

In his opening address to the Second National ACRL Conference in Minneapolis on October 1, Dr. Thomas Melady, Assistant Secretary for Post-Secondary Education in the Department of Education, said that one of the Department's major initiatives would be the work of the newly-established National Commission on Excellence in Education. Appointed by Secretary Terrel Bell as a response to the perceived decline in the quality of American education, the members of the commission will recommend ways to improve the achievement of students in schools, colleges and universities. Melady urged librarians to participate in the hearings the commission will conduct across the country.

The commission's responsibilities include conducting a literature and data review and synthesis, comparing the education systems of several advanced countries with the U.S., studying the effect of postsecondary admission standards and course requirements on high school curricula and achievement, identifying secondary schools whose students do exceptionally well in college as well as colleges and universities which hold to high admissions standards and have worked with high schools, reviewing relevant changes in American education and society during the past quarter century, and holding hearings and receiving testimony and expert advice.

Although the need for library resources and the role of library skills in improving the quality of education are not mentioned, these would be very appropriate points for librarians to make at public hearings or in written testimony. The ALA Washington Office will continue to inform the library community of opportunities to provide input to the commission. In the meantime, academic librarians who are acquainted with or located at the home institutions of members of the commission may want to get in touch with them. A list of members follows:

David P. Gardner, President, University of Utah (chair);  
Yvonne W. Larsen, President, San Diego Unified School District Board of Education (vice-chair);  
William O. Baker, retired chairman of Bell Telephone Laboratories; member of the board, Council on Library Resources;  
Anne Campbell, Commissioner of Education for Nebraska;  
Emeral A. Crosby, Principal, Northern High School, Detroit;  
Charles A. Foster, Jr., President, Foundation for Teaching Economics, San Francisco;  
Norman C. Francis, President, Xavier University, New Orleans;  
A. Bartlett Giamatti, President, Yale University;  
Shirley Gordon, President, Highline Community College, Midway, Washington;  
Robert V. Haderlein, President, National School Boards Association;  
Gerald Holton, Professor of Physics and History of Science, Harvard;  
Annette Y. Kirk, former high school teacher, Mecosta County, Michigan;  
Margaret S. Marston, member, Virginia State Board of Education;  
Albert H. Quie, Governor of Minnesota;  
Francisco D. Sanchez, Jr., superintendent, Albuquerque Public Schools;  
Glenn T. Seaborg, Chemistry Professor, University of California, Berkeley;  
Jay Sommer, foreign language teacher, New Rochelle, New York;  
Richard Wallace, principal, Lutheran High School East, Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

At the commission's first meeting, October 9-10, it was obvious that their work ranked very high on Secretary Bell's priority list. He expects the commission to complete its task and make its report to appropriate officials at the end of its 18-month lifespan, regardless of the fate of the Department of Education in the meantime.