



Council on
Library and
Information
Resources

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May 4, 2005

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The Honorable Conrad Burns
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Room SD-132
Washington, DC 20510-6033

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Dear Chairman Burns:

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This letter is submitted on behalf of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR). ARL and CLIR are writing in support of the FY2006 budget request of \$138,054,000 for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and, in particular, the \$18.6 million budget request for the Preservation and Access Division, whose work is critical to preserving our American heritage.

NEH plays a vital role in preserving our historic and cultural legacy, improving education at all levels, and helping Americans to better understand the life of their Nation. The Preservation and Access Division of NEH was created to help advance knowledge and understanding of the humanities in America. Through its broad range of grant programs, the Division supports projects that preserve and increase the availability of resources, such as books, journals, newspapers, photographs, and films that are crucial for research, education, and public programming in the humanities.

In 1987, Congress took a significant leadership role in recognizing the crisis confronting this country's vast printed intellectual heritage. It was then estimated that more than 12 million volumes in the research libraries of the U.S. were at risk of deterioration simply because they were printed on an unstable medium – acidic paper. Library stacks were lined with thousands of books, journals, and newspapers that were already so brittle that pages broke when they were turned. As a result, Congress allocated resources to NEH to coordinate and support the efforts of the library

community to preserve these resources through microfilming the intellectual content of, and to provide broad access to, fragile materials. This effort, known as the Brittle Books Program, was envisioned as a long-term effort to preserve millions of important volumes. Today it is estimated that some 25-30 percent of the printed holdings in the Nation's research libraries are deteriorating because of paper acidity, and other materials, such as photographs, films, and sound recordings are in danger because of their composition and/or storage media. The requested FY 2006 funding will enable the Division to continue preserving America's heritage through the support of the following projects and programs:

- Microfilming the contents of brittle books and serials;
- Preserving and establishing access to other threatened humanities resources, such as newspapers, and archival collections of unique materials;
- Enabling institutions to stabilize humanities collections by improving storage, housing, and security;
- Developing regional preservation and consultation services to help smaller cultural institutions obtain the advice and knowledge they need to preserve their collections;
- Continuing the education and training of preservation administrators and conservators; and
- Supporting research and development to improve preservation and access methods and technologies and preservation assistance grants that focus on small and mid-sized institutions.

The Division of Preservation and Access has demonstrated exceptional leadership in protecting America's heritage from perishing. In February 2004, NEH announced \$5.4 million in awards to 127 cultural institutions throughout the United States and Puerto Rico for projects aimed at preserving cultural resources important to research, education, and knowledge of the humanities. Of the grants distributed, 114 were "Preservation Assistance Grants" for projects in museums, libraries, and archives. In FY 2003, NEH allocated 63 grants relating to preservation and access.

As shown, funding for NEH is absolutely critical to ongoing programs of interest to the library community: the Brittle Books Program, the U.S. Newspaper Program, and Preservation Education and Training. Without Congressional support for NEH, fragile material in libraries and repositories in universities, colleges, and communities across the country would be in danger of permanent loss.

It is also worth mentioning that CLIR, The Center for Network Information (CNI), and Research Libraries Group (RLG), have joined ARL in supporting digitization as a viable preservation reformatting strategy and ARL is working to secure the support of other allied organizations. On July 20, 2004 ARL released a paper, "Recognizing Digitization as a Preservation Reformatting Method," (http://www.arl.org/preserv/digit_final.html) as a first step in building community

support and facilitating the development of policies, standards, guidelines, and best practices. Although ARL recognizes there are many other methods in preserving paper-based materials, this method of digitization is becoming more widely accepted by many communities.

In addition to our support of NEH and the Preservation and Access Division, ARL and CLIR also encourage funding for the Administration's request of \$11.2 million for the *We the People* initiative, which would further enhance NEH's core functions in critical areas, including Preservation and Access. The initiative, created in response to the lack of basic historical knowledge among many Americans, is designed to enhance the teaching, research, and understanding of American history and culture. Of particular interest to the research library community is one of the initiative's key programs, the National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP). This program will convert microfilms of historical newspapers published between 1836 and 1922 into digital files and to mount them on a national database that would be freely accessible to all Americans via the Internet. This effort is a partnership between NEH, which would fund the digitization projects, and the Library of Congress, which would mount and maintain the resources over time. NDNP will be implemented in phases over the course of 20 years. NEH will make its first round of NDNP awards in FY 2005. The resulting searchable textbase will serve as a permanent resource for the American people and be available for education, research, and public programming. We strongly encourage you support this initiative.

Although microfilming serves as a great tool for preserving America's books and newspapers, materials such as films, videos, photographs, tapes, and visual recordings are also in danger. ARL and CLIR strongly support the efforts of NEH to complement its preservation program with grants for the digitization of library materials. Digital technology provides new opportunities to extend the reach of humanities resources into every classroom, library, and home. To that end, many repositories of specialized and rare materials are digitizing their holdings to provide students, educators, and scholars easy access to them. Moreover, libraries and other humanities organizations are providing online access to an ever-increasing body of knowledge created in electronic journals, books, and databases that are available only in electronic form.

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Although the transition to digital libraries creates new opportunities, there are new challenges that also arise. As with print resources, digital information requires preservation, which cannot be achieved simply by building digital repositories. Successful digital preservation will require collaborative agreements and efforts involving authors, publishers, technologists, and librarians. It will be important for NEH to continue to receive sufficient funding to allocate grants so that the public can be assured that the raw materials of scholarship in all major repositories will be preserved for future generations.

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As noted above, NEH also provides critical assistance to our Nation's libraries, archives, historical societies, and other repositories for preservation education and training. Grants in this area help support U.S. graduate programs in art and material culture conservation; preservation workshops, surveys, and information services to hundreds of cultural institutions; and targeted workshops for staff who manage digital imaging and preservation microfilming projects.

NEH has been in helping to ensure the preservation of Iraq's cultural heritage. NEH announced a special initiative, "Recovering Iraq's Past," in July of 2003 to support endeavors that would protect and document resources in Iraq's archives, libraries, and museums. In April 2004, NEH awarded its first round of grants totaling \$559,000 in support of this effort. On a similar front, NEH and the National Science Foundation (NSF) have formed a partnership to develop and advance knowledge of endangered languages.

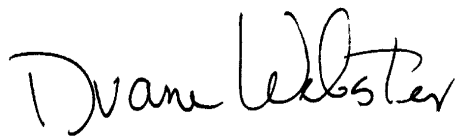
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Information, education, and knowledge are the pillars of our country's domestic progress and international leadership in the 21st century. The existence and support of humanities is vital to ensure a successful democracy by means of reflection, participation, and communication. The Nation must preserve the historical record accumulated by past generations to ensure the success of future generations.

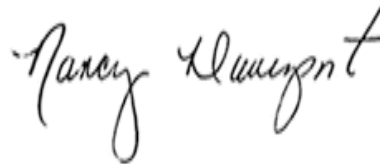
We very much appreciate the Subcommittee's continuing support of NEH and its programs.

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Sincerely,



Duane E. Webster
Executive Director
Association of Research Libraries



Nancy Davenport
President
Council on Library and
Information Resources

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. Its mission is to shape and influence forces affecting the future of research libraries in the process of scholarly communication. ARL programs and services promote equitable access to and effective uses of recorded knowledge in support of teaching, research, scholarship and community service.

The Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) is an independent, not-for-profit organization working to maintain and improve access to information for generations to come. In partnership with other organizations, CLIR helps create services that expand the concept of "library" and supports the providers and preservers of information. CLIR is supported by fees from sponsoring institutions, grants from public and private foundations, contracts with federal agencies and contributions from individuals.