

Statement of Dr. James Billington
The Librarian of Congress
before the
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Fiscal 2009 Budget Request
April 30, 2008

Madam Chair, Senator Alexander, and other Members of the Subcommittee:

It is an honor to be here to present the Library of Congress fiscal 2009 budget request. Madam Chair, I thank you for your continuing interest in the vision and goals of the Library. Senator Alexander, I want to welcome you to the Subcommittee and look forward to working with you and all the members of the Subcommittee.

We have submitted a very modest budget request for fiscal 2009, based on fiscal 2008 operating levels—levels that were achieved with deep and painful cuts to the Library's budget. The Library has requested a total fiscal 2009 budget of \$645.8 million, representing an increase of 5.3 percent over fiscal 2008. With this request, we have limited ourselves mainly to asking for funding to meet mandatory pay raises and unavoidable price-level increases, and a much smaller amount mainly to rescue from the brink of collapse the unique National Digital Information and Infrastructure Preservation Program (NDIIPP) that the Congress mandated and funded in 2001 for preserving the growing volume of valuable information and knowledge produced only in highly impermanent digital form.

The Congress of the United States has been the greatest patron of the library in the history of the world. We respect the understandable desire of the Congress for austerity in this year's budget request. And we respect the Congress's authority to limit and redirect funds within the Library's appropriations. But I feel obligated to say that if we are stretched much farther, we may soon reach a breaking point. We are extending the useful life of the technical infrastructure of the Library, but we cannot and should not put in jeopardy this important part of the information infrastructure of America in this information age.

This is a time of great promise for the Library. In all areas, digital technology is being used to transform the way we do our work and deliver services to Congress. Copyright's reengineering program, Library Services' digital acquisitions program, the Office of Strategic Initiatives' NDIIPP initiative, the National Library Service the Blind and Physically Handicapped Digital Talking Book program, and the Law Library's Global Legal Information Network are but a few examples of a broader institutional goal: to add digital content and services on top of traditional Library programs. The relatively modest increases we are requesting are almost all designed to sustain the progress we have been making in the digital transformation of our collections, services and internal

procedures. Our digital initiatives are not miscellaneous, unrelated activities; they are related pieces in transforming all Library functions for the future. The digital transformation will occur over several years and will require continuity of Congressional support. Beginning with our fiscal 2010 request, we will provide detailed advanced projections of what we will propose both to add and to reduce over the next few years in order to sustain our historic mission for the Congress and the nation at a time of revolutionary change in the generation and communication of knowledge.

The fiscal 2008 appropriation, including the across-the-board rescission, resulted in a 0.83 percent increase for the Library of Congress over the fiscal 2007 funding level. While total funding for fiscal 2008 included a \$12.5 million increase to support the Digital Talking Book program, the Congress reduced funding levels in several of the Library's other accounts, including a \$10 million reduction to the Copyright Office's no-year funding balance, a \$4 million general pay reduction, and more than \$5 million in targeted reductions to our Library Services program. In addition to these direct cuts, the Library has had to absorb roughly \$16 million in cost-of-living increases in fiscal 2007 and 2008.

We now have more than 1,000 fewer staff to do far more work than was done 20 years ago when I became Librarian and before we assumed the Herculean task—and national leadership we have achieved—of superimposing digital library collections and services on top of our continuing role as the world's largest and most diversified repository of analog materials (books, maps, movies, music, etc.). We already are having to begin cutting back on one of our most vital core missions: the comprehensive acquisition of information and knowledge that we alone collect and preserve for the nation's strategic information reserve. With difficulty and a focus on fiscal restraint, the Library's Executive Committee and I eliminated more than \$52 million in critical funding needs from this fiscal 2009 budget request, committing either to forgo or seek to fund internally those items or activities in fiscal 2009.

All service units within the Library have been affected by the austere budgets of fiscal 2007 and 2008, but two programs were affected severely:

Books for the Blind and Physically Handicapped Digital Talking Book Program

The Digital Talking Book Program (DTB) was funded at \$12.5 million, rather than our original request for a \$19.1 million increase, which means that our long-planned roll-out of the transition to a digital format for talking books and playback machines will be prolonged from four to six years. During the appropriations cycle, the Library made an appeal for \$15 million for the DTB program, but this appeal was rejected in light of budget austerity across the broader Legislative Branch.

Recognizing the very difficult budget environment that the Congress and the entire Federal government face, Library leadership accepted the necessity of managing the Digital Talking Book program at the current (fiscal 2008) funding level and over the

extended (six-year) transition period. Production of the playback machines is well underway, and digital books are being created, but the current funding level will, during this transition period, reduce the number of books on the shelf for blind readers, for whom we are the sole source of free reading material. The blind community continues to express its displeasure with the consequences of the lower funding level.

National Digital Information and Infrastructure Preservation Program (NDIIPP)

NDIIPP was founded and funded by the Congress in 2001 on the principle of shared stewardship and costs. The fiscal 2007 rescission of \$47 million from NDIIPP resulted in a total loss to the collaborative national digital preservation effort of \$84 million. We are living in an unprecedented period of unbounded creativity where important knowledge creation, legislative proceedings and political discourse are increasingly documented only in ephemeral digital formats. We cannot as a national cultural institution of the United States afford to walk away from our mission responsibility to save these valuable records for future generations. The rescission to NDIIPP forced us to reduce by 75 percent the commitments we had already made to our partners in fiscal 2007. The rescission to NDIIPP has taken away the means by which we can save more content, expand the joint stewardship network, and build out the necessary underlying technical infrastructure.

We have requested an increase of \$6 million in fiscal 2009 and have provided a five-year plan for keeping this program alive. Without these program funds, we will be forced to begin shutting down the joint stewardship program and walk away from shared stewardship and costs with our sustaining network partners. Absent this funding, we will be left only to voice our alarm at the risks of loss and remain on the sideline in hopes that others will have the means to save our digital cultural heritage records.

Collecting and preserving ephemeral digital content is essential if we are to continue serving the information needs of the Congress. This program is also important for validating our new way of doing business, by sharing ongoing costs and expertise with the network of NDIIPP partners we have built up in Florida, Iowa, California and Minnesota.

The Library has developed specific goals it will achieve during the next five years. The program has acquired 66 terabytes of at-risk digital content collected and preserved by its partners within a network of repositories. This is equivalent to the content in approximately 66 million books. It has developed a network of more than 130 partners in the content, technology, research, government, and business sectors across 25 states; 10 of these partners are federal agencies.

The NDIIPP partners have created, for free download, publicly available tools for preserving digital content. These tools make the life cycle management of at-risk content easier. Together with our partners, we have created, standardized, and shared the means to harvest content from the web, prepare content metadata, prepare content for long-term storage, and allow sharing and exchanging content across digital libraries.

During the next five years NDIIPP will increase by tenfold (to 650 terabytes) the digital content under national stewardship. It will create a National Alliance for Content Stewardship that reaches all 50 states. This alliance will establish a formal presence in every state to champion and catalyze digital preservation efforts and investments from the public and private sectors, and also construct the technical architecture necessary for storage of the 650 terabytes of content distributed across the partnerships.

Other than funding for mandatory pay and price-level increases and a \$6 million increase for the NDIIPP program, the Library has limited its fiscal 2009 program funding requests to \$5.8 million in order to maintain the services of our most critical programs. We have requested \$3 million to cover the increased assessment for the State Department Capital Security Cost-Sharing program to keep alive our all-important overseas offices; \$0.9 million for the final increment of a five-year adjustment for inflationary cost increases in the Library's Acquisitions Program; \$1.8 million to restore salary funding for staff operating the Packard Campus for Audio-Visual Conservation in Culpeper, Virginia; and \$156,000 for an additional staff member in the Library's Office of the Inspector General.

Library Services

Beginning in fiscal 2006, Library Services (LS) began realigning its base funding in order to meet new requirements and support needed innovation without requesting new funding from the Congress for such programs and activities as upgrading of its preservation research and testing lab; acquiring historically important special collections that should rightly be included in the national library; and refurbishing many of the Library's most heavily used public spaces.

With the reductions to the LS budget in fiscal 2007 and fiscal 2008, current funding levels no longer support many important programs and activities. For example, the Packard Campus preservation laboratories are not yet operational. Even though staff and collections have been moved to Culpeper, fully half of the capacity to preserve at-risk collections at the New Packard Campus for Audio-Visual Conservation cannot be realized.

LS has absorbed part of the fiscal 2008 cuts by delaying hiring. This has resulted in gaps in critical language and subject-matter expertise. It has also meant that important supervisory and managerial vacancies in LS remain open at a time when anticipated retirements are at an all-time high. The long-term effects of the budget reductions are significant. Salaries and benefits of critical new hires will be annualized in fiscal 2009. As a result, major preservation contracts for mass deacidification and binding, and collections management contracts that provide care and service of collections items, must be reduced. This directly affects the stewardship of the collections built over the past 200 years and their availability for future generations. Finally, the Library will be unable to acquire many special collections that are appropriate for the Library's collections.

Copyright

The Library's fiscal 2009 budget justification includes a net appropriation request of \$12.9 million to support the Copyright Office's core operations. Of this amount, \$10 million represents a request to restore funding the Congress temporarily reduced in the fiscal 2008 budget. The Congress directed the Copyright Office to use a no-year balance to fund normal operating expenses in fiscal 2008. As the balance of the no-year account will be depleted in fiscal 2008, the Copyright Office must have appropriated funding restored in order to maintain operations.

The total increase in net appropriations requested for the Copyright Office also includes \$1 million to support the implementation of the Copyright Records Preservation Project. This funding will remain in place for six years for digital imaging of pre-1978 public records, supporting at a very basic level the Copyright Office's preservation and access goals.

Congressional Research Service (CRS)

The CRS Director's testimony identifies four ways in which the Library's Congressional Research Service fulfills a unique niche for the Congress. First, CRS has experts in the worlds that Members and committees inhabit. They understand Congress as an institution, its work processes, Members' responsibilities, and legal and constitutional contexts. Second, the Service is in a unique position to analyze issues that arise from and are often dominated by the operations of executive agencies and their missions. Third, CRS is uniquely equipped to offer multi-disciplinary, analytic approaches to identifying relevant public-policy issues and to offer solutions to address them. The fourth is the Service's ability to rally and immediately offer support when the Congress is faced with an emergency or other unexpected major event.

Funding cuts and shortfalls in mandatory pay increases were mitigated by reducing the CRS staffing plan, deferring equipment purchases, and placing additional constraints on the acquisition of research materials. The plan for reducing FTE from 705 to 675 in the fiscal 2008 Operating Plan targets support functions to avoid any loss of direct research capacity. CRS has reduced equipment expenses by deferring or eliminating upgrades or replacement of IT and office equipment. Research material costs were lowered by reducing user access to electronic resources; canceling selective print titles; not purchasing new resources; and continuing to partner with Library Services to acquire public policy research materials.

Law Library

The Law Library of Congress has placed special emphasis on the content of the U.S. legal material in the Global Legal Information Network (GLIN) and THOMAS to incorporate all laws published in the United States Statutes-at-Large and all Congressional hearings. This will be expanded to include summaries and associated metadata for 100 U.S. treaties and other international agreements. The Law Library's

highest priority remains the need to re-classify books formerly categorized as “Law” into the K class in order to ensure a complete, current, and accessible law collection and provide timely responses to congressional requests for foreign legal law information. The Law Library has completed a comprehensive redesign of its public website and launched four RSS feeds thus far in fiscal 2008 that allow users to easily stay up-to-date with areas of interest by delivering news, such as the latest Research Report or issue of the Global Legal Monitor, to a desktop computer or other Internet device.

In response to fiscal 2008 funding shortfalls related to the rescission and unfunded mandatory pay increases, the Law Library has realigned base funding from contractual services and equipment accounts in order to absorb payroll costs and to support key staff who provide important services to the Congress. The impacts of these include the shortening of performance periods for contractual services necessary to perform core law collections maintenance services, elimination of contracts providing GLIN data development and program support, and scaling back technological enhancements to the Law Library Multi-Media Center.

Future Projects and Resource Needs

The Library’s budget formulation process highlighted other highly critical activities that support the Library’s customers, to increase the use of the Library’s digital resources to promote knowledge and better world understanding and increase use of Library resources to inform scholarly, educational, and public-policy discourse. However, we chose not to bring forward a number of these important activities as requests for funding in this budget.

The New Library of Congress Experience will give a greatly expanded number of visitors the opportunity to experience expanded exhibits and learn interactively from the breadth of our collections and knowledge of our curators and staff, all at the end of the passageway from the United States Capitol through the New Capitol Visitors Center. The journey will begin with a new orientation experience and travel through the Great Hall, as various new gallery spaces and educational content are delivered through state-of-the-art technology that will greatly enhance the in-person experience. To fulfill this journey, the Library will need to hire new specialized staff and create new systems, applications and interactive components to integrate and deliver complex technological services. In fiscal 2009, the Library will do what is possible with available resources and the significant private funds we have raised to implement these plans. However, given the scope of this effort, the Library will need to seek Congressional support for the New Library of Congress Experience in fiscal 2010.

Demand for online services, increased pressure on web services operations to enhance THOMAS, the World Digital Library (WDL), and the Legal Information Services (LIS) databases, and the need to develop new configurations and applications have severely strained technical assistance and infrastructure support provided by the Office of Strategic Initiatives (OSI) and Information Technology Services (ITS). Since 1995, THOMAS has provided free legislative information on the web. Our congressional

and public constituencies have for several years been requesting upgrades to both THOMAS and LIS to enhance content and searchability. Again, the Library will attempt to use the prioritizing tools of the Strategic Plan to address these demands with existing resources. However, the IT and digital demands on the Library will need support from the Congress in fiscal 2010 to sustain the Library's ability to provide services to the Congress and its constituents.

Conclusion

2008 will be an exciting year in which our outstanding, dedicated staff will be working to build a new constituency for the Congress's Library. We will transform with mostly private funding the public spaces of the Jefferson Building into a learning center for the large number of visitors who will be coming when the Capitol Visitors Center opens; we will begin operations in the magnificent new National Audio-Visual Conservation Center made possible by the unprecedented gift of more than \$150 million by the Packard Humanities Institute and funding from the Congress; and we will begin putting online, with the support of UNESCO and a number of other national libraries, a World Digital Library of primary cultural documents in seven languages.

Madam Chair, we recognize that difficult choices will continue to have to be made during this time of extraordinary budget constraints. But this Library is an essential part of our knowledge-based democracy. I ask for your support for our modest funding request for fiscal 2009 and look forward to working with this Committee to craft a budget for fiscal 2010 that will sustain the Library's historic mission of serving the Congress and the nation.