

Implications of Library State Laws on Information Services in Public Libraries

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Abstract. The National Network of Public Libraries (RNBP, for its abbreviation in Spanish) was established in 1983 and the General Law on Libraries was published in 1988. This law is of national observance. It indicates the tasks and obligations that each of the three levels of government (federal, state, and municipal) has regarding the establishment of public libraries, as well as the general principles for the network operation.

During the first decade of RNBP existence, library infrastructure (buildings) has increased notably, from 351 in 1983 to 5,120 libraries in 1994.

The first state to elaborate its own library law was Puebla in 1978. However, some states in Mexico begin the task of developing their own library laws until 2001. Currently, 10 states have their own law.

Thus, the importance of knowing about services offered by the libraries and their situation in states with their own law; of realizing if the situation before having their own law changed or remained the same; and of analyzing library state laws, to verify if they are a copy of the General Law on Libraries or they have been adapted to the local context of each state.

Qualitative and quantitative methods will be applied to answer these issues.

Keywords. General Law of Libraries, Library Services, Public Libraries, Government, National Network of Public Libraries, Library State Laws, Library infrastructure.

1. Introduction

In the national context, the General Law on Libraries, published in 1998 and amended in June 2009 was a milestone in the politics of information in Mexico. It provided a framework to govern the public library system and encouraging its development. It is a general law where several organisms can intervene as well as the three levels of government.

This law, presents the general guidelines for the operation of the National Network of Public Libraries, in turns each state should develop its own law according to its social context. Puebla was the first state to publish its own law called "*Law that creates the overall state and public library in the state*" in 1978, followed by the General Law of Public Libraries.

The state law libraries that currently exist were released since 2001, in response to one of the actions raised in the National Program for Culture 2001-2006:

"Promote the review and updating of the legal framework governing the operation of the National Network of Public Libraries, both at the level of general legislation on the coordination agreements or arrangements between the federal government, state governments and municipalities to strengthen and ensure the effectiveness of its effort in fulfilling their responsibilities. "

Since the creation of state library laws an interest was born to know the situation of the states with a local Law on Libraries compared with states governed by the General Law on Libraries: How are they funded? What is the profile of their staff? and, what services they provide?

2. National Network of Public Libraries

The National Network of Public Libraries was established from the existing public libraries under the Ministry of Education that were in operation at the beginning of the National Libraries program in 1982. The network began with a total of 351 libraries, administrated by the National Council for Culture and the Arts since 1988.

From its beginnings, the Net formulated the following objectives:

- *"integrate the resources of all public libraries in the country and coordinate their functions in order to strengthen and optimize its operation,*
- *expand and diversify their holdings and target their services to ensure free access of all people to reading, information, recreation and knowledge. "*

During the first decade of the Net, the number of libraries increased dramatically from 351 in 1983 to 5.120 in 1994 libraries. Later actions focused on maintenance services and rather than establishing new libraries; they also focused on promoting and creating financial mechanisms for the rehabilitation and improvement of existing public libraries.

The National Network of Public Libraries consist in:

- 31 state networks and
- 16 networks in each of Mexico City's administrative demarcations.

The state and Mexico City's networks are coordinated primarily by the General Directorate of Libraries, and on a second level by the central public libraries, which are also the link between the Department of Libraries and the network of each entity. A third level of coordination rules public libraries in major cities in each state, whose role is to liaise between the central state public library and the municipal libraries.

The state networks are hierarchically integrated as follows:

- 1.State Coordination of Public Libraries
- 2.State Central Public Library.
- 3.Regional public libraries.
- 4.Municipal public libraries.

Central public libraries are in charge of training all of the entity's employees, as well as being directly responsible for supervising through regular visits all the municipal libraries in their jurisdiction (Ministry of Education, 1988).

Regional public libraries support each state's coordination and have a larger capacity than municipal libraries. They are usually set in medium-sized cities, where they support the smaller libraries. Public libraries fulfill the function of providing, by all means available and free of charge, formative, informational, and recreational reading material to all community members who may require it. The role of the state coordination and the different types of libraries is to serve as a channel of communication with the General Directorate of Libraries.

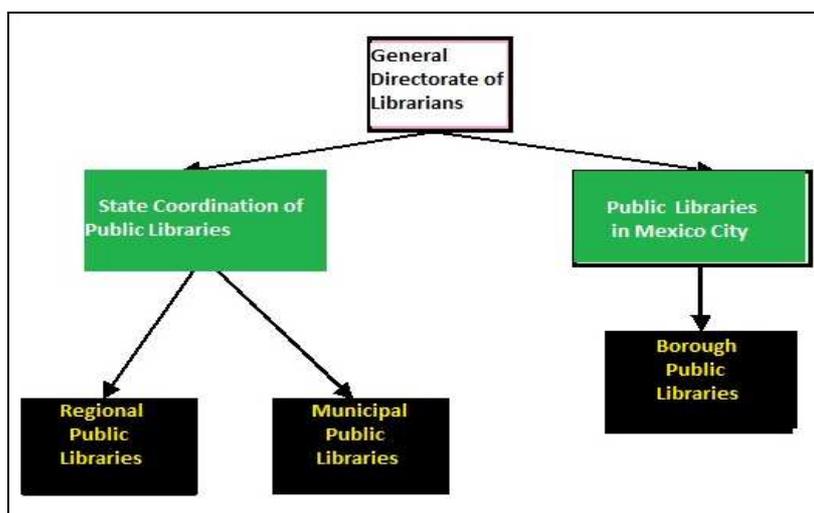


Figure 1. Chart of the National Network of Public Libraries

3. Methodology and Results

First, states with local library laws were identified, as well as state networks with its own law on libraries; then a questionnaire was designed to apply to some selected state network coordinators. From the data obtained through the questionnaire, items were given to permit a representation of the situation in which libraries and their services with its own law stand.

According to the classification from the National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education, Mexico is divided into six regions where five of them contain states with their own law on libraries:

REGION	STATE	YEAR
South - Central	Puebla	1978
	Tlaxcala	2003
	Guerrero	2005
Northwest	Sinaloa	2001
	Chihuahua	2006
Northeast	Zacatecas	2006
	Durango	2011
	San Luis Potosí	2012
South - Southeast	Quintana Roo	2010
Center - West	Jalisco	2012

The remaining states are governed by the General Law Libraries, from 1988, amended on June 23, 2009.

At the time of the questionnaire, only states whose local laws were published before 2010 were considered. The analysis was made on two states with their own law in the Central – South region, Guerrero and, Tlaxcala, and one that is governed by the general law on libraries: Hidalgo. From the Northwest: Sinaloa and Chihuahua, both with own law, and Sonora, governed by the general law on libraries. The coordinators of the state library networks from the mentioned states were asked to answer a questionnaire designed to directly assess the impact of their library services.

4. West – South Region

1.Hidalgo

Despite of not having its own law on libraries, it has an annual operating program. Among its goals are:

- 1."The establishment of five new libraries annually.
- 2.Train and supervise librarians working in your network.
- 3.Improve and modernize the conditions of at least 50 libraries [...]".

That is, a budget for buying books. Yet this budget may change with each new government, since it is not formally stipulated. The conditions of the public libraries belonging to network in Hidalgo's state have improved in as much as the state government has embraced its responsibility. However, its own law should establish budget allocations for the purchase of collections and the maintenance of the facilities, as well as guidelines to ensure the staff's stability. It should also define the responsibilities of each of the administrative instances involved, that is, federal, state and municipalities.

2.Tlaxcala

Library services offered by the library network of Tlaxcala have improved following the installation of digital service modules. The Law on Libraries of the State of Tlaxcala, so far, has not led to any change in the situation of its public libraries. This library Law is presented as a copy of the General Law in solely replacing the term "federal" with the term "state". Thus, some functions assigned are impossible to realize, such as the staff training.

This situation gets worse by the lack of support from state authorities and the lack of adequate trained staff. Added to this, the mobility of the staff, as every three years there is change of personnel within the municipalities, results in the need to train the new staff so they can develop skills to provide qualified library services. Having a proper law to its context, one that contemplate sanctions, where the responsibility falls into each of the levels of government - federal, state and municipal - and allocate a budget for the operation and maintenance of the statewide network library, will enable the provision of better services.

3. Guerrero

Guerrero's state library law, number 565 has no operational program by itself, however, it adheres to the government program called "Establishment of an operative and consolidation of public libraries in the state", which aims to: "To give people more and better spaces, materials and services required at different stages of educational development."

The library network of Guerrero, has no budget to increase their assets, yet, the law posits that as long as the state library coordination settles as Directorate of Public Libraries it will have a budget for operation and resources, to be distributed by a General Director.

State Library law gives further support to public libraries faced with the federal, state and municipal, as well as providing the specific tasks that correspond to the each level of government and encourages citizen participation. Among the tasks mentioned in the law, when they join the National Network of Public Libraries, local public libraries get linked to the international library community and the program of universal availability of publications of the United Nations Organization for Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

5. Northwest Region:

5.1. Sonora

The state library network operates under the general law libraries and according to the "Program of public libraries and promotion of reading," which has among their objectives: "*to promote the development of public libraries, consolidating those existing and increasing their number in marginal areas, also to promote the modernization of information services and consultation.*"

As part of the activities to promote reading it implemented a series of state contests and competitions that promote consultation in public libraries.

The first significant change in library services came with the establishment of digital service modules. The benefits that the Sonora's network has received have come through the National Public Library Program, which led to increase the number of libraries. This encouraged the establishment of public libraries throughout the state and thus improving the conditions of education of the population. From its part, the General Law on Libraries mandates the tasks for both the Libraries Department of CONACULTA and the state governments. These tasks, although general, are a legal support for public libraries.

5.2. Sinaloa

Before the publication of the Law Library of the State of Sinaloa, an annual budget item for purchase of books existed in the central library. Such budget was allocated by the state government. Since the publication of the Library law of Sinaloa state, such responsibility resides on the Sinaloa's Institute of Culture.

Regarding employing staff, the law establishes that the Sinaloa Institute for Culture will "appoint, assign and pay the staff wages for the operation of their public libraries." Some criteria should be established on the staff profiles, as well as its contractual duration. Despite being mentioned in the law, maintenance aspects and recruitment has not been modified at all.

The same applies to the training of the personnel, to the expansion and diversification of their holdings, and the integration of the resources of public libraries network of Sinaloa. The law has had no effect on any aspect.

5.3. Chihuahua

Chihuahua's state law library, in Article 10 stipulates: • *"Expand and diversify the holdings and target services of public libraries, and promote and encourage the training and professionalism of its staff."*

To accomplish this, the library network has assigned an item in the state budget expenditures. This budget is provided through the Creation and Modernization Program of Public Libraries, which allows the expansion, enhancement of the network in relation to infrastructure, book collections, holdings in general and furniture. As for the training of its staff, the Coordination of the Chihuahua library network has designed a series of workshops for those regional libraries. The goal of the workshops is to strengthen regional libraries to be monitors to establish communication within the same region such that feedback will have as outcome, improvement of library services.

With regard to the permanence and staff profile, their law states: *"Municipalities will appoint, remunerated and allocate personnel for the operation of public libraries in accordance with the profile of librarians and library to be established in the regulations of this law [...]"*.

However, such regulation has not been implemented. The state Law Library has improved library services in general. This has been a fulcrum to request the support of the relevant authorities; however, there is a need to regulate it.

6. Conclusions

In the South-west region, the training of library staff is quite similar. The three states' networks presents, just over 40% of its staff with a high school education, followed by the college level, except Hidalgo, which has also a library staff with a basic educational level. Regarding senior staff 42% of those attached to the library network in Guerrero, mostly, is college undergraduate or graduate degree; there is only one person with a Library Science degree, working in the planning and evaluation area of coordination of the network.

In Tlaxcala, 28% of its staff has a finished college or are graduates, most of them in directive level. For Hidalgo, only 14% of staff has college completed.

The library network of Hidalgo, ruled by the General Law on Libraries provides highly specialized library services. Also workshops, such as a intrauterine stimulation workshops, workshops for babies, for disabled community, aimed to encourage the habit of reading. State government support can be seen through the allowance of a budget for the purchase of books.

A program concerning library automation was launched, resulting, so far, the automation of some of their library catalogs, which together are shaping the general catalog of the library network of Hidalgo.

The situation observed in the library network of Guerrero, which have its own states' Law on Libraries is the following. Even when law manifests that the public libraries are under the responsibility of the state government, only 2 libraries have received support of this.

Regarding Tlaxcala, also with a state law, there is a total lack of concern from state government. The network is not part of the current State Development Plan, and therefore none of the libraries that make up its network have received any benefit.

The training of library staff in the three library systems is similar, with a peculiarity in Hidalgo, who has been training personnel to specialize on the area of cataloging processes. Moreover, the three library networks depend on the Libraries' Department of CONACULTA for training.

Within services, library networks of Hidalgo and Tlaxcala generally offer the same basic services: internal home and interlibrary loans; consultation, guidance to users and activities to promote reading. As for the last activities, we find variations, such as intrauterine stimulation and baby workshops.

There are additional services: digital services; librarian or extramural extension, photocopying, children's room, computerized catalogs, notice of new acquisitions, special services for people with disabilities, and cultural video libraries. The library network of Guerrero offers interlibrary loans, library extension services, automated catalogs and special services to persons with disabilities. Despite having its own law with a regulation code in process, it offers fewer library services.

Northwest Region

As in the south-central region, the level of education of library staff in the North-West region is predominantly the high school. In this region, more than half of the staff has such level, followed by basic education and at last, the college level. This last staff is much fewer than in the south-central region, and it does not exceed 16%. Regarding the training of staff, only Sinaloa and Chihuahua designed courses and workshops through its cultural institutes to such staff. In Sonora, training depends on the Libraries General Directorate.

The library network of Chihuahua is the only in this region that has an institutional budget assigned for infrastructure, collections and furniture through the program "Development and Modernization of Public Libraries", stated in his State Law on Libraries.

It is worth to mention, that the Sinaloa library network was loose some support with the publication of the Sinaloa Law on Libraries, because the support the central library had to purchase books was withdrawn.

Regarding the services offered in their networks, basic services are the same: internal and home loans; consultation; guidance to users, and activities to promote reading. For additional services, the network of Sonora offers a greater variety and scope than Sinaloa and Chihuahua. Meanwhile, the Sinaloa network is offering fewer library services because they lack the right conditions, such as ramps for people with disabilities, among others. The factors affecting the quality of library services offered by state networks are centered upon the library staff; every three years employee's mobility is experienced and therefore training starts over again. This creates a circle in which every three years the same training courses are given, which does not allow advancement in service skills which at the end is reflected in the services offered.

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