-sharing will help libraries distribute their own information. This bill will be of great benefit to college students.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (Pro) Nancy Zussy, Washington State Library; and George Tyler, Citizen.