

Policy debate on the provision of broadband telecommunications capacity and the delivery of electronic information services is heating up again in the wake of recent court decisions, Federal Communications Commission proposals, and pending legislation. A series of ads in major daily newspapers by the newspaper and telephone industries (specifically by the Regional Bell Operating Companies or RBOCs) have raised questions among librarians about ALA's position concerning the issues addressed by the ads. In one ad, ALA was listed as a potential information provider.

The issue prompting this campaign for public attention is under what conditions the regional phone companies should be allowed to provide information services. The issue itself dates back to the breakup of the Bell system in 1982 through an antitrust decision (the Modified Final Judgment or MFJ). Judge Harold Greene of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, who has continued to preside over issues resulting from divestiture, prohibited the RBOCs, newly created in 1984, from entering unregulated businesses such as electronic publishing because of the RBOCs' dominant power in their local service areas. While this dominance over local telephone service is eroding, most telephone customers are still able to obtain local service from only one company. Judge Greene last year reluctantly lifted the restrictions.

The RBOCs now have what they want through the courts and oppose any legislation to undo the court decision or to impose restrictions on their provision of information services, but they would like to get into other areas still off limits to them—provision of cable TV signals and programming, and provision of long distance service. The regional telcos claim they need to carry TV signals as economic incentive to replace copper wire with high-capacity fiber to the home. The cable industry would like to get into the phone business. The newspaper publishers are the most vocal opponent of

Washington Hotline

Carol C. Henderson

RBOC entry into information services, fearing loss of classified ad revenue. Adding to the policy ferment are FCC proposals to further deregulate the telecommunications industry, including allowing the phone companies to provide a "video dialtone" service. Various bills (among them, HR 3515, S. 2112, HR 2546, S. 1200, and HR 3701) are pending in Congress supported by one industry group or another,

and hearings have been held on most of them. Public interest, consumer, and education group reactions have been mixed.

ALA's Committee on Legislation, active in recent years on telecommunications issues such as opposing access charges on enhanced service providers, and promoting library interests in legislation to establish the National Research and Education Network, has not yet recommended an ALA position on the issue of RBOC provision of information services. The arguments for opposing phone company provision of information services are strong. The RBOCs, which often have monopoly power in their local service areas, would have the incentive and the ability to discriminate against competing information providers or to subsidize their own information services with regulated revenues, despite statutory protections. For protection of free expression, the common carrier controlling the local conduit should have no control over the content carried over that conduit.

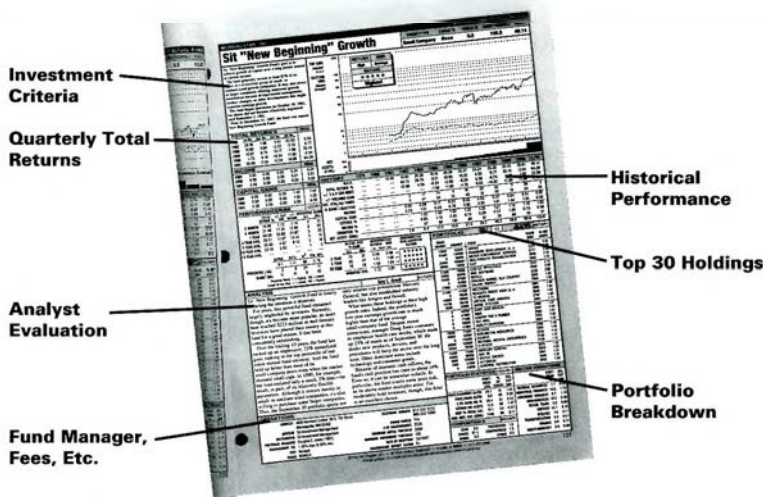
However, some librarians have argued that sophisticated information services will never reach rural libraries or residents of rural and sparsely populated areas until the phone companies are permitted to provide them. Some have suggested that libraries should work with phone companies and negotiate favorable arrangements to make library services available to the public via phone company gateways.

The Committee on Legislation discussed these issues recently, felt that further informa-

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Stanford develops preservation fact sheet for scholars

Stanford University Libraries has developed a fact sheet on what scholars can do to promote preservation of library materials. It was distributed by Stanford staff at the Modern Language Association Annual Convention in December 1991. Free copies are available from the Commission on Preservation

and Access, 1400 16th Street, N.W., Suite 740, Washington, DC 20036-2217; (202) 939-3400. Duplication or adaptation is encouraged.

Clareson reports on highlights of three ALA preservation meetings

The ALA Midwinter activities of three groups, the Cooperative Preservation Programs Discussion Group, the Preservation of Library Materials Section (PLMS) Task Force on Preservation Education Needs, and the PLMS Discussion Group, have been summarized in *AMIGOS Agenda & OCLC Connection* by Tom Clareson, AMIGOS preservation service manager. For free copies contact Tom at AMIGOS, 12200 Park Central Dr., Suite 500, Dallas, TX 75251; (800) 843-8482.

NARA publication provides information on preservation photocopying

A National Archives and Record Administration 1990 publication, *Archival Copies of Thermofax, Verifax, and Other Unstable Records* (Technical Information Paper, no. 5), contains valuable information on photocopying and photocopiers, according to the Science Panel of the Commission on Preservation and Access. It covers the photocopying process, its suitability for archival purposes, how to test for "archivally acceptable copy," and a number of practical suggestions to improve any preservation photocopying program. The 31-page publication (order number PB90-171836/GAR) is available from NTIS, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22161; (703) 487-4650. Copies cost \$17.00 in paper or \$9.00 in microfiche, plus a \$3.00 handling

Prepared by Jane Hedberg for the College Libraries Committee, Commission on Preservation and Access

Preservation News

Jane Hedberg

fee. Orders not charged or pre-paid are subject to an additional \$7.50 fee.

CPA plans preservation management seminar for 1993

The College Libraries Committee of the Commission on Preservation and Access, in cooperation with SOLINET, Inc., is planning to offer a second Preservation Management Seminar in 1993. The

first seminar was held at Washington & Lee University from July 20-27, 1991, and was judged by the 16 participants to be an overwhelming success. The 1991 program was designed to provide librarians who have part-time preservation responsibilities with strategies for preserving general collections. For more information contact SOLINET, 1438 W. Peachtree St. NW, Suite 200, Atlanta, GA 30309-2955; (800) 999-8558.

Submissions for this column may be made via: Internet: JHEDBERG@LUCY.WELLESLEY.EDU; Fax: (617) 239-1139; or mail: Jane Hedberg, Wellesley College Library, 106 Central Street, Wellesley, MA 02181-8275. ■

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tion is needed by the ALA membership, and that the committee needed wider ALA input into its deliberations on how to protect basic principles and library interests as policy evolves. Steps taken by committee chair E. J. Josey at the ALA Midwinter Meeting in January include:

- Establishing an ad hoc subcommittee on telecommunications, chaired by Elaine Albright of the University of Maine. (Albright is chair of the Legislation Assembly.)

- Focusing the Committee on Legislation's Information Update Session on these telecommunications issues at the ALA Annual Conference in San Francisco. The time slot is Saturday, June 27, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

- Holding a hearing at the ALA Annual Conference to solicit opinions from ALA members and units on Sunday, June 28, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

An issues background paper and information about the conference activities will be distributed to ALA units this spring. Carol Henderson is staff liaison to the committee. ■