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Chairman Henry Bonilla  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-6026

Dear Chairman Bonilla,

On behalf of the American Library Association (ALA) and the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), we write in strong support of the President's FY 2007 budget request for the National Agricultural Library (NAL). We greatly appreciate your past generosity to NAL and ask you to support the FY 2007 budget request of \$26.5 million, a \$4.2 million increase for NAL. This constitutes the largest appropriations increase in two decades for NAL and it is especially critical if NAL is to maintain its leadership in the provision of long-term preservation and access to agricultural information and literature.

Since 1862, NAL has actively provided agricultural information to researchers, educators, policymakers, consumers of agricultural products, and the public. The Library is the world's largest agricultural research library and plays a vital role in supporting research, education, and applied agriculture. Moreover, it offers specialized services in such areas as: alternative farming; animal welfare; food and nutrition; food safety; invasive species; and water quality.

The President's FY 2007 budget request for NAL will allow it to continue to serve as the Nation's premier provider of agricultural information by expanding its capabilities, programs, collections and services. Specifically, this request will allow NAL to devote critical resources to develop and deliver content for a National Digital Library for Agriculture (NDLA). Establishing a NDLA is vital to ensure that agricultural information will continue to be readily and conveniently available to the public in this increasingly digital world. The development of a digital library would operate as a central hub to gather knowledge and exchange ideas within the American agricultural community, increase collaboration with U.S. Agricultural Information Network (AgNIC) and improve access to the non-digital publications in the NAL collection through digital reformatting of 15,000 core document images for Web access by the public.

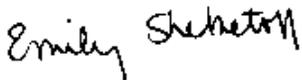
The requested appropriation will allow NAL to develop the necessary collaborative partnerships with selected university research libraries offering strong programs in the agricultural and related sciences. U.S. research libraries and members of the agricultural community depend on NAL for a diverse array of information resources. For example, NAL acquires, preserves and manages information and services in agricultural and allied sciences; organizes agricultural information by cataloging, indexing, and making it readily available; and cooperates with public and private agricultural industries and programs to manage a comprehensive information network. It is clear

that NAL provides critically important support to public and private sector organizations, institutions of higher education, libraries, and members of the public.

AGRICOLA, NAL's rapidly expanding bibliographic database of more than four million records and the chief resource for agricultural information, has been available free of charge via the NAL website since 1998. This resource has served as an invaluable tool in keeping members of the agricultural community connected and informed. The President's FY 2007 budget request would integrate the AGRICOLA Database with other NAL information products and services. This will enhance the volume and quality of the information services provided to NAL users, and lead to improved agriculture research, decision-making and policy development.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of NAL's FY 2007 budget request and your continued support and commitment to the Library. NAL's information, services, and programs are vital to the success of the agricultural community, the general public and our economy. As always, we look forward to working with you and the Subcommittee.

Sincerely,



Emily Sheketoff  
Executive Director  
Washington Office  
American Library Association



Prudence S. Adler  
Associate Executive Director  
Association of Research Libraries