

Statement of Dr. James H. Billington  
The Librarian of Congress  
before the  
Subcommittee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Fiscal 2015 Budget Request

March 5, 2014

Mr. Chairman, Ms. Wasserman Schultz, Members of the Subcommittee:

I welcome Chairman Cole back to the Subcommittee, now as Chair; and thank Ranking Member Ms. Wasserman Schultz and this entire supportive Subcommittee. We look forward to working with you to realize the full potential of the world's greatest Library for the creative future of the United States in our fast changing world.

The Library of Congress fiscal 2015 budget request represents a \$14.2 million, or 2.3 percent increase over the Library's fiscal 2014 funding level. This request includes no program increases for the Library—and is exclusively for mandatory pay and price level increases anticipated for fiscal 2015.

The Library of Congress has the largest and most wide-ranging collection anywhere, both of the world's recorded human knowledge and of the cultural and intellectual creativity of the American people. It was created and has been sustained by the Congress of the United States for 214 years. The Library has encouraged, protected, and preserved America's free creativity through the work of the Copyright Office since 1871. Through its Congressional Research Service, the Library has also been the Congress' primary research arm for 100 years—and for 182 years through the nation's largest law library.

Over the past several years, the Library has been operating with progressively decreasing resources. Our total appropriation has declined in excess of 12.5 percent, from \$684.3 million in fiscal 2010 to \$598.4 million in fiscal 2013. During the entire 23 years (fiscal years 1992-2014) during which the Library built our now massive digital outreach alongside our still growing analog library, our FTE's decreased by 1,389.

We are doing more with less. Precisely because our staff have such one-of-a-kind skills, we minimized making budget cuts in our staff pay budget, administering only a three-day library-wide furlough for all staff in fiscal 2013. Nonetheless there has been substantial attrition, resulting in growing knowledge gaps.

Moving into fiscal 2014 with the prospect of continued sequestration budget reduction, the Library was deeply concerned about absorbing additional cuts among its core program activities or burdening our staff with another series of furlough days. Thus, the Library very much welcomed receiving some relief in the fiscal 2014 Omnibus Appropriation, including the partial restoration of sequestration reduction and funding for the construction for Fort Meade Module 5. Constructing Module 5 will provide critical storage space for preserving and making accessible the Library's incomparable collections.

Despite the challenging budget environment, the Library's uniquely experienced, dedicated and multi-talented staff is looking boldly into the future for what we can do better and more extensively for America in the rapidly changing, unpredictable times that lie ahead.

Our remarkable staff is participating – at a variety of levels, in addition to their regular work – in a Futures Program for the Library. I recently wrote our staff that, “our shared task in shaping this program is to demonstrate that the nation's oldest federal cultural institution has the unique resources and people to become one of America's most innovative.”

The Futures Program is a Library-wide effort to define an action plan for the Library of Congress in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by September 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. It seeks to find new synergies and economies while bringing digital and traditional services closer together and provide a blueprint for streamlining and developing the Library of Congress both onsite and online.

We have already received bold new ideas from 72, mostly younger, staff members on eight teams. Those teams are now being succeeded by three teams covering the key Library-wide issues of (1) mediating knowledge through a new type of Knowledge Navigator, (2) developing a coherent and accountable overall digital strategy, and (3) defining appropriate new forms of collaboration with outside organizations and communities.

We will be consulting actively with this Subcommittee as well as the Joint Committee on the Library about new initiatives we may be implementing as the most effective and cost-neutral approach to further the Library's mission for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While we work on the Futures Program and the future of the Library, the Library continues to bring great value to the Congress and the nation.

At the direction of the Speaker's Office and the Clerk of the House, the Library both led and participated in a number of initiatives over the past year to enhance public availability and transparency of legislative information. We have upgraded

Congress.gov, which is now surpassing our popular THOMAS website in both high-level functionality and ease of use on all types of devices.

Working on the Bulk Download Task Force created by this Subcommittee, we have coordinated closely with the Office of the clerk, the Government Printing Office and others to make data publicly available for third party web and app integration, and to design the basis for possible U.S. participation in international parliamentary data sharing. We developed a new mobile version of the U.S. Constitution Annotated, which will make this unique resource (a CRS product now in its centennial edition) much more widely available to the public.

The Library not only collects, preserves, and provides web-based information, but actively participates in social media outlets (blogs, Facebook pages, YouTube tutorials, and Twitter feeds) that share our collections and staff expertise with thousands of Americans every day. Our pioneering work on the Twitter collection has given us valuable hands-on experience in organizing big data for research and scholarship. We expect to make the 2006-2010 portions of the collection –21 billion tweets— available in June within the Library for research use by the public.

The Library now manages 6.5 petabytes of digital information. Millions of primary digital materials are available onsite or online. This material is widely used in K-12 education and by life-long learners throughout America.

Our World Digital Library continues to grow in popularity in America and beyond, with 178 partners from 80 nations that are providing the Library with high quality primary documents of the world's greatest treasures— with expert curatorial commentary in seven languages. This project helps Americans understand and value other cultures. Young “digital native” users abroad appreciate that America is taking the lead in the “virtual repatriation” of their own heritage.

Building on the Library's vast collection of materials on the early Americas, Central America, and Mexico, we conducted in December a two-day “Celebration of Mexico”, which brought to the Library a wide range of cultural luminaries with whom we plan to work more closely in the future.

CRS, which is celebrating 100 years of service to the Congress, partnered with other Library units and the Government Printing Office (GPO) to publish the centennial edition of the Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretations (known as The Constitution Annotated) on Constitution Day, September 17, 2013.

CRS analysts and information professionals served every Member's office on all major issues on the legislative agenda. Economists, policy analysts and attorneys

responded with analyses and consultations on the complex issues surrounding the government shutdown, the debt ceiling and sequestration. Much of this work was on a short-turnaround basis, given the fast-moving events.

Collaboration across several CRS divisions was necessary to support Congress' oversight of implementation of the Affordable Care Act, analyze legislative options to amend the law and describe the impact of the developing jurisprudence on challenges to some of the Act's provisions. Congressional options in light of events in Egypt, Syria and Iran were addressed in CRS reports, memoranda and briefings.

Working closely with the House Judiciary Committee, the Register of Copyrights helped commence a comprehensive Congressional review of the nation's copyright laws, for the purpose of assessing issues resulting from the vast changes over the past 20 years in the way that creators disseminate and consumers access, music, books, films and software. The Copyright Office also updated its Compendium of Copyright Office Practices, which is the authoritative source of registration procedures relied upon by Copyright Office staff, the public and the courts. The revision is undergoing external review and will be published in 2014.

The Law Library has improved its coverage of key foreign jurisdictions of interest to Congress, and has acquired rare and important legal materials including one of the first books on law printed in the new world (Mexico 1556), and a collection of rare 17<sup>th</sup> century German legal dissertations. Private and individual donors have generously supplied the Law Library's bringing the Lincoln Cathedral 1215 version of the Magna Carta back to the Library of Congress for its exhibit on the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of this seminal document.

We have been privileged this past year to have organized and hosted exclusively for Members of Congress a new series of major evening conversations with outstanding experts on our greatest early Presidents (the most recent with David McCullough on John Adams) for 125 members from both houses and both parties. For these evenings we display original documents of the Presidents, listen to our generous benefactor David Rubenstein ask the expert searching questions, ending with comments and questions by the Members. All Members of Congress are invited to these memorable evenings. The next will be held in James Madison on March 11.

A FutureBridge Program that began in October 2013 pairs our young professionals with a senior colleague who can mentor and share his or her one-of-a-kind knowledge and experience. Annually, the Library brings college and graduate students into units throughout our institution through the Knowledge Navigators/Junior Fellows programs. During their time as apprentices at the Library,

these students bring more of our materials into the stream of knowledge and often become librarians themselves.

This year the Library added another program in its multi-pronged efforts to address illiteracy thanks to a generous gift from David Rubenstein. The Library developed a new program that awarded three prizes and identified best practices in innovative programs that open up the world of reading to the illiterate in America and globally. This program is part of the Library's commitment to life-long learning that includes our annual National Book Festival, our Nobel-type Kluge Prize for Lifetime Achievement in the Study of Humanity, our Young Readers' Center on Capitol Hill, and our national Teaching with Primary Sources Program.

Mr. Chairman, the Congress of the United States has been the greatest patron of a library in history. Each year, the Library is privileged to serve every member of Congress, every Congressional Committee, and millions of Americans, often in ways that would otherwise be unavailable to them. All of the Library's present and future work must and will be (a) directly important for the United States and not just for our own institution, as well as (b) serve the public in ways one else can do as well or better.

The Library embodies and advances the distinctly American ideal of a knowledge-based democracy. And we will be grateful for your consideration of our budget request for fiscal 2015.

Mr. Chairman, Ms. Wasserman Schultz, and Members of the Subcommittee, I thank you all again for your good counsel and support for the Library.