

EPA Libraries Update

On February 6, 2007, ALA President Leslie Burger testified before the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, chaired by Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA), concerning the recent closure of several libraries in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Burger addressed the EPA's lack of openness with regard to digitizing its materials.

Without more detailed information about the EPA's digitization project, we cannot assess whether they are digitizing the most appropriate materials, whether there is appropriate metadata or cataloging to make sure that people can access the digitized materials, and that the technology that will be used to host the digital content and the indexing software meets today's standards.

This oversight hearing, the first in a series looking into EPA's recent actions, also featured testimony from EPA Director Stephen Johnson, who was grilled by Boxer for his lack of knowledge about the libraries. Boxer produced several e-mails concerning the disposal of library materials, and as she produced each one, slapped it down onto the podium. Johnson testified that he had no knowledge of these e-mails or of any directives for disposing of materials, aside from those that were duplicates. Boxer gave Johnson one month to respond to questions he wasn't willing or able to answer.

For more information, including Burger's full testimony, please visit www.ala.org/epalibraries. Pictures of the testimony are available on the ALA Washington Office Flickr page at www.flickr.com/photos/alawash.

FY 2007, 2008 budgets

In February, President Bush signed a bill that wraps up fiscal year (FY) 2007 appropriations. In January, the House of Representatives passed the joint funding resolution by a

vote of 286-140. On Wednesday, the Senate passed the resolution by a vote of 81-15. The resolution passed despite complaints from Republicans about being blocked from offering amendments.


Democratic leaders decided to package together the nine spending bills the 109th Congress was unable to pass and use FY 2006 numbers as a baseline for funding, with some exceptions. Several education and health programs received an increase, while some programs, such as the Library of Congress, faced a rescission. The resolution would allow \$463.5 billion to be spent for the remainder of FY 2007, which ends September 30, 2007. The Institute of Museum and Library Services will be level-funded at FY 2006 levels for the remainder of FY 2007.

Congress will now turn its attention to the FY 2008 budget. On February 5, President Bush released a \$2.9 trillion FY 2008 budget request that eliminates or sharply reduces 141 programs. While the administration requests a sharp increase in defense spending, it significantly reduces entitlement spending to meet the goal of balancing the budget by 2012.

Despite the extremely tight fiscal environment, where many programs are experiencing cuts in funding, the President's request for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) is \$226,182,000, an increase of \$15,585,000 over FY 2006 and an even bigger increase than LSTA would have received for FY 2007 if Congress had completed FY 2007 appropriations bills.

We will continue to provide information as we review the budget documents. This includes the budget for EPA libraries, for which we await word from EPA.

Given the budget difficulties, members are urged to contact the White House to thank the administration for its continued support and commitment to our nation's libraries. You may call the White House at (202) 456-1111.

For more information, please visit ALA Washington Office's Web site at www.ala.org/washoff. 

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