

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

April 22, 2003

The Honorable Jack Kingston
Chairman
Subcommittee on Legislative
Committee on Appropriations
H-147 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-6025

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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 fiscal year 2004 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 124 research libraries in North America. ARL's programs and services promote equitable access to and effective use of recorded knowledge in support of teaching, research, scholarship, and community service.

The Library of Congress budget request of \$576,600,000 with \$36,500,000 in authority to use receipts will enhance the Library's ability to effectively maintain ongoing operational activities while tackling key concerns related to the explosive growth of the digital environment. Several major initiatives merit special consideration and the support of the Subcommittee on Legislative, Committee on Appropriations. These include the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program (NDIIPP), Mass Deacidification efforts, the Law Library of Congress, funds to reduce cataloging arrearages, the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, and the National Film Preservation Foundation (NFPF).

Digital resources are growing at a phenomenal pace. Libraries throughout the United States 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.

ALA, ARL, and AALL strongly support the mission of the NDIIPP to develop a national strategy to collect, archive, catalog, and preserve the rapidly increasing amount of digital content for current and future generations, especially materials that are created only in digital formats. Libraries throughout the United States are investing in

comparable initiatives, thus cooperation among institutions will be fundamental to the success of these endeavors.

To preserve the past, libraries have established collaborative programs to protect 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 efforts have, 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 2004 request of \$919,000 represents the fourth increment of a five-year \$18,000,000 initiative to preserve one million endangered books and five million manuscript pages through 2005.

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. AALL, ARL, and ALA urge your full support for the Law Library's FY 2004 budget request of \$360,000. This includes a permanent increase of \$310,000 to purchase new monographs and serial titles in a variety of jurisdictions that the Law Library has not been able to acquire under its current budget.

The library associations support the request for additional funds and personnel to reduce the number of uncataloged items in the Library. The Library of Congress, in collaboration with others in the library community, continues to reduce the volume of unprocessed materials. Cooperative cataloging programs allow all libraries to share records, thus reducing the workload of and cost to all institutions. For example, in FY 2002 there were 47.8 million records in the OCLC online union catalog, WorldCat. Of these, libraries contributed 2.3 million new records, and the Library of Congress contributed 300,000, or 13%, of the records cataloged. In addition, the Library of Congress enhanced 100,000 records, building on other libraries' original cataloging in order to meet Library of Congress standards.

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 a distribution point for specialized playback equipment and accessories. The Library's request that Congress restore \$1,000,000, offset by the decrease for a one-time payment to the National Federation of the Blind, would provide critical support for this important service and also allow for the evaluation of alternative digital delivery mechanisms.

Finally, authorization of the National Film Preservation Foundation (NFPF) and the National Film Preservation Board (NFPB) expires in October 2003. We support the Library of Congress' request for reauthorization of base funding and an increase of \$250,000 in FY 2004 for a total request of \$750,000. The NFPF, a nonprofit foundation created by the U.S. Congress in 1997, has been instrumental in preserving the Nation's film heritage by securing matching private sector grants. The NFPF supports initiatives at the Nation's libraries that preserve American films and improve access to film for study, education, and exhibition.

Funding to assist the Library in its long-term preservation and access initiatives is critical to ensuring that the American public benefits from our Nation's cultural resources as well as from the Library's global resources. ARL, AALL, and ALA look forward to working with members of the Subcommittee on Legislative and very much appreciate the Subcommittee's continued support for the Library of Congress and its programs.

Sincerely,

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