

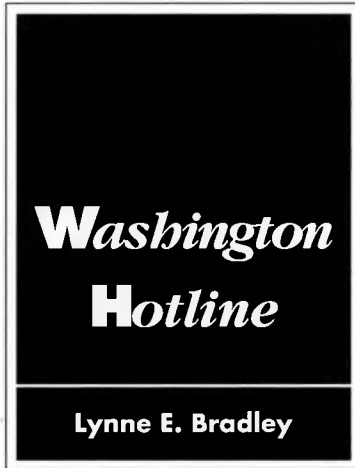
## Academic libraries and the 105th Congress (cont.)

Last month this column covered renewed initiatives on intellectual property and the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA)—critical legislative issues important to academic libraries during the 105th Congress. Other issues will include access to government information and development of Internet II and the Next Generation Internet (NGI).

**Access to government information.** The debate on access to government information and the transition to all electronic formats will inevitably continue in the 105th Congress. Initiatives to revise the major laws related to public access to government information through the Depository Library program (revision of "Title 44") have great impact on academic libraries since more than half of all depository libraries are in academic libraries.

**Internet II and Next Generation Internet.** There have been many policy concerns directed to the limitations and strains on the current Internet. Three related developments may bring increased congressional attention during this next Congress. 1) A number of research universities have announced the formation of a consortium to develop and implement "Internet II." The new system will be a greatly enhanced Internet, in terms of speed (roughly 200 times the speed of the current system) with new capabilities and embedded services. 2) The National Science Foundation (NSF) has announced the expansion and redirection of its vBNS (very high speed backbone network services) program. Originally conceived as a platform strictly for research on high-speed data transport, NSF's program will now support the connection of up to 100 universities and research laboratories to a set of advanced network services. 3) A "Next Generation Internet" (NGI) announcement was made by President Clinton.

While still in the planning stage, the initiative will have two parts: a research program focused on the near term development of very high speed infrastructure and associated ser-



vices, and a longer term research program exploring ultra high speed data networks (loosely defined as networks with 1,000 times the speed and capacity of the current Internet). The three efforts are clearly closely related, although precisely how they will evolve is still under discussion. ALA will monitor the NGI program development in the executive branch and legislative interest as it

evolves and work with ACRL on this issue.

## Opportunities for advocacy and getting involved

A "Legislative Update" is sponsored by the ALA Committee on Legislation (COL) at each ALA Annual Conference and Midwinter Meeting (usually the Saturday morning of each conference). This is an excellent opportunity to hear from congressional staffers and library supporters about the status of key legislative issues at the federal level and how library advocates can be involved. There are also numerous opportunities for academic librarians to participate in library advocacy training at ALA conferences and other state library association/affiliate meetings. The ACRL Government Relations Committee is involved with these activities and is an excellent resource for academic librarians.

Academic librarians are also strongly encouraged to participate in the annual Library Legislative Days held each spring in Washington, D.C. The next National Library Legislative Day will be May 5–6, 1997. Contact Legislative Day coordinators in the state library associations to find out more about how particular states are organizing their delegations. See also the Legislative Day Web page at <http://www.ala.org/washoff/legday.html>.

Through these and other activities we look forward to our continuing work with ACRL members during the 105th Congress. It will be a very busy session. ■

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*Lynne E. Bradley is deputy executive director of ALA's Washington Office; e-mail: [leb@alawash.org](mailto:leb@alawash.org); (800) 941-8478.*

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