

ALA actively opposes NSA surveillance

In response to June revelations on the National Security Agency's (NSA) secret surveillance practices, ALA has called on Congress to provide more accountability and transparency about how the government is obtaining and using vast amounts of information on innocent people. In July, ALA launched "ALA Liberty," a new privacy Web site that contains tools that librarians can use to host educational sessions and public forums that help Americans understand their First and Fourth Amendment rights. ALA has joined an unprecedented coalition of Internet companies and advocates—such as Apple, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, the Center for Democracy and Technology, Facebook, and Twitter—to demand greater transparency around national security surveillance of Internet and telephone communications. In late July, ALA urged library advocates to support the Amash amendment, a bill that would have stopped funding NSA's warrantless surveillance programs as part of the Defense Appropriations bill. The amendment failed in the House 205-217.

Bestselling authors call for library e-book lending

In June, ALA announced the launch of "Authors for Library Ebooks," a new initiative that asks authors to stand with libraries in their quest for equitable access to e-books. "Authors for Library Ebooks" represents an extension of ALA's advocacy strategy to ensure all people have access to the world's knowledge and literature through our nation's libraries—regardless of format. Over the past 18 months, ALA leaders have met with major publishers, distributors, authors, and representative associations to seek sustainable solutions for library e-book lending. Developed by ALA's Digital Content and Libraries Working Group,

the Authors for Library E-books campaign encourages authors to sign on to a statement of shared values, to discuss the issue with their publishers, and to raise awareness of their concerns through their Web sites, social media, and other communications channels.

WIPO passes the Treaty for the Blind

In June, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Assembly made history by passing the "Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works by Visually Impaired and Persons with Print Disabilities" (the "Treaty for the Blind"). By passing what is an exception to copyright, WIPO demonstrated that there is international support for balance in copyright law. In the last day of negotiations, WIPO delegations reached consensus on a number of issues, including the three step test, the use of technological protection measures, and fair use and fair dealing as stakeholders made numerous concessions. By all accounts, however, when the treaty goes into effect, nations with exceptions for the disabled will be able to share accessible content across borders. Libraries will be considered "authorized agencies" that can make accessible copies without the prior permission of the rights holder.

E-rate moves forward

E-rate, the federal program that provides hundreds of millions of dollars to the library community each year, is undergoing a revamp. The Federal Communications Commission will consider a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to modernize the e-rate program to support high-speed broadband for digital learning technologies. In July, Maine State Librarian Linda Lord called for a "proactive vision for meeting the educational and learning needs of our communities for the next 15 years and beyond" at a hearing of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. Lord touted the success of the e-rate program in helping connect nearly 100 percent of libraries to serve more than 30 million people every week. *ZZ*

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