

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 108 709

IR 002 251

AUTHOR Faibisoff, Sylvia G.  
 TITLE Regional Coordination: A Point of View.  
 INSTITUTION South Central Research Library Council, Ithaca, N.Y.  
 PUB DATE Apr 75  
 NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the New York State Library System Conference (First, Albany, New York, April 8-10, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.76 HC-\$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE  
 DESCRIPTORS Coordination; Geographic Regions; Information Needs; \*Library Cooperation; \*Library Networks; Library, Reference Services; Medical Libraries; Public Libraries; \*Regional Cooperation; Regional Programs; Research Libraries; Special Libraries; Speeches; \*State Libraries; University Libraries  
 IDENTIFIERS \*New York

ABSTRACT

To more adequately provide for newly perceived user needs, New York State libraries have adopted the philosophy of regionalism through which public, academic, and special libraries can cooperate and share resources. The state's 22 public library systems and 9 3R regions (Reference and Research Library Resources Councils) are organized geographically. The key to developing regionalism is multi-directional communication. In order to create a statewide network and to communicate with the regions, an administrative unit at the State level could be most responsive if divided by function--a resource section, a collection development section, an interlibrary loan section, a communication and delivery section, and a budget section. The regions could then coordinate their plans through a Statewide Advisory Council on Library Development composed of representatives from each of the regions, and all could then report to the Assistant Commissioner for Libraries. (Author/KKC)

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REGIONAL COORDINATION: A  
POINT OF VIEW

An address presented at the First  
Annual New York State Library  
System Conference

April 8 - 10, 1975

Albany, New York

by

Sylvia G. Faibisoff

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REGIONAL COORDINATION: A POINT  
OF VIEW

INTRODUCTION:

Libraries in New York State increasingly find themselves competing with other agencies for executive and legislated dollars. Although it is doubtful that the State, local, and city governments will deny total funding to libraries, it has become more and more obvious in New York State that libraries have to justify every dollar requested. Although justification is not objectionable, the worrisome problem appears to be the lack of understanding of the modern library,-- its new services, its emphasis on the dissemination of information, and probably most difficult to see and comprehend, the newly emerging organizational patterns in the form of systems and networks.

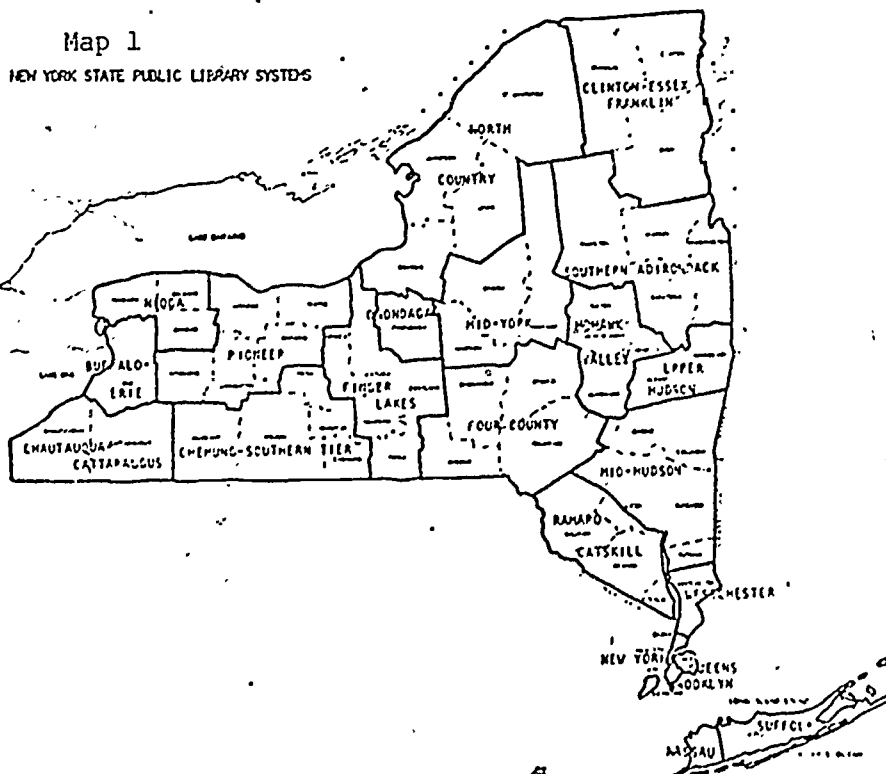
The systems and networks need dollars to plan, to organize, and to operate. In the long run, the planning should pay off. Unfortunately, however, the public sees only the traditional facade of the library and is not aware of the changes in the form of systems and networks taking place in libraries in response to a multiplicity of perceived and real user needs. Consequently, the public is apprehensive about requests for additional dollars and, as we have read,

budgets are being slashed throughout the country.

To more adequately provide for newly perceived user needs, libraries have adopted a differing philosophy. The new tools are the products of technology -- computers, duplicators, satellites, cable; the philosophy is regionalism. The title of this paper is Regional Coordination: A Point of View. It is a deceptively simplistic title for a complex concept which attempts to explain this new philosophy..

DEFINITION OF REGIONALISM:

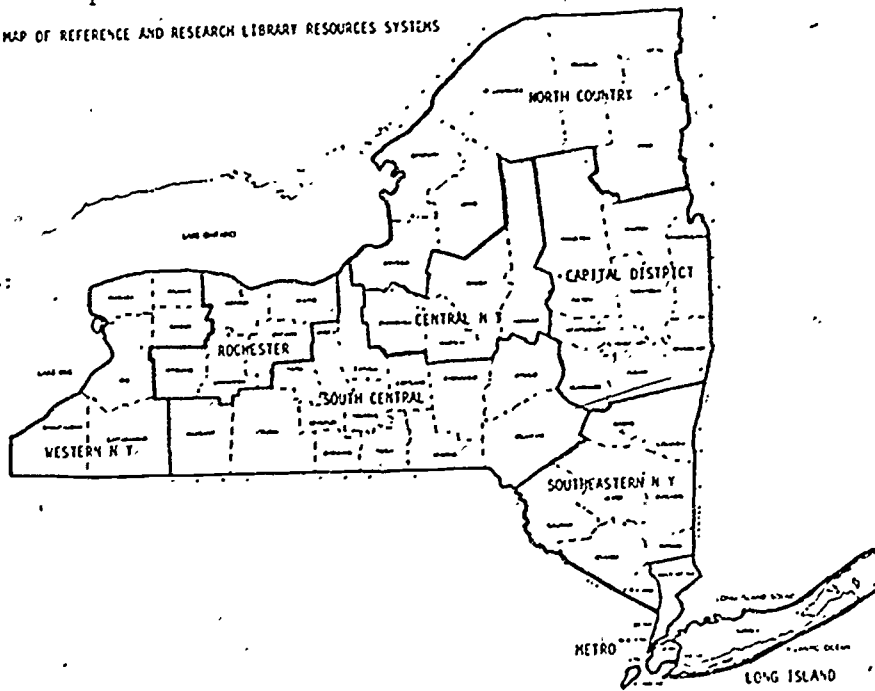
Regionalism is generally thought of as a geographic concept. The following maps of New York State, for instance, show the extent to which this State has developed regional (geographic) library systems and networks. Map 1 shows the 62 counties in the State divided into 22 library systems or regions designed to serve the needs of approximately 691 public libraries.



Map 2 shows the 62 counties divided into nine Reference and Research Library Resources Councils (3R) designed to facilitate and extend the use of the library facilities of 22 public library systems, 232 academic libraries, and innumerable special libraries.

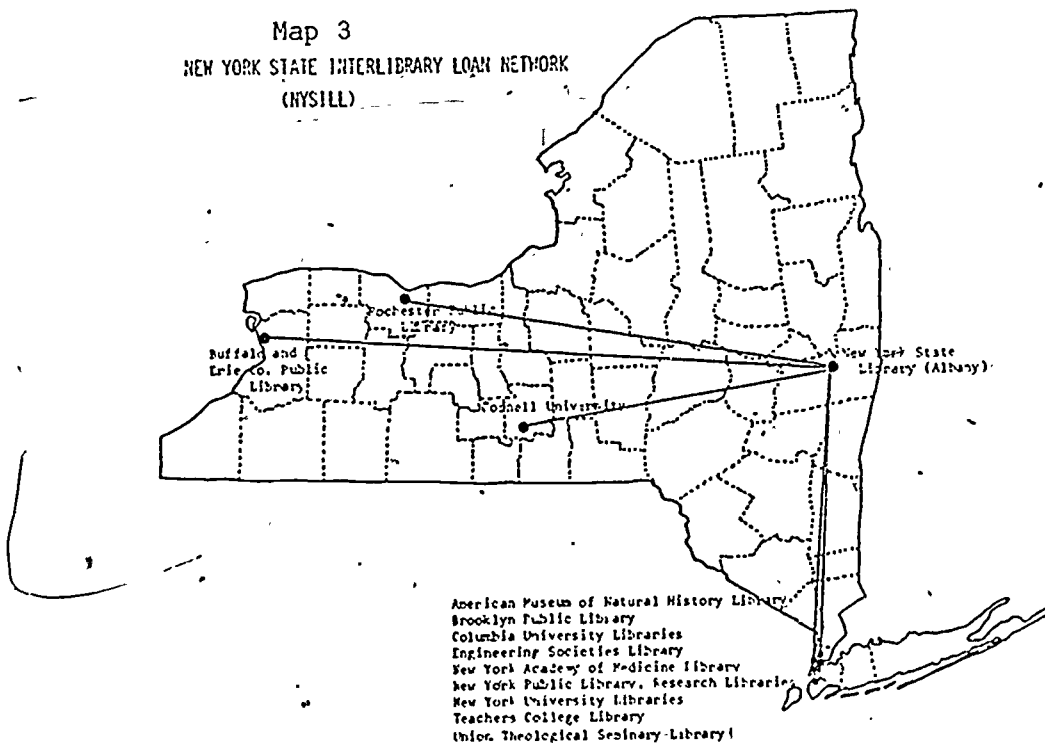
Map 2

MAP OF REFERENCE AND RESEARCH LIBRARY RESOURCES SYSTEMS

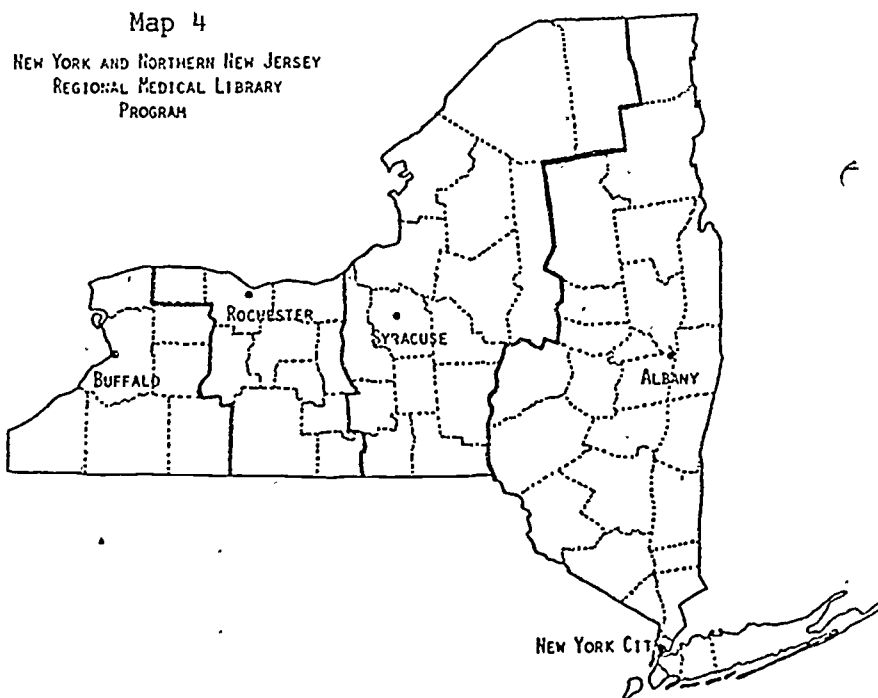


Map 3 shows a statewide network of the major research libraries incorporated into the NYSILL network whose resources can be tapped by all other libraries in the State.

Map 3  
NEW YORK STATE INTERLIBRARY LOAN NETWORK  
(NYSILL)

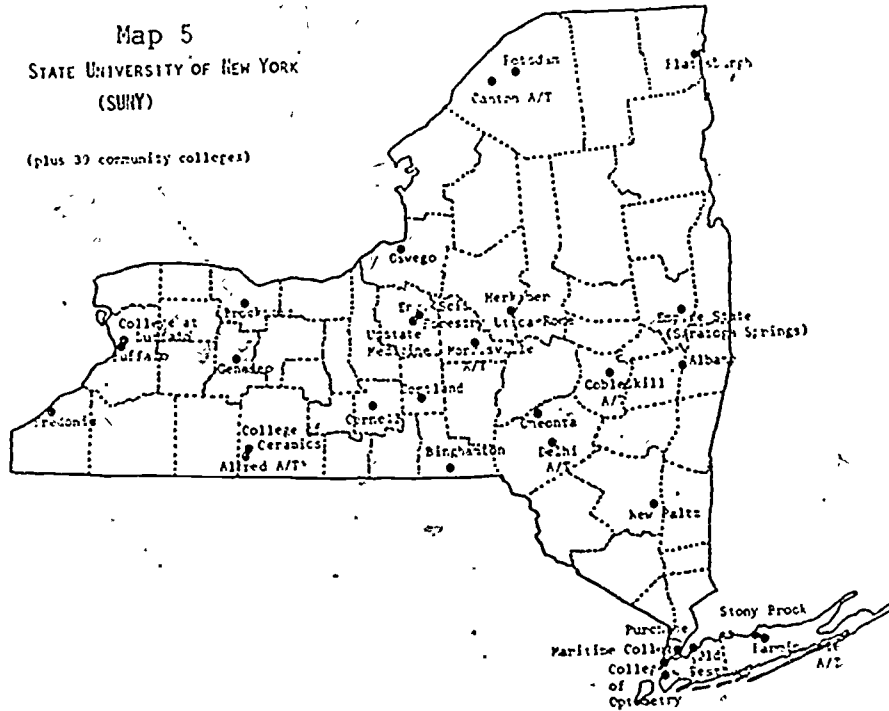


Map 4 shows still another type of network, the New York and Northern New Jersey Regional Medical Library Program, a network providing quick literature searches for the health services libraries.



Map 5 shows the State University of New York (SUNY) system, coordinating the development, services, and functions of the libraries of

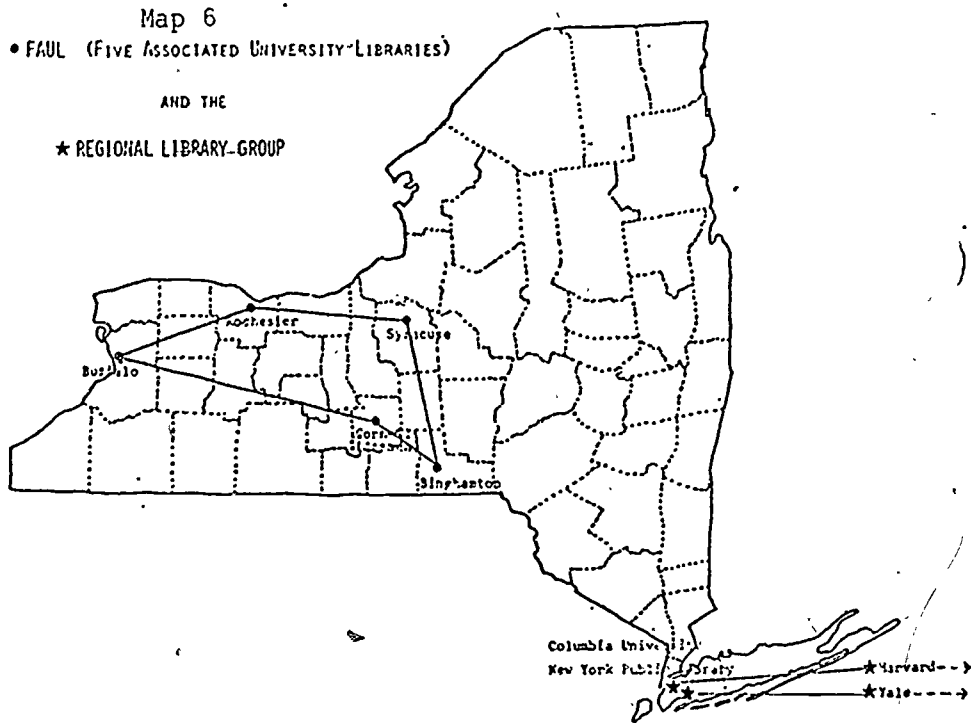
the State University of New York.



These are all State and Federally funded programs. However, systems supported by non-public funds have also emerged. Map 6 shows the members of FAUL (the Five Associated University Libraries), Cornell University, University of Rochester, SUNY at Buffalo, SUNY at Binghamton, and Syracuse University; and the Regional Library Group--the New York Public Library, Columbia University, Harvard, and Yale--consortia of private institutions designed to coordinate



the resources and services of major libraries in and out of the State.



This developing philosophy of libraries organized by regions can to some extent be compared with the development of regionalism in the United States. At the turn of the century, historians switched from the use of the term "sectionalism" to the term "regionalism" as a means of explaining the growth and development of the United States. By the 1920's, a trio of social scientists at the University of Chicago were using the term "regionalism" as a philosophy, science, and a tool describing space/group relationships subject to environmental forces.

The term regionalism has innumerable definitions. Howard Odum, in his study American Regionalism, presented at least 41 definitions of the term "region." (See Chart 1 on the following page.) This list includes definitions used by geographers, economists, historians, and other disciplines. For instance, a geographer's definition: "A region is the term for an environmental type in which the geographic elements are combined in certain definite and constant relations." The philosopher's concept: "A region is the name of man's concept of the totality of an area." Or the sociologist's definition: "A region is a familiar place where we know to some extent the lay of the land, the traits of the people and their resources, needs and problems." And the biologist's definition: "An organic region may thus be described as an area where people or institutions are bound together by mutual dependencies arising from common interests."

The latter definition, a socio-biological definition, is particularly suitable to the concept of regionalism in librarianship. Thus, if the community is considered an organic region or organism, the people and institutions within it can be identified as its organs -- each mutually dependent on the other. For example, if the rural community is referred to as the organism, some of its component organs would be government, medical facilities, schools and the library; the organs of a university campus; another type of organism, would be faculty, students, laboratories, and the library. Similarly, industrial communities and cities can be thought of as organisms. The organism provides the sustenance -- financial and economic means -- enabling the organ to

CHART 1

VARYING CONCEPTS OF THE REGION \*\*

A region may be regarded as a spontaneous expression of physical and psychological differences.<sup>1</sup>

Regions are genuine entities, each of which expresses, both natural and cultural differentiation from its neighbors.<sup>1</sup>

An area within which the combination of environmental and demographic factors have created a homogeneity of economic and social structure.<sup>2</sup>

In an area like France with an ancient civilization, a geographical region is defined by an *ensemble de rapports* between man and the natural milieu.<sup>3</sup>

Any one part of a national domain sufficiently unified physiographically and socially, to have a true consciousness of its own customs and ideals, and to possess a sense of distinction from other parts of the country.<sup>4</sup>

A region is an area . . . delineated on a basis of general homogeneity of land character and general homogeneity of occupation.<sup>5</sup>

Regions are areas within which there is significant homogeneity in one or several respects.<sup>6</sup>

A region is a natural-economic unit, and is an expression of areal differentiation in the physical and cultural landscapes.<sup>7</sup>

An area or unit in which the economic and social activities of the population are integrated around a focal and administrative center.<sup>8</sup>

Physical regions, like organic regions, are of many different kinds and may be classified by their individual characteristics such as geologic, geographic, climatic, or ecologic.<sup>9</sup>

A governmental region is an area in which the people are objectively bound together by ties of governmental authority. Its limits have been set by law.<sup>10</sup>

. . . organic regions may be defined roughly as areas within which a higher degree of mutual dependence exists than in relationships outside that area.<sup>11</sup>

A "region" is the geographer's term for an "environmental type" in which "the geographic elements are combined in certain definite and constant relations."<sup>12</sup>

. . . an area, wherein there has grown up one characteristic pattern of human adjustment to environment, one general class of human use of resources and locus,—is a region.<sup>13</sup>

Every region is a domain where many dissimilar beings, artificially brought together, have subsequently adapted themselves to a common existence.<sup>14</sup>

Every region has its unique character to which contribute the features, of the soil, atmosphere, plants and man.<sup>15</sup>

. . . an area throughout which a particular set of physical conditions will lead to a particular type of economic life.<sup>16</sup>

. . . geographic areas which have become unified culturally, unified at first economically and later by consensus of thought, social patterns of education, recreation, and other forms of action which serve to distinguish it from other areas.<sup>17</sup>

The dominant theme is the expression of the individuality of the region as the site of a particular group of people and their work.<sup>18</sup>

. . . a complex of land, water, air, plant, animal and man regarded in their special relationship as together constituting a definite, characteristic portion of the Earth's surface.<sup>19</sup>

A region may be described loosely as an area of which the inhabitants instinctively feel themselves a part.<sup>20</sup>

Our personal region is bounded by the environs of our daily life.<sup>21</sup>

Our region is a familiar place, where we know, to some extent, the lay of the land, the traits of the people and their resources, needs and problems.<sup>22</sup>

Region is a name for man's concept of the entity of an area.<sup>23</sup>

The regional concept is based on natural or unrestricted relationships between places and people, as distinguished from political or governmental relationships.<sup>24</sup>

In its inherent nature, and in the common meaning of the word, a region is a territory of indefinite extent.<sup>25</sup>

The regional concept thus embraces two distinct kinds of areas—geologic, geographic, climatic and other physical characteristics and organic regions or areas of human life and movement.<sup>26</sup>

An organic region may thus be described as an area whose people are bound together by mutual dependencies arising from common interests.<sup>27</sup>

Geo-physical regions may be described as areas bounded by definite physical conformations or areas having similar physical characteristics, such as rainfall, temperature, climate.<sup>28</sup>

. . . the region is distinguished by the use to which it is put by its occupants.<sup>29</sup>

A natural region may be defined as any portion of the earth's surface whose physical conditions are homogeneous.<sup>30</sup>

. . . the region as a culture area, "an assemblage of such forms as have interdependence and is functionally differentiated from other areas."<sup>31</sup>

. . . an area which is characterized throughout by similar or closely related surface features, and which is contrasted in these respects with neighboring areas.<sup>32</sup>

. . . those areas that show within their boundaries essential uniformity in dominant physical conditions and consequently in dominant life responses.<sup>33</sup>

It is this tendency of all vital traits of culture to coincide with economic traits that gives a regional character to culture as a whole.<sup>34</sup>

. . . the region is comprised of a constellation of communities.<sup>35</sup>

A region is generally considered to be an area exhibiting homogeneity in one or more of its aspects, and thus it represents an areal or spatial generalization.<sup>36</sup>

. . . an area where many dissimilar species of inhabitants adapt themselves to a common existence so that the ecological community as a whole keeps on.<sup>37</sup>

A region may be defined as an area where nature acts in a roughly uniform manner.<sup>38</sup>

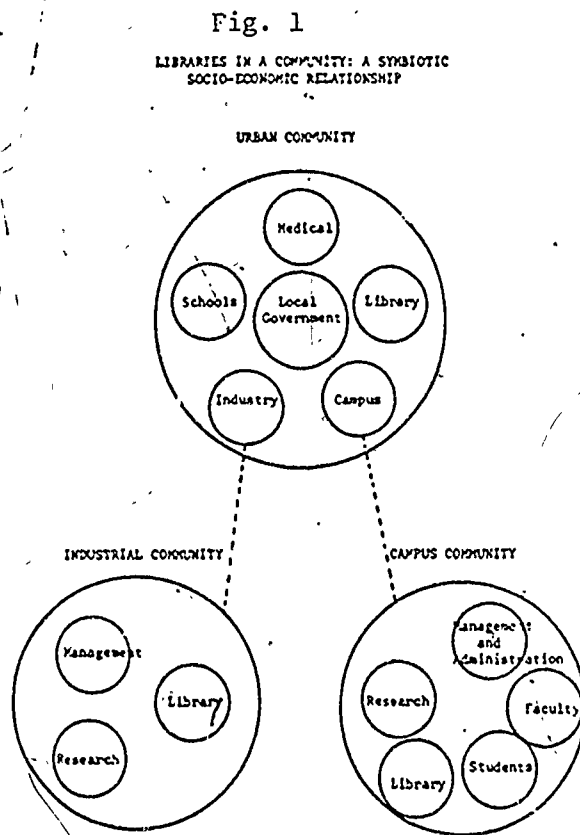
Between the continent and the historic village is an area sometimes larger, sometimes smaller than the political state. It is the human region.<sup>39</sup>

My conception of a region is one in which the vegetation, animal and human life have acquired a character due to a permanent association; so the fact that the struggle for existence had brought about some sort of equilibrium among the competing and co-operating organism.<sup>40</sup>

The above concepts indicate both diversity and a certain agreement with reference to the meanings of regionalism. The authors are: 1. George T. Renner, 2. T. J. Woolter, Jr., 3. Isaiah Bowman, 4. Josiah Royce, 5. K. S. Platt, 6. W. D. Jones, 7. G. H. Smith, 8. R. D. McKenzie, 9. V. B. Stanbery, 10. B. A. Botkin, 11. American Society of Planning Officials, 12. P. Vidal de la Blache, 13. R. E. Dickinson and J. R. Howarth, 14. R. H. Whitbeck, 15. Wolfgang L. G. Joerg, 16. Nevin M. Fenneman, 18. Mabel C. Stark, 19. Clark Wissler, 20. Carl A. Dawson and Warner E. Gettys, 21. National Resources Board, 22. Radhakamal Mukerjee, 23. Kimball Young, 24. Carl O. Sauer, 25. A. J. Herbertson, 26. Stuart Chase, 27. Lewis Mumford, 28. Robert E. Park.

\*\*Howard W. Odum and Harry Estill Moore, American Regionalism: A Cultural-Historical Approach to National Integration (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1938), p. 2.

function. In turn, the organism cannot adequately exist without the organs. Withdraw any of the organs from the organism and the organism will suffer, but will not necessarily die. For instance, withdraw the library a primary source of information from the community, the community will suffer, but will not collapse. In each situation, a symbiotic relationship exists between the organs and the organism. (See Figure 1.)



For the purposes of this paper, the library has been designated the "information organ," one of the vital organs. It provides the information essential to the decision-making process on the assumption that decisions can best be made with the retrieval of pertinent, relevant information supplied as speedily as possible. The degree to which any organ is developed (in this case, the degree to which the library can supply the necessary information efficiently) depends upon the sustenance (that is, funds) given to it by the organism of which it is a part. Too frequently, the library as an information organ, may be anemic from lack of sustenance. This contributes to the inequitable distribution of resources in libraries and information centers in different communities. In the situations where libraries suffer from lack of sustenance, the library may look to another library within another organism to help improve and strengthen it. The library seeking aid from other regions outside its own organism can be said to be seeking a transfusion or supplementary nutrients. For example, a library organ in an academic organism seeking sustenance, may obtain it from a library located in an industrial organism.

At first such sharing may be casual. As the need develops, however, more formal arrangements regarding exchange and sharing are devised. Cooperation, coordination, and reciprocity may set it.

The history of sharing library resources dates back almost one hundred years to 1876. The first issue of Library Journal contains

articles on the philosophy and need for sharing resources through interlibrary lending. Interlibrary borrowing on a voluntary, cooperative and casual basis seemed adequate until World War II. At that time the information explosion as well as increased need for information forced libraries to examine their approaches to information and resource sharing.

The professional, scientific, and research community, faced with the problem of obtaining resources and information from their home library realized that some place out there, in another organism, there were vital resources which could be tapped. In some instances, these resources were held by libraries unaccustomed to sharing and exchanging resources. However, as libraries accepted the philosophy that they could not completely supply all the information needed by their community, and additionally felt compelled to meet the growing needs of their clientele, they began to relax barriers to share and exchange.

With this need to share, it was almost a natural phenomenon for library regions to develop. In New York State, the first such development took place in the 1950's with the creation of the public library systems. Public libraries within a compact geographic framework agreed to join a system to share one another's resources, establish a convenient delivery system, coordinate operations and purchases, and improve services to their own immediate community. By combining forces, the public libraries seemed to have found a solution to solving some of the problems of meeting the information needs of their own user communities.

However, the professional, research, and academic community still had serious information needs for resources which could not be supplied by their own communities or public library systems.

This situation was appraised and the solution appeared to lie in the development of another type of geographic library regional organization. By designing a system through which public, academic, and special libraries could cooperate and share resources, namely the 3R regions (Reference, Research and Library Resources), the services of all types of libraries could be extended to multi-communities. Thus, for instance, a researcher requiring medical information not available in his immediate library, could obtain it from either another medical library in a contiguous community, from another medical library in the State, or through the academic and special libraries within prescribed 3R regions. (See Table 1 for an overview of the public library system and 3R functions and relationships.)

Table 1

AN OVERVIEW OF THE APPROACH TO REGIONALISM  
BY THE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEMS  
AND THE 3R

PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEMS

3R

GOAL:

To strengthen and round out services and collections of public libraries

To mobilize the resources and services of the public, academic and special libraries at the regional level in order to provide users with information wherever it may be through the local library.

(Continued)

(Table 1, Continued)

PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEMS

3R

TARGET:	Public Libraries	Academic, public and special Libraries
SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUPS SERVED:	All: dependent on type of community	Research, professional, education, serious information seeker
GEOGRAPHIC CONFIGURATION:	Counties: 1 +	Public library systems: 2 - 14 counties
EMPHASIS:	To improve the quality of services of the public libraries. emphasis on technical processing, consultant services. To supplement resources and collections in the public libraries.	To improve access and availability of all resources. To build on strengths.
RESOURCES:	A headquarters collection	Stress collaborative and cooperative development of resources; identify nodes
SERVICES:	Interlibrary Loan - public libraries: switching capability to NYSILL Delivery - generally system vehicle Technical processing - (cataloging, acquisition, book marking) Adult, Young Adult, Children's Outreach Consultants Services for the blind and physically handicapped Bibliographic aids - union catalogs Reference services for member public libraries.	Interlibrary loan - to all libraries: switching capability to NYSILL Delivery - generally contracted None Identification of levels of services that provide for basic needs of patrons and their special needs Bibliographic aids - union lists of serials, of newspapers, of resource collections, of government documents Bibliographic and reference centers for the academic, public and special member libraries

(Continued)



(Table 1, Continued)

PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEMS

3R

ACCESS:	Free, direct, in-person access within public library systems	Pilots. Limited
COMMUNICA- TION SYSTEMS:	Teletype	Establishment of multi-directional communication systems
CONTINUING EDUCATION:	Workshops, seminars, In-service training	Workshops, seminars, In-service training
OTHER PROJECTS:	Bookmobile service	Grantsmanship Patent services Film cooperatives Microfilming Provision for entrance into information networks -- OCLC, DIALOG, New York Times Information Bank

ANOTHER DIMENSION OF REGIONALISM:

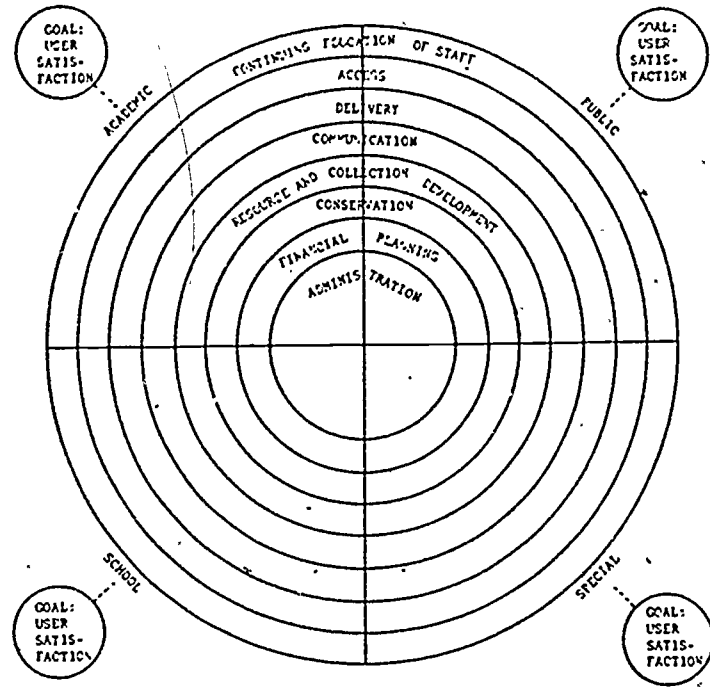
Obviously, in order to obtain the maximum benefits from the geographic region, and in order to mobilize the resources and services of each of the 3R regions, each manager of a 3R region had to create a socio-economic profile of the information seekers in the community and an inventory of the resources available in the region. Since the program was based on voluntary participation, cooperation became not only a goal, but a process and a means through which interaction between libraries within the geographic region could take place and through which a product could be produced. Thus, each library could determine the extent to which it would participate in helping to sustain libraries in other communities; each could determine the appropriateness of the activities

of other libraries in the region, and finally each of the libraries could dissociate itself from the region without any penalty. In this type of ambience, it was essential that each library perceive the rewards that could be gained through cooperation.

It is not possible within the restraints of this paper to expand on the development of cooperation within these regions and the beginning of coordination of functions and services. What should be emphasized, however, is that communication had to be established between libraries; that libraries had to have their own resources and had to develop a sensitivity for the resources in other communities. Provision had to be made for the delivery of materials and the benefits of coordinating collection development began to be considered. This led to a consciousness of the homologous structures of libraries and their operations. As shown in Figure 2, in spite of the type of library -- academic, public, or special -- each institution, in order to respond to the needs of its users, performed similar functions and provided similar services. The means by which the libraries provide service may differ, but the end product is the same--user satisfaction. Each type of library, although different, is similar to the other. This, then, is the reason why libraries can interrelate, can develop services that can benefit one another's societies and can eventually coordinate operations regardless of type.

Fig. 2

HOMOLOGOUS LIBRARY STRUCTURES



In New York State, regionalism as both a tool and a philosophy has set in. By examining themselves and other libraries, public school, academic and special libraries and the State Library have developed systems and networks. Each type of library is in the process of identifying or defining the regionalism of which it is a part; each has demarked the area it encompasses; each is determining the needs of the area; each is

implementing its plans in terms of the economic and financial situation in its region; each system is working so as not to impair the autonomy of the individual units within the region; each region is studying the means of maintaining continuous contact with other regions in order to facilitate the movement of resources and services.

The development of systems in New York State has been a consciousness-raising experience. It has been an attempt to break through traditional jurisdictional boundaries; it has been an attempt to identify resources wherever they may be located; it has led to efforts to introduce in-person access to academic and special libraries whose communities have in the past been inaccessible; it has been an attempt to fully utilize the resources of libraries throughout the State.

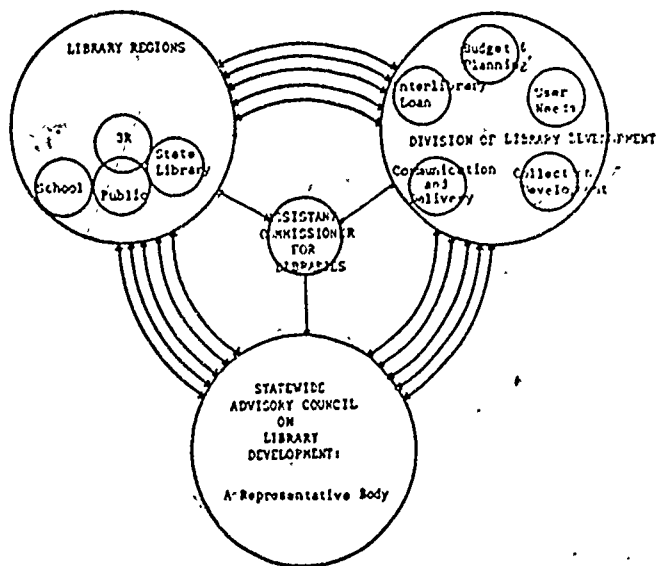
Each library has probably unconsciously acted in accordance with Louis Mumford's definition of regionalism, cultivate whatever you have, no matter how poor it is . . . at least it is your own; seek elsewhere for what you do not possess . . . absorb whatever is good, wherever it may be found and make it your own.

Finally, the key to developing regionalism is multi-directional communication. Figure 3 illustrates regional communication patterns which may be developing in New York State. The regions within the State (3R, public library systems, schools, and the State Library) relate to one another and communicate with one another. On a statewide basis, in order to respond to the homologous structure of libraries and in order to create a statewide network and to better communicate with the regions, an

administration unit at the State level could be most responsive if divided by function -- i.e., a resource section, a collection development section, an interlibrary loan section, a communication and delivery section, and finally a budget and planning section. The regions and the State level administrative units could then coordinate their plans and thoughts through a Statewide Advisory Council on Library Development composed of representatives from each of the regions. All could then report to the Assistant Commissioner for Libraries.

Fig. 3

COMMUNICATION PATTERNS FOR  
LIBRARIES IN NEW YORK STATE:  
A POINT OF VIEW



In closing, it became quite apparent during this conference that every speaker was explaining the system or network that was either in operation or that could be developed. However, Mr. Trezza, whose presentation on the activities of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science was dynamic, interesting and provocative, managed to stimulate the flow of my adrenalin when he implied that New York State is standing still and is no longer the state where the action is. He even suggested, and why not-- that Illinois is outdistancing the State of New York. As a patriotic New Yorker, as well as a most enthusiastic supporter and observer of system development in Illinois (I read Illinois Libraries, although I cannot quote chapter and verse), I would like to suggest that perhaps Illinois is just catching up to New York State's development in 1965. I would also like to suggest that perhaps the development of library systems and networks in New York State may be encountering problems and that the forces which propelled this State forward are now meeting other forces which are hindering its progress. Some of these forces are economic others are management. New York State, however, is only temporarily quagmired. It is stopping only to catch its second breath in order to run the next lap.