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Columnist Drew Pearson used to take great delight in detailing the junkets of prominent members of Congress and the upper-level bureaucracy. His favorite was the Paris Air Show, a gala event frequented by members of the armed forces committees, their staffs, and Pentagon brass, who would return from a week in gay Paree with a case of champagne and a sheaf of bills from Pigalle, claiming them as travel expenses.

Pearson's colorful reports gave junketing a bad name and high-minded legislators began slapping a ceiling on government travel funds in the late 1950s.

During this period of new morality someone discovered that the employees of the Library of Congress were also in the travel game, flitting off to a government-funded holiday in Chicago in January and the like. As a result Congress added a ceiling to the amount LC could spend sending its staff to "meetings."

The ceiling was temporarily removed in the 1960s but reimposed in 1972, some said at the behest of Rep. Frank Bow, the ranking Republican on the House Appropriations Committee and a renowned curmudgeon.

As a result, just as the library was making major strides in machine-readable cataloging, paper preservation, and bibliographic control, its staff was cut off from communicating these advances through participation in professional seminars and colloquia. LC got the reputation of being aloof, disinterested in the outside library community, and paranoid.

Now the library has asked the House Subcommittee on Legislative Branch Appropriations, which approves the LC budget, to remove the ceiling and to appropriate \$94,000 for travel to meetings next year—up from \$57,500 in fiscal year 1975.

The specific words that acting librarian John Lorenz asked the committee to remove are contained in the next-to-last paragraph in the LC budget, under the heading "administrative provisions." The paragraph limits to \$57,500 the amount the Librarian of Congress can make available from the library's travel funds "for attendance at meetings concerned with the function or activity for which the appropriation is made."

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The problem is that someone then has to make a differentiation between "attendance at meetings" and ordinary travel on government business. For instance, is it government business to appear on a panel to explain to catalogers how the MARC serial communications format works? Or is this the personal, professional activity of the librarian?

Forced to abide by the intent of the law, LC incorporated this definition into its regulations:

The following are considered attendance at meetings:

1. General membership meetings of an association, even though the employee is a speaker or participant. . . .
2. Workshops, seminars and symposia sponsored or co-sponsored by an association. This includes pre-conference workshops.

Considering that LC has some 4,700 employees this means that very few people attend conferences. Last year thirty-one librarians went to ALA in New York, three went to ASIS in Atlanta, two went to the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History in Philadelphia, one to the Gerontological Society in Portland, Oregon, etc. The Processing Department (MARC, CONSER, NUC) got a total of \$15,000 for meetings. Congressional Research Service got \$15,000. In all, about 200 trips were made outside the Washington, D.C. area at an average cost of \$280.

Members of the Appropriations Committee suggested to Lorenz that they simply raise the amount of money available for attendance at meetings. After all, they argued, if a substantial part of the library's \$455,000 travel budget was available for meetings, wouldn't this solve the problem?

Of course it would for the moment. But the wording in the law perpetuates the antiquated notion that the Library of Congress is just another big reference library in Washington. Its staff should stay at their desks cataloging books and answering research questions. No junketing allowed.

But participating on a panel to discuss computerizing catalogs is not a junket. Even if it isn't Chicago in January.

Stimulating new thinking and sharing new ideas with members of the library profession is the business of LC. By removing this artificial limit on the amount of money library staff can spend attending professional meetings and communicating new knowledge, Congress can show it appreciates the role its library is playing in the development of libraries and information science in this country. ■■