



Joint Letter in Support of LC FY2003 Budget Request

**American Library Association
Association of Research Libraries
American Association of Law Libraries**

April 24, 2002

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Subcommittee on Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
SD-115 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin:

On behalf of the American Library Association (ALA), the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), and the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), we write in support of the FY2003 budget request of the Library of Congress. Collectively, these three associations represent thousands of individuals and institutions serving communities throughout the nation. ALA is a nonprofit educational organization of 61,000 librarians, library trustees, and other friends of libraries dedicated to improving library services and promoting a free and open information society. AALL is a nonprofit educational organization with 5,000 members dedicated to providing leadership and advocacy in the field of legal information and information policy. ARL is an Association of 123 research libraries in North America. ARL programs and services promote equitable access to recorded knowledge in support of teaching, research, scholarship, and community service.

Digital resources are growing at a phenomenal pace. Libraries actively promote and invest in network-based programs and services to ensure that all segments of society have access to digital resources and that these information resources are available to future generations. It is crucial to strengthen key institutions in this rapidly changing information-based economy.

The Library of Congress budget request of \$572.7 million with \$36.6 million in authority to use receipts will enhance the Library's ability to effectively maintain ongoing operational activities while tackling key issues posed by the digital environment. Four major initiatives merit special consideration and the support of the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch. These include digital initiatives, preservation activities, the Law Library of Congress, and the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

Digital Initiatives

The Library is requesting \$12,900,000 to support the National Digital Library. Distinct from the FY 2001 funding to tackle long-term preservation strategies of "born" digital materials on a national basis, these funds would support the Library's digitally based programs. These would include developing a digital-repository architecture for the Library's holdings, technological infrastructure to support the Library's digital activities, and enhanced access services. All libraries are investing in comparable initiatives to fully realize the benefits of the networked environment and this request merits the Subcommittee's support.

Access, Preservation, and Security

We face a significant preservation challenge – how to address the fragility of our printed past and the volatility of the electronic future. To preserve the past, libraries have established collaborative programs to treat millions of books and other materials, most of which are becoming unreadable due to the acidic paper on which they are printed. This is truly a national crisis and our response must be sustained over many years, utilizing different approaches to preserving these invaluable printed resources. The Library of Congress Mass Deacidification Program has, over several years, successfully deacidified thousands of books. This process, one of many employed by the library community to tackle this enormous and critical problem, extends the life of brittle books significantly, permitting their use for at least another 300-800 years. The FY 2003 request by the Library of Congress represents a planned increase for the Program. This proposal is part of a thirty-year plan to deacidify all older books as well as new, acidic acquisitions.

Law Library

The Law Library of Congress is the world's largest collection of United States federal and state, international, comparative and foreign legal documents, covering over 200 jurisdictions. The Law Library provides legal and legislative reference and collection services to Congress, the Judicial and Executive branches of government, and to the American public. With an exceptionally skilled staff competent in most foreign languages and international law and legal systems of the world, the Law Library serves thousands of users each year and, in addition, a rapidly increasing number of remote users through its web site and its unique digital collections. We urge your full support for the Law Library's FY 2003 budget request that includes a program increase to \$3,063,000. These additional funds would be targeted to expand contract support for important collections maintenance functions and to continue the Law Library's successful digitization efforts such as the Global Legal Information Network.

National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) is a critically important service to the Nation. This national library service provides recorded and braille materials to blind and physically handicapped persons throughout the United States. Millions of audio and braille books are borrowed annually. The network of libraries also serves as distribution points for specialized playback equipment and accessories. The request of \$1,954,000 for mandatory pay and price level increases would provide needed additional support for this important service and also allow for the evaluation of alternative digital delivery mechanisms.

In conclusion, it is important to ensure that the public benefits from our Nation's cultural resources as well as from the global resources that the Library acquires. Funding to assist the Library in strengthening its infrastructure as well as targeted new initiatives focused on long-term preservation and access are key elements in meeting this goal. We look forward to working with members of the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch and very much appreciate your continuing support for the Library and its programs.

Sincerely,

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Association of Research Libraries

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