

Statement of Dr. James H. Billington
The Librarian of Congress
Before the
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Fiscal 2013 Budget Request
February 7, 2012

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Honda, Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to present the Library of Congress fiscal 2013 budget request.

The Congress of the United States has created and sustained its Library, the nation's library, for 212 years, through every period of our history. The Congress has viewed its Library – America's oldest federal cultural institution – as a unique institution of fundamental importance for our knowledge-based democracy. Mr. Chairman, all of us at the Library of Congress are deeply grateful for the support you give to this, the world's largest and most inclusive collection of recorded human knowledge and of America's cultural creativity.

The Library's mission is to support the Congress in fulfilling its constitutional duties and to further the progress of knowledge and creativity for the American people. Our fiscal request for 2013, Mr. Chairman, respects the need for budgetary austerity and asks for what is truly important for America in this information age.

We are seeking funding just to maintain current core services, adjusted for inflation, at the reduced fiscal 2012 level. We have asked for no program increases. The requested funding will allow the Library time to conclude the intensive IT and zero-base budget review, now underway, that was called for in the House Report for fiscal 2012. Over the next year, the results of the review will inform our decisions on resource allocation that are necessary in order to preserve and enhance priority mission functions within smaller budgets.

In fiscal 2011, we were able to continue these services with reduced resources. We

- Responded to more than 763,000 congressional research requests, delivering to the Congress more than one million research products and approximately 30,000 items directly from the Library's collections.
- Registered more than 670,000 claims to copyright.
- Provided reference services to more than half a million individual users;
- Led a nationwide effort with more than 19,000 teachers throughout the country to advance K-12 students' understanding of American history and culture by providing 20 million primary documents from our collections online free of charge.

- Circulated more than 25 million items to more than 800,000 blind and physically handicapped Americans.
- Gave state-of-the-art preservation treatment to 10.7 million items in the collections; and
- Welcomed nearly 1.7 million visitors to our exhibits and public facilities here on Capitol Hill.

In response to the appropriations reductions in fiscal 2012, and in an effort to absorb the reductions without damaging the Library's mission critical programs, we offered a voluntary separation incentive program, accepting early retirement for 186 staff – which nonetheless meant losing institutional memory in some highly specialized areas of research and curation.

As a result of the fiscal 2012 reductions:

The Congressional Research Service eliminated 40 positions and decreased its investments in information technology, research materials, and professional development activities. With fewer resources, we are increasingly challenged both to maintain the quality and timeliness of response that characterize CRS work and to ensure coverage of all issues for the Congress.

The Copyright Office made significant cutbacks in its information technology budget and reduced or delayed hiring, because receipts were lower than expected and because appropriated funding was reduced. As a result, critical upgrades to the electronic registration service that directly supports copyright commerce will take a longer period of time to put in place and raise concern about a potential new backlog in copyright claims processing, adversely affecting both authors and users of copyrighted materials.

The Law Library lost four key positions (including a senior foreign law specialist for Canada) and is concerned about sustaining its historic ability both to recruit expert foreign legal specialists for important jurisdictions and to acquire current and new foreign legal and legislative material needed to respond to congressional requests.

Library Services lost 50 staff in the Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access Directorate alone – the most basic of the Library's services – along with other reference and public service staff. Budget reductions in fiscal 2012 have led to the postponement of purchasing switches and routers needed to archive video of Senate floor proceedings and have delayed installation of compact shelving at the Packard Campus facility.

For the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, unless \$6 million in no-year funds for playback machines can be reprogrammed to allow the purchase of content media cartridges, the shortage of funds for flash cartridges will disrupt the Digital Talking Book program production cycle, and could dramatically affect the delivery of digital books and magazines to patrons and slow the analog-to-digital conversion of retrospective titles.

I have listed some of the impacts, but there has also been an important strategic bright spot amid the practical difficulties posed by our current budget environment: it has encouraged the entire Library to work better together in pursuit of Library-wide strategies. We have made major strides in improving the Library's Web presence in a unified effort that has brought together resources and expertise from across the Library. We are in the process of making robust structural changes that will more fully integrate our digital and analog resources.

I also want to make special mention again of our need for funding in the Architect of the Capitol's budget for Module 5 at Ft. Meade. This is an essential element of our increasingly pressing collections management and access requirements.

Our fiscal 2013 request is, in essence, a petition not to deepen the reductions in the Library's budget and put our core services at greater risk. Reductions have already cut deep into the Library's muscle. We ask that they not be allowed to cut into bone.

Mr. Chairman, the Congress of the United States has been the greatest patron of a library in human history. Each year, its Library is privileged to serve directly every member of Congress, every congressional committee, and millions of Americans, often in ways that would otherwise be unavailable to them. We want to continue these services. We, as a nation, need this institution, which serves as the sole keeper of both the mint record of America's copyrighted creativity and of the world's greatest repository of preserved and curated knowledge.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Honda, and Members of the Subcommittee, I thank you again for your support of the Library and for your consideration of our fiscal 2013 request.