NREN Policy Workshop

ALA, represented by the author of this column, participated in a policy workshop on the National Research and Education Network (NREN) designed to explore the issues surrounding six questions in the High Performance Computing Act of 1991 (HPCA) on which Congress requested a report. The workshop, held in Monterey, California, on September 16–18, 1992, received support from the National Science Foundation. It was sponsored by the Institute for Electrical Engineering and Electronics (IEEE) U.S. Activities Board, EDUCOM, and the Computing Research Association.

Washington Hotline

Carol C. Henderson

More than 80 attendees including representatives from higher education, the library community, the computing industry, federal agencies, telecommunications companies, network service providers, and K-12 education, met for two days to review the congressional questions and other key issues in the evolution of the NREN. The 225-page *Proceedings of the NREN Workshop* was presented to the Office of Science and Technology Policy to assist it in developing the report on the following questions requested in the HPCA (PL 102-194):

1) effective mechanisms for providing operating funds for maintenance and use of the Network, including user fees, industry support, and continued Federal investment;

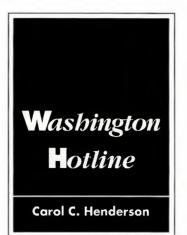2) the future operation and evolution of the Network;

3) how commercial information service providers could be charged for access to the Network and how Network users could be charged for such commercial information services;

4) the technological feasibility of allowing commercial information service providers to use the Network and other federally funded research networks;

5) how to protect the copyrights of material distributed over the Network;

6) appropriate policies to ensure the security of resources available on the Network and to protect the privacy of users of networks.

The report highlights the key policy issues discussed at the workshop and includes copies of the 18 position papers submitted. Because of the wide range of knowledgeable attendees, the workshop and report provide a unique opportunity for significant discussion of the policy issues which will affect the development of the NREN, and eventually, the national information infrastructure. The report summarizes the discussions and key issues that will affect achievement of a congress intent to "promote the more rapid development of an information infrastructure."

Among the conclusions shared widely by the participants were that the NREN should be more than a program supporting high-performance computing. The NREN has the potential to facilitate development of the National Information Infrastructure; provide tools for increasing the effectiveness of research, education, and technology transfer at all levels; and demonstrate network applications and technologies which can aid in addressing critical social needs. Among the other possible congressional actions identified by workshop participants were establishment of a national commission to develop, with involved constituencies, a detailed NREN plan and program; inclusion of additional federal agencies in the NREN; creation of a public-sector governing body for the NREN; reaffirming and further defining the federal role in the development of the NREN system; and supporting NREN applications such as medical care and lifelong learning.

Background papers prepared by the author of this column for ALA and by Patricia Wand for ACRL are included in the *Proceedings*. The Association of Research Libraries, the Coalition for Networked Information, and the Library of Congress also prepared papers. Copies of the report are available through EDUCOM at $10 per copy by contacting Elizabeth Barnhart, EDUCOM—Networks, 1112 16th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036; phone: (202) 331-5342; fax: (202) 872-4318; e-mail: Barnhart@EDUCOM.EDU. ∎

Carol C. Henderson is deputy executive director of ALA's Washington Office; bitnet: NU_ALAWASH@CUA