

Assembly Bill No. 1723

CHAPTER 654

An act to amend Section 19325 of, and to add Section 19325.1 to, the Education Code, relating to the State Library, and making an appropriation therefor.

[Approved by Governor October 9, 2001. Filed with Secretary of State October 10, 2001.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1723, Committee on Utilities and Commerce. State Library: telephonic reading systems.

Existing law authorizes the State Librarian to provide toll-free telephone services for registered patrons of the federally designated regional libraries for the blind and physically handicapped in order to enable those persons to have direct patron access to library services.

This bill would authorize the State Librarian to provide toll-free telephone access to telephonic reading systems for individuals with print disabilities who are registered patrons of the federally designated regional libraries for the blind and physically handicapped. The bill would authorize the State Librarian to operate a telephonic reading system, as defined, or fund the operation of telephonic reading systems operated by qualifying entities, as defined. The bill would appropriate \$830,000 from the California Teleconnect Fund Administrative Committee Fund to the California State Library to fund the 7 existing telephonic reading centers in specified cities, until July 1, 2002. The bill would require that any funds appropriated to the California State Library under the bill, which are not encumbered on or before July 1, 2002, revert to the fund.

The bill would make related findings and declarations.

Appropriation: yes.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Thousands of California citizens have disabilities that prevent them from directly accessing conventional print material due to visual impairments, dyslexia, and orthopedic disabilities, which prevent the physical manipulation of print materials.

(b) For decades there have been governmental and nonprofit organizations dedicated to providing access to reading materials on a



wide variety of subjects by way of Braille, large print, or audio tape recordings.

(c) Access to time-sensitive or local or regional publications, or both, is not feasible to produce through these traditional means and formats.

(d) Lack of direct and prompt access to these materials, such as newspapers, magazines, newsletters, broadcast media schedules, and other time-sensitive materials has a detrimental effect on the educational opportunities, literacy, and opportunity for full participation in governmental and community forums by people with print disabilities.

(e) The California State Library, through the leadership of State Librarian Dr. Kevin Starr, has caused to be established in five locations throughout California high technology systems that provide access to previously inaccessible material by use of a standard telephone.

(f) These telephonic reading systems are currently underutilized because they are capable of serving many more people than can call without incurring long distance telephone charges.

(g) It is not cost-effective to establish the hundreds of locations necessary to give print disabled Californians local telephone call access to those locations.

(h) Toll-free access to current and future telephonic reading systems operated by governmental or nonprofit organizations in California will provide meaningful access to this important print material for all Californians with print disabilities.

SEC. 2. This bill may be known and shall be cited as the Kevin Starr Access to Information Act of 2001.

SEC. 3. Section 19325 of the Education Code is amended to read:
19325. The State Librarian may provide the following:

(a) Toll-free telephone services for registered patrons of the federally designated regional libraries for the blind and physically handicapped, in order to enable those persons to have direct patron access to library services.

(b) Toll-free telephone access to telephonic reading systems for individuals with print disabilities who are registered patrons of the federally designated regional libraries for the blind and physically handicapped.

SEC. 4. Section 19325.1 is added to the Education Code, to read:

19325.1. (a) The State Librarian may operate a telephonic reading system, fund the operation of telephonic reading systems operated by qualifying entities, or both.

(b) As used in this section, the following terms have the following meanings, unless otherwise indicated:

(1) "Telephonic reading system" means a system operated by the State Librarian or a qualifying entity, whereby a caller can hear the reading of



material such as newspapers, magazines, newsletters, broadcast media schedules, transit route and schedule information, and other reference or time-sensitive materials, as determined by the operator of the system.

(2) “Qualifying entity” means any agency, instrumentality, or political subdivision of the state or any nonprofit organization whose primary mission is to provide services to people who are blind or visually impaired.

(c) Qualifying entities that were eligible, as of January 1, 2001, to receive funds from the State Librarian relating to the operation of a telephonic reading system may continue to receive funding from the State Librarian.

(d) The State Librarian, in cooperation with qualifying entities, may expand the type and scope of materials available on telephonic reading systems in order to meet the local, regional, or foreign language needs of print-disabled residents of this state. The State Librarian may also expand the scope of services and availability of telephonic reading services by current methods and technologies or by methods and technologies that may be developed. The State Librarian may inform current and potential patrons of the availability of telephonic reading service through appropriate means, including, but not limited to, direct mailings, direct telephonic contact, and public service announcements.

(f) The State Librarian may enter into contracts or other agreements that he or she determines to be appropriate to provide telephonic reading services pursuant to this section.

SEC. 5. The sum of eight hundred thirty thousand dollars (\$830,000) is hereby appropriated from the California Teleconnect Fund Administrative Committee Fund to the California State Library to fund the seven existing telephonic reading centers in Los Angeles, San Diego, Fresno, San Francisco, and Sacramento until July 1, 2002. Any funds appropriated to the California State Library pursuant to this section, which are not encumbered on or before July 1, 2002, shall revert to the California Teleconnect Fund Administrative Committee Fund.

