

**Statement of Carla Hayden
The Librarian of Congress
Before the
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives**

Fiscal 2026 Budget Request

April 8, 2025

Chairman Valadao, Ranking Member Espallat, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the Library's fiscal 2026 budget request.

The mission of the Library of Congress is to “Engage, inspire and inform the Congress and the American people with a universal and enduring source of knowledge and creativity.” Above all, the Library exists to serve. Service to the Congress remains the foundation for the Library's mission every day with analysis, policy consultations, briefings, programs and constituent engagement. The U.S. Copyright Office within the Library promotes creativity and knowledge by administering the nation's copyright system for the benefit of all. And service to the American people – Copyright users, researchers, visitors, teachers, students, veterans, and blind and print disabled citizens, among many others – delivered in countless ways, takes a user-centered approach with access in person and in digital form.

The Library's resources are authoritative, expansive, and evergreen. In a time of rapidly evolving technology in a fast-changing world, the Library of Congress stands as it has for over two hundred and twenty-five years (225) as the steward of the largest collection of information and resources ever assembled – not as a memorial but as a living source of knowledge and creativity for Congress and the betterment of the nation. The Library meets its responsibility to collect, preserve and share these treasures every day by constantly renewing the collections and the services it provides to the Congress and the American people. With congressional support, the Library is extensively modernizing and optimizing its systems, processes, and staff. Throughout, the Library never stops its drive to engage, inspire and inform, increasingly through digital means.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the ongoing and extraordinary support that this committee and the Congress gives to the Library. I especially appreciate the funding you have provided for major Information Technology (IT) investments that we are implementing and continuously improving to meet user expectations for greater access and new and enhanced tools. In fiscal year 2024, nearly 120 million people viewed more than a half a billion pages of websites managed by the Library.

These investments include the Copyright Office's Enterprise Copyright System (ECS); CRS's Integrated Research and Information System (IRIS); the National Library Service's Braille and Audio Reading Download service (BARD) and next generation devices; the Library Collections Access Platform (LCAP); Congress.gov; and the Library's core IT infrastructure and IT security. Across the

Library there's been great progress in modernization and information technology security, but we are not yet finished. Pulling back now will jeopardize our efforts, and we must maintain this momentum and continue building upon these investments to leverage their true potential for all Americans.

I would also like to give special thanks for your continued support of the Library's Visitor Experience initiative. The Library's Treasures Gallery opened to the public in June 2024, and we are excited to open the Library's new education center – The Source – by the end of 2025, in time for the nation's Semiquincentennial celebrations. I am pleased to report that construction and fabrication for the Orientation Gallery is now underway, too. We are grateful for the Committee's efforts to secure a successful outcome for this central component, and we continue to work closely with the Architect of the Capitol to complete the Jefferson Building's transformation for the benefit of all Americans.

I come before you today to discuss the Library's fiscal 2026 appropriations request of \$946.2 million, which represents a 5.4 percent increase over the Library's current funding, which has been set at fiscal 2024 appropriation levels as we operate under a continuing resolution (CR). Given current economic conditions, we have revised programmatic increases and minimized out-year costs, deferring all but the most time-critical requests.

The Library's fiscal 2026 appropriations request aligns with the strategic goals set forth in our fiscal 2024-2028 Strategic Plan, A Library for All – expand access, enhance services, strengthen capacity, and foster innovation. It affirms the Library's user-centered mission of service. It builds on multiyear strategic efforts to rebuild the Library's information technology foundation and to optimize advanced IT systems and business processes, while at the same time enhancing access and customer service. And it invests in the future, ensuring that the Library can safeguard and support its collections, services, and workforce in person and online.

Staff are the heart of the Library of Congress. Our employees represent the apex of their professions, bringing unparalleled knowledge, expertise, and experience to bear for the benefit of Congress and the American people. To strengthen our operations, we continue to streamline our processes and advance the systems that support them, making the most of today's evolving technologies and operational best practices to deliver for our users.

We are providing more programs and services than ever before, and while modernization and automation have allowed us to expand productivity in some areas and to do more with less, it is worth noting that the Library's staffing level has remained largely unchanged since fiscal 2015. Indeed, the Library's permanent workforce steadily declined from over 5,000 employees in the early 1990s to its current level of approximately 3,300. It is critical that this relatively low staff level be adequately supported.

With that said, the Library's fiscal 2026 appropriations request does include \$30.9 million in mandatory pay and price-level increases. As a result of the continuing resolution, the Library has had to absorb the cost of mandatory pay and high inflationary price-level increases in fiscal 2025. The need to absorb these expenses threatens our ability to execute the Library's full range of programs and services. It also has an outsized negative impact on the Library of Congress, Salaries & Expenses appropriation, which funds centralized support services across the entire agency.

The Library has three new programmatic requests for fiscal 2026 that, if funded, would provide the resources we need to develop strategic initiatives that deliver greater access and enhanced services, strengthen our capacity, and foster innovation. These requests would also help us to keep pace with digital advancements and deliver exceptional service to the Congress and the American people.

Preservation Object Storage Upgrade

The Library is requesting \$5.4 million to replace and upgrade the decades-old digital preservation system at the Library's on-premises sites with Object Storage technology to achieve compatibility with cloud-native technologies and storage.

The Library is responsible for preserving and securing the world's largest collection of knowledge. To meet this responsibility with digital collections and data, the Library's Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) has established specific strategies for preservation data (preserved for future generations) and presentation data (available on Library web sites). Both strategies require multiple copies of data stored securely on-premises and in the cloud.

The Library currently maintains two digital preservation tape libraries that are now over twenty years old. The requested funding will allow OCIO to replace and upgrade this decades-old digital preservation system with the industry standard Object Storage format, which is required to support the applications developed by the Library within the cloud including: the digital collections platform; NLS's Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) application; the Enterprise Copyright System (ECS), and the Audio-Visual Content Management System (AVCMS). Each of these cloud-native applications depends on access to Library data to deliver content and provide important services to the public.

This upgrade will establish parity between the Library's on-premises and cloud storage environments and best support current and future cloud-native technologies. It will provide greater portability between data centers when necessary and support the ability to scale storage capacity over time. Additionally, this strategic design provides redundancies that ensure that no single event such as a disaster or termination of cloud service puts this incredibly important data at risk.

Web Application Delivery and Management Improvements

The Library is requesting \$2.5 million annually to better serve the millions of users who access the Library's data, collections, and services through its primary public websites by transitioning web development activities and hosting to the cloud.

For decades, the Library has developed and hosted its primary public websites and applications within its own data centers, working hard to meet the challenges created by the sites' rapidly increasing usage and scope. In recent years, however, keeping up with the sites' higher usage and the fast-growing scope and scale of the sites' content has led to challenges maintaining a high level of scalability, reliability, and performance.

The technical and financial limitations of physical data centers leave us unable to provide needed capacity during periods of high demand from individual users and impact a growing number of data partners and research institutions using bulk-data services such as Application Program Interfaces (APIs). The physical limitations of the data centers, including bandwidth capacity constraints, limit options for increasing performance beyond current measures.

This request will enable OCIO to update the Congress.gov, loc.gov, and copyright.gov websites and applications to utilize elastic technology available from commercial cloud providers. Elastic technology is a cloud feature that allows for the quick adjustment of resources like memory, storage, and processing power based on demand. This allows users to scale resources up or down to meet changing demands, without having concerns about capacity planning or peak usage.

In addition to cloud migration, the Library's well-established software development processes and management practices require increased licensing and integration tools providing development, security, and operations support. Converting from limited licenses to enterprise versions of these tools increases efficiency and future enhancements.

This request invests in upgrading how the Library makes content and service available to the Congress and the American people and supports the access of collections in connection with the Preservation Object Storage Upgrade request.

Continuous Development of the Enterprise Copyright System (ECS)

The Library is requesting an appropriation of \$6.8 million for the U.S. Copyright Office for three years to accelerate development and delivery of the Registration component of the Enterprise Copyright System (ECS), reducing the time to completion by approximately two years.

Recent stakeholder concerns, evolving technological demands, and congressional focus make it imperative to more quickly address the limitations of the existing online registration system, eCO, which has been used to support copyright registrations for over 15 years. There have been growing demands to accelerate the pace of IT development and delivery of the ECS Registration component to include the capabilities to support the entire registration process.

Registration acceleration will include all types of registration and methods of deposit (electronic and/or physical) presently available in eCO. Increasing resources devoted to registration will meet the demands of stakeholders for a new, enhanced and efficient registration system, allowing the Copyright Office to quickly sunset the legacy eCO system and other workflows that rely on legacy platforms.

In addition, this initiative will ensure that all ECS components are integrated with the Library's financial system. Once developed and integrated, ECS will be used across the Copyright Office to administer all aspects of copyrights, manage collection of fees, and enable electronic payment for services. If funded, this initiative is targeted to provide a fully operational ECS Registration system available to the public in fiscal 2028.

Fiscal 2025 Re-Submissions

In keeping with the Library's strategic goals, the Library is re-submitting the following three requests that were not funded in fiscal 2025. Given current economic conditions, these requests have been revised to reduce overall funding and eliminate permanent staff hires where possible.

Digital Collections Processing Capacity and Infrastructure (Expanding Access) will enable the Library to invest in end-to-end modernization of IT infrastructure to support the centrality of digital collecting and to upskill staff capacity to process digital content and support the associated IT systems. These resources are necessary to support a host of IT infrastructure and systems to

redesign and refresh workflows critical for the Library to meet the objectives, principles, and targets to acquire, preserve and make accessible digital content as described in the Library's Strategic Plan.

This request is essential as the Library increasingly moves toward digital as the preferred format for acquiring items for the collections that were born digital or converted from analog form.

Transitioning from an almost exclusively physical collections to increasingly digital collections is a multi-year undertaking. The Copyright ECS system for digital deposits is emerging without the Library capabilities for scaled digital processing systems, to receive those deposits for regular Library collection building, management, preservation and limited onsite access. A delay in beginning the digital collection processing capacity upgrade will result in deposits making it through Copyright registration but with the Library unable to perform necessary processing at scale, resulting in significant backlogs with a risk of loss and users unable to access the content. Existing digital systems that support most digital collections were developed iteratively more than a decade ago and are in need of investment to better standardize, integrate, and modernize to accommodate the scale of digital collections growth. These resources allow the Library to manage the actual digital collections ingest, processing, and access.

The request supports ongoing work to digitize and manage materials from the collections, and the continued growth of acquisitions in digital format. To achieve this, the request will provide resources critical to upgrading and improving the IT systems, workflows, and processes necessary to support ongoing work to digitize and manage digital materials from our collections, and to support the continued growth of acquisitions in digital format. Copyright deposits, for example, are central to building the Library's collection, and it is critical for it to be as easy as possible for digital content and metadata delivered to the U.S. Copyright Office to be considered for additions to the Library's collections. This request also includes staffing with advanced skills to process and describe content to make it accessible, as well as staff to support IT systems for digital content management and processing.

CRS: Expanding Data Analytics Capacity (Strengthening Capacity & Fostering Innovation) will enable the Congressional Research Service (CRS) to expand capabilities in quantitative data analysis and policy simulation capacity. It will expand CRS' ability to perform quantitative analysis of both research and operational "big data" for congressional clients, establishing a base process and increased capacity for in-depth data analysis. In alignment with Congressional Members and Committees expressed interest, CRS is investigating how artificial intelligence (AI) technologies could enhance its work for the Congress.

CRS is working to make information more readily discoverable and accessible. It is also working to make finding reports and experts easier on CRS.gov and exploring AI and machine learning for analyzing legislative bills and text to expedite summaries and searches. CRS divisions are developing interactive tools for Members, so that Members can determine more easily and immediately how multiple policy approaches might impact specific constituencies. CRS experts are also using big data to improve analysis. The request includes staffing to strengthen existing capabilities and an investment in the tools and datasets required to broaden the depth of quantitative analysis and models by leveraging big data.

Ensuring Access through a Digital Accessibility Program (Expanding Access) will enable the Library to fully meet its mission in the information age. The Library's digital products, materials, and services must be accessible to all, including veterans and those with disabilities. Direct patron and

staff feedback, along with preliminary expert assessments, point to a large gap between the Library's products, materials, and services and federal/international accessibility standards.

The Library established a small Digital Accessibility Program within OCIO that provides in-house digital accessibility expertise and guidance for Library IT projects and other digital initiatives. Additional resources will mature the enterprise digital accessibility program, expanding capacity to meet growing Library demands for accessibility services including consultation, compliance assessment, and remediation within OCIO. Establishing greater capacity and tools in the Digital Accessibility program will enable OCIO to meet growing demands for accessibility services including consultation, compliance assessment, and remediation and to improve access to the Library's digital products, materials, and services for Americans with disabilities.

The Library seeks to expand the program to address accessibility as the Library enhances current digital products with custom development, releases new IT development efforts, and procures new commercial-off-the-shelf and software-as-a-service products. This request allows the Library to include accessibility training and integration at the beginning of the software development lifecycle.

Chairman Valadao, Ranking Member Espaillat, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you again for supporting the Library of Congress and for your consideration of our fiscal 2026 budget request.