

April 4, 2008

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Chair, Subcommittee on Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
Room H-147, Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz:

This letter is submitted on behalf of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), the American Library Association (ALA), and the National Humanities Alliance (NHA), in support of the fiscal year (FY) 2009 budget request of \$645.8 million for the Library of Congress. We are concerned about the impact of tight funding, and urge the Subcommittee to support full funding of this request as a necessary investment in one of the nation's greatest intellectual resources.

Full funding is needed to allow the Library to continue all of its ongoing operational activities. The activities that we address below are critical to the American public. The benefits of these services reach far and wide to researchers, college as well as K-12 students, person with special needs, and scholars of all types across the Nation and, even, the world. This letter addresses four of these key activities: Preservation & Access, Collections & Services, Acquisitions & Bibliographic Control, Outreach & Public Programs, and Scholarly Research.

Preservation & Access

NDIPP

ARL, ALA, and NHA support the mission of the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program (NDIPP) to develop a national strategy to collect, archive, catalog, and preserve the rapidly increasing amount of digital content for current and future generations, especially materials that are created only in digital formats. Libraries throughout the United States are investing in comparable initiatives, thus cooperation among institutions will be fundamental to the success of these endeavors. The Library of Congress is seeking \$6 million to strengthen the NDIPP network and continue technical collaborations that are essential to expanding the network over time.

NAVCC

The National Audio-Visual Conservation Center (NAVCC) will serve as the central storage and conservation facility for the Library's audiovisual collections and will also be home to specialized preservation laboratories for audiovisual media. The FY 2009 budget request for this project is \$11.589 million.

NLS

In 1966, Congress authorized the Library of Congress' National Library Service (NLS) to provide services to the blind. Currently over 750,000 people rely on NLS for access to reading material. NLS is in the process of switching the talking books format and associated playback

equipment from four-track cassette tapes to digital (USB) flash memory cartridges. NLS estimates the cost of transition is \$76.4 million, over a four-year period, and the Library of Congress received only \$12.5 million of the \$19.1 million requested in FY 2008. We urge you to provide \$19.1 million in FY 2009. Anything less jeopardizes the successful transition to the USB technology and threatens access to information for the thousands of people across the country that must rely on this important resource.

Collections & Services

The Library of Congress is the largest and most comprehensive legislative and national library in the world. Area specialists and reference librarians provide critical reference services to users of the library by phone, Internet, and on-site assistance. The Humanities and Social Sciences Division provides valuable support for hundreds of scholars each year through regular seminars and orientation sessions for researchers. The Area Studies Divisions (including the African and Middle Eastern, Asian, European, and Hispanic divisions) as well as the Science, Technology and Business Division, employ expert staff to identify new acquisitions, respond to research requests, and develop finding aids for the collections. Special Collections and Services staff provide collection development and reference services, as well as bibliographic access for a broad array of holdings, including: manuscripts, rare books, prints, photographs, sound recordings, moving images, maps and atlases. Digital and Internet-based finding aids, exhibits, and classroom curricula increasingly enhance access to the Library's collections.

In FY 2006, more than one million items were circulated within the library, and reference librarians supported 633,396 direct reference inquiries (not including statistics for the Congressional Research Service or Preservation directorate). We are concerned that increasing pressures on the Library's general operating budget may limit access to Library specialists and reading rooms. The Library has requested a \$26.5 million increase for FY 2009 to maintain the current level of services, reflecting mandatory pay and price level increases. Requested funding supports 4,133 FTE's across all operations, a decrease of 58 FTE's below the current level.

Acquisitions and Bibliographic Control

In FY 2006, the Library of Congress added 286,717 titles to the collections. The Library's acquisitions and cataloging operations support the activities of public and private libraries across the country, as well as other federal government agencies, who rely on the Library's extensive expertise for their own cataloging and purchase decisions. We support full funding for these functions.

America's libraries have come to rely on the LC bibliographic services. As a consequence, we ask that the Subcommittee include the requirement that The Library of Congress consult in advance with the American library community and cooperate in any transitions, should there be any potential shifts or cutbacks in LC's bibliographic services. This is one way that the academic, public and school libraries can adjust to these changes and still assure appropriate access to their local library collections for the American public.

Non-US materials are also important. The Library of Congress manages a complex system of exchange agreements, dealer approval plans, and overseas offices to acquire, catalog, and preserve non-US titles for the Library of Congress. The Library's Cooperative Acquisitions Program enables other institutions to acquire materials for their own collections on a cost-recovery basis.

We are especially concerned that rising security costs and the weakness of the US dollar may force reduction of the Library's support for overseas offices and non-US acquisitions. It would be nearly impossible for individual institutions to reproduce the bibliographic, foreign language, and area expertise harnessed by the Library. In addition to general operations and staff support, the Library has requested a \$910 thousand base increase for Acquisitions in FY 2009 to help keep pace with increasing costs.

Outreach & Public Access

The Library of Congress hosts a broad array of activities that promote appreciation for books and reading, and provide broad access to the Library's collections to scholars, educators and the general public. Examples of notable outreach programs include the Center for the Book, the American Folklife Center and the National Book Festival.

The Center for the Book leverages the prestige and resources of the Library of Congress to stimulate public interest in books, reading, libraries and literacy and to encourage the study of books and the printed word. In partnership with a broad network of state affiliates, educational and civic organizations, the Center develops national reading promotion themes and campaigns disseminated in all fifty states and the District of Columbia. State centers for the book, which host a growing number of programs based on national and local themes, are based at a variety of institutions, including public libraries, universities and state humanities councils.

The American Folklife Center was created in 1976 by Congress to "preserve and present" the heritage of American folklife through programs of research, documentation, archival preservation, reference service, live performance, exhibition, publication, and training. The Folklife Center includes the Archive of Folk Culture, which is now one of the largest collections of ethnographic material from the United States and around the world. With a growing number of finding aids in print and online, lesson plans, classroom resources, and online collections, the Folklife Center is an important resource for teachers, scholars, and students across the country. Each year, the Center makes modest financial awards to scholars interested in working with ethnographic collection materials at the Library of Congress and for those individuals conducting fieldwork on topics related to the aims and scope of folklife research. The Veterans History Project, a multi-year effort to collect and archive the personal recollections of U.S. wartime veterans and home front civilians, was launched by the Folklife Center in 2000. The project represents the largest collection of its kind and is an important resource for participants, researchers, students of history and writers.

Organized and sponsored by the Library of Congress, the National Book Festival brings award-winning and nationally known authors, illustrators and poets to the National

Mall each year to promote and celebrate reading. Approximately 100,000 people gathered on the National Mall to celebrate the 2007 Festival. The Festival provides a vital national spotlight on the importance of literature and culture in our Nation's intellectual life.

Scholarly Programs

Through the Office of Scholarly Programs and the John W. Kluge Center, the Library of Congress supports scholars' use of the Library's holdings, outstanding multi-lingual collections of books and periodicals, and special collections of manuscripts, maps, music, films, recorded sound, prints and photographs. During FY 2006, the Library's Office of Scholarly Programs and the Kluge Center managed the activities of 23 gift funds, donated by a variety of individuals, organizations and foundations, including eight in the Poetry and Literature Center, for a total expenditure of nearly \$1.7 million. In the same year, the Office of Scholarly Programs sponsored more than forty events, such as symposia, lectures, book talks, and conferences, as well as talks by fellows and scholars on their particular areas of research.

The Office of Scholarly Programs manages a variety of fellowship programs for fellows and scholars and a major intellectual prize. The programs bring together senior scholars and postdoctoral fellows who come to Washington, D.C. to be in residence in the Kluge Center where they use the Library's collections, receive facilitated access to staff, and at the senior level, interact informally with lawmakers. Scholars and fellows present the results of their research to the public through special events and seminars. Many presentations are available over the Internet to constituencies all over the nation.

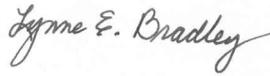
The Kluge Center collaborates with other scholarly organizations on conferences, summer institutes, and other activities reaching a broad range of the nation's scholars. For example, during most summers over nearly a decade the Library and the American Historical Association have offered one or more summer institutes at the Library for faculty and advanced graduate students of universities, colleges, or community colleges across the nation.

The Library's major prize, the Kluge Prize for Lifetime Achievement in the Human Sciences, was established in 2003 by the Kluge Endowment and is comparable in size to the Nobel prizes. The Kluge prize rewards a lifetime achievement in scholarship in a wide range of disciplines not covered by the Nobel, including history, philosophy, politics, anthropology, sociology, religion, criticism in the arts and humanities, and linguistics.

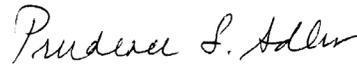
Summary

Funding to assist the Library of Congress in its long-term preservation of its tremendous collections, cataloging and bibliographic functions, and its initiatives in moving library services into the digital world make the Library of Congress a resource upon which all types of libraries rely on across the Nation and globally. We look forward to working with members of the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch, and we very much appreciate the Committee's continued support for the Library of Congress and its programs.

Sincerely,



Lynne Bradley
Director, Office of Government Relations
National Humanities Alliance



Prudence S. Adler
Associate Executive Director
Association of Research Libraries



Jessica Jones Irons
Executive Director
National Humanities Alliance

***The American Library Association** is the oldest and largest library association in the world, with more than 64,000 members. Its mission is “to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.*

***The Association of Research Libraries (ARL)** is a nonprofit organization of 123 research libraries in North America. ARL’s members include university libraries, public libraries, government and national libraries. ARL pursues its mission by advancing the goals of its member research libraries, providing leadership in public and information policy to the scholarly and higher education communities, fostering the exchange of ideas and expertise, and shaping a future environment that leverages its interests with those of allied organizations.*

***The National Humanities Alliance** is a coalition of 93 national, state and local organizations and institutions, dedicated to the advancement of education, research, preservation, and public programs in the humanities. Its members include: scholarly and professional associations; higher education associations; organizations of museums, libraries, historical societies and state humanities councils; university-based and independent humanities research centers; colleges and universities.*