

**LIBRARY OF CALIFORNIA:  
AN ELECTRONIC NETWORK OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARIES**

*Kevin Starr*

**Description:** California is making steady progress toward the creation of a virtual catalog for resource sharing purposes. Some libraries have encountered implementation problems along the way; recommendations for addressing those problems are being considered.

[Compiler's notes: Dr. Starr spoke from notes for this session and for his luncheon presentation. His office called to say that, regretfully, he does not have the time to write a full copy of his presentation for our Proceedings. Since I heard both his session and the luncheon speech, I took the liberty of excerpting pertinent paragraphs from the Library of California website (<http://www.library.ca.gov>). In this way, Dr. Starr's presentation is included, with my added notes regarding its application to Judaica libraries. Dr. Starr has approved this text. (B.Leff)]

---

**Kevin Starr**, the seventh State Librarian of California since the turn of the century, was born in San Francisco in 1940. After graduation from the University of San Francisco in 1962, Starr served two years as a lieutenant in a tank battalion in Germany. Upon release from the service, Starr entered Harvard University where he took his MA degree in 1965 and his PhD in 1969 in American Literature. He also holds the Master of Library Science degree from UC Berkeley and has done post-doctoral work at the Graduate Theological Union. Starr has served as Allston Burr Senior Tutor in Eliot House at Harvard, executive assistant to the Mayor of San Francisco, the City Librarian of San Francisco, and a daily columnist for the San Francisco Examiner. He currently holds the rank of University Professor at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles and is a contributing editor to the Opinion section of the Los Angeles Times. The author of numerous newspaper and magazine articles, Starr has written nine books, five of which are part of his American and the California Dream series. His writing has won him a Guggenheim Fellowship, membership in the Society of American Historians, and the Gold Medal of the Commonwealth Club of California.

**Greetings From The State Librarian, Dr. Kevin Starr<sup>1</sup>**

The libraries of California represent a fundamental public good within our democracy. Libraries provide access to information and knowledge, and are how we record our time, achievements and failures for future generations. Libraries provide the capital necessary for us to understand the past and plan for the future. Free public library service is the basis of our democracy and will keep us a free nation. Democratic values depend on the free flow of information and knowledge with each individual assured the right and the privilege and the ability to choose and to pursue any direction of thought, study, or action. Libraries are also our collective memory, since history and human experience are best preserved in writing.

The California State Library believes deeply in equity and that libraries are fundamental in empowering people to take charge of their lives, their governments, and their communities. With the growing awareness of our diversity, libraries provide wonderful places for us to learn of the rich traditions and cultures that come together in our communities. The library collections we build, the access we provide, and the technologies we embrace will carry the people of California into a productive and creative future. The staff of the California State Library believes deeply in the future of California and that libraries have an essential role to play in that future.

## **About the Library of California<sup>2</sup>**

The Library of California is a statewide program, established in 1999, to provide equitable access to library materials and information resources for all Californians. Administered by the California State Library, under the policy direction of the Library of California Board, this program has both a statewide component for infrastructure support and development, and a regional component for direct service delivery to and through libraries. Seven regional library networks provide the regional services specified in the Library of California Act.

## **The Library of California in plain language<sup>3</sup>**

The Library of California revolutionizes the way Californians request and receive information from their libraries, a complex process. The common definition of the Library of California is that it: "increases resource-sharing among libraries, offers services and programs that address the costs of sharing services and materials between libraries, and enables libraries to store and share information for the benefit of all Californians."

Some of these terms, though, might seem abstract even to those entrenched in the library field. Many people may still be unclear about what *exactly* the Library of California is and does.

Let's simplify things. The Library of California is not a library. It's a program state government enacted in 1998 and activated in 1999 that hooks California's libraries together via a network so the libraries can share each other's collections and resources. The name *Library of California* embodies the program's mission to offer Californians one virtual library whose door is on anyone's computer desktop. The Library of California program is what director Diana Paque calls "invisible to patrons." Its primary purpose is to help California libraries do their job better, invisibly.

Here are the Statewide and regional resources libraries that participate in the Library of California program:

- California State Library

- Regional library networks

- Local libraries

- Statewide and regional resource libraries such as the University of California and California State University campuses, and major public libraries.

- Information agencies.

The Library of California board oversees the Library of California program and a highly trained team of specialists run it at the California State Library. The program's operators are devoted to ensuring that California's library patrons have the best access to information possible, and that libraries, by being part of a group, or *regional network*, save money and increase patronage by sharing services and materials.

California has four types of libraries, academic (community colleges through graduate schools), special (corporate and government), school (K-12), and public. When a library becomes a member of the Library of California, that library becomes part of a regional network decided by the library's geographic location in California. The member library then enjoys the benefits of instant access to

the databases of its specific Library of California region and to the textual collections of all Library of California members statewide. Libraries within the region do business with each other regardless of their differing types: The Library of California dissolves common lending restrictions.

The Library of California's seven regions are:

- Cascade Pacific (northern California border)
- Golden Gateway (bay area and north coast)
- Sierra Valley (Sierras, foothills and Sacramento valley)
- Heartland (Fresno, Bakersfield and surrounding valleys)
- Gold Coast (central coast)
- Arroyo Seco (Los Angeles and vicinity)
- Tierra del Sol (San Bernardino to the Mexico border)

Because the Library of California is a program administered by a state of California agency, libraries that join the network and become part of a region receive state services. Library of California member libraries enjoy:

- Delivery service between regions
- Financial and staff support for the on-line servers, or search engines, that are the technological backbone of the electronic communications between regional members.
- Financial reimbursement for libraries serving patrons other than their own.
- Access to costly databases that the state has negotiated at the government level
- Access to state-funded services that the state made available to all the libraries in the region
- Statewide reference support.

Patrons, on the other hand, benefit from their libraries' membership in the Library of California in a simpler way. A patron whose library is a member of the Library of California program can, using his or her "PIN," locate and request a text from a PC anywhere in the state. Within days, that text will be delivered to the participating library closest to the patron.

The Library of California's outstanding service to California library patrons embodies the values that underscore the purpose of libraries. State Librarian Dr. Kevin Starr said, "To use the language of Star Trek, the 'prime directive' of all State Library outreach programs is to insure equal and complete library service for all Californians. No program at the State Library is more key to this effort than the Library of California."

Because of the Library of California, disabled men and women, people isolated in both California's rural and urban niches, single parents, researchers, students, anyone, under any circumstances, has access to a broad range of California's collections and databases, from anywhere and for free.

For more information, visit the Library of California website: <http://www.library.ca.gov> -- and read current and back issues of the *Connection*.

[*Compiler's notes:* Dr. Starr was pleased to hear from some AJL attendees how the Library of California grants benefited their academic Judaica libraries. He said that the special Judaica library

and the synagogue, school, and center libraries will also benefit from grants and services, and he agreed to work with our representatives to see that to fruition. One of our AJL members is an Arroyo Seco regional representative to the Library of California -- Adaire Klein at the Simon Wiesenthal Center and Museum of Tolerance, Los Angeles -- [aklein@wiesenthal.net](mailto:aklein@wiesenthal.net).]

### Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> *Greetings...:* <http://www.library.ca.gov/html/starr.html>

<sup>2</sup> *About...* [http://www.library.ca.gov/loc/About\\_LoC/about\\_loc.html](http://www.library.ca.gov/loc/About_LoC/about_loc.html)

<sup>3</sup> *The Library of California in Plain Language*, from *Connection*, Issue No. 14, August 2001. <http://www.library.ca.gov/html/newsletter.html> [*Connection* is the monthly newsletter of the California State Library and the Library of California, and serves as a forum for library issues and library news statewide.]