5. Overview of Service Network

5.7 Advisory and Outreach Centers

1. Background. When the Pratt-Smoot Act was signed into law by President Herbert Hoover in 1931, nineteen regional libraries formed the network of cooperating libraries. The network expanded again by seven libraries in 1934 when Pratt-Smoot was amended to include sound recordings. The network was stable at twenty-six libraries until a second era of growth began in 1950 with the establishment of a regional library in Florida and closed in 1976 with the establishment of regional libraries in Alaska and Vermont. In 1995 North Dakota established the most recent regional library for a total of 57 regional libraries, leaving only the state of Wyoming without its own in-state regional library. In 2009 the Cincinnati, Ohio regional consolidated with Cleveland bring the network’s regional library total to 56.

Subregional libraries (SRLs) [See 5.5 Subregional Libraries] were first established in 1969 and grew to a total of 104 by the mid 1980s. The number began to drop shortly afterward and this trend has continued. By July 1, 2011, the number of subregional libraries had decreased to 47.

In recent years with the digital transition and Great Recession funding reductions, new service patterns and centers have developed. Some closing subregional libraries are now recognized by NLS as Advisory and Outreach Centers (AOCs), defined below. The primary mission of these centers is outreach to their communities, identifying and registering eligible individuals, and providing them with reader-advisory services.

2. Definition. An Advisory and Outreach Center (AOC) is a former subregional library that no longer provides daily circulation of hard-copy audio books to eligible readers, and has instead retained staff to focus on reader-advisory, outreach, and/or machine-sublending agency activities. The Center also provides walk-in services for patrons who use digital books that the AOC downloads from BARD. The regional library provides connectivity to its automated circulation system to facilitate AOC service. The regional library provides book-circulation and/or machine-lending functions to the patrons in the AOC service area.

3. AOCs will meet the following criteria:
   - Be authorized by the regional library
• Be a former subregional library in the NLS library network

• Have access to a regional library’s automated circulation system for the purposes of checking reader status, providing reader-advisory services, and assigning playback equipment

• Provide digital books on demand for patrons who visit the center

• Report statistics to the regional library

4. NLS will provide:

• Access to NLS-Reports, Network Library Manual, and other online NLS resources

• CMLS read-only access

• BARD administrative access (if approved by the regional library)

• BARD institutional status (if approved by the regional library)

• Outreach brochures, posters, and materials

• Inclusion in the NLS network address list including the NLS website Find a Library listing

5. Outreach centers without the reader-advisory component. Some public libraries that have never been subregionals may wish to become outreach centers. In this instance the regional library should set up the public library as a deposit collection and provide training and necessary materials for the public library to promote the program. The current policies governing deposit collections and institutions would apply to these libraries.