

**Statement of Carla Hayden
The Librarian of Congress
Before the
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives**

Fiscal 2025 Budget Request

April 16, 2024

Chairman Amodei, Ranking Member Espaillat, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the Library's fiscal 2025 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 223 years 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 all. 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 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 all of the Congress gives to the Library. In particular, I 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. These investments include the Enterprise Copyright System (ECS); CRS's Integrated Research and Information System (IRIS); the National Library Service's Braille Audio Reading by Download (BARD) and next generation devices; the Library Collections Access Platform (L-CAP); Congress.gov; and the Library's core IT infrastructure and IT security.

I would also like to give special thanks for your support of the Library's Visitor Experience initiative over the last five years. We are excited to open the Treasures Gallery in June of this year and we expect the Youth Center, named "The Source," will open by the end of 2025, in time for the nation's semiquincentennial in 2026. Further, in addition to the funds appropriated by the Congress, we have raised more than \$20 million in private donations for this project. We remain in constant coordination with the Architect of the Capitol and are grateful for the Committee's involvement to ensure the success of the Orientation Gallery, a critical element of the project.

I come before you today to discuss the Library's fiscal 2025 appropriations request of \$943.7 million, which represents a 5.1 percent increase over the Library's fiscal 2024 appropriation, including \$38.9 million in mandatory pay and price level increases. The Library has absorbed especially high pay and inflationary increases over the last three years, with a 5.3 percent pay raise and inflationary increases at 3.4 percent in fiscal 2024 alone. The need to absorb these increases threatens all that we do and has a permanent impact. This is particularly the case for the Library of Congress, Salaries & Expenses appropriation because it provides centralized support services to the entire Library.

The budget request reflects the resources needed to sustain the Library's mission of service to the Congress and the American people, and its strategic priorities to be digitally enabled, user centered, data informed, inclusive and welcoming, with meaningful collaboration and partnership and active engagement with our communities. It builds on multiyear strategic efforts to rebuild the information technology foundation and to optimize advanced IT systems and business processes, while at the same time enhancing access and customer services. And it invests in the future, ensuring that the Library can safeguard and support its collections, services, and workforce in person and online.

The request aligns with the strategic goals set forth in the new fiscal 2024-2028 Strategic Plan, *A Library for All*: Expand access, enhance services, strengthen capacity, and foster innovation. The goals affirm the Library's user-centered mission of service. The Library's formerly standalone Digital Strategy is now fully integrated into the new Strategic Plan, in recognition that technology must be "baked into all that we do." Digital technology indeed permeates every aspect of the Library as a modern knowledge institution, and it is used deliberately and strategically to meet the needs of a quickly changing world. None of the Library's strategic goals or themes in today's context could be achieved without the contributions of digital technology.

Recognizing that economic conditions are different than they were eight years ago when I became Librarian, we are requesting the lowest programmatic increase of my tenure -- \$11.3 million compared to the highest at \$55 million. We have minimized programmatic increases by deferring those without critical impacts, not because our needs have decreased, but out of concern for the impact of absorbing mandatory pay and price level increases given current economic conditions and other external forces. We have taken great care to make only programmatic requests that are necessary and have a meaningful impact on our service to the Congress and the American people.

The two new requests for fiscal 2025 further the goals in the new Strategic Plan:

Digital Collections Processing Capacity and Infrastructure

In alignment with the Expand Access strategic goal, digital collections processing capacity and infrastructure meet the strategic objective to invest in end-to-end modernization of IT infrastructure to support the centrality of digital collecting and strengthen staff capacity with advanced skills in processing digital content and the supporting 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 set forth in the Library's Strategic Plan.

The new initiative for digital collections processing capacity and infrastructure is essential as the Library increasingly moves toward digital as the necessary preferred format for acquiring items for the collections that were born digital or converted from analog form. 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 rapidly growing scale of digital collections growth.

The initiative will support the 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 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.

Center for Exhibits and Interpretation Collections Handling

In pursuit of the Library's strategic goals to expand access and enhance services by transforming in-person experiences the Library will open more than 12,000 square feet of public space in the Thomas Jefferson Building. The expanded exhibition spaces will display over 1,000 items at any given time, a nearly 50 percent increase from previous years. A majority of the objects on view must be rotated every six months or less, which means that each item must be reviewed, cataloged, mounted, installed, and deinstalled by trained and experienced registrars. The level of permanent registrar and production staff has remained flat for the last decade, and is not sufficient to accommodate the support requirements to cover the expansion of the Library's exhibition spaces. The Library has stewardship over the collections, including those on display worth millions of dollars. This request is put forward to ensure that additional items on exhibit are secure and supported by an appropriate level of staff.

Fiscal 2024 Re-Submissions

In keeping with our strategic goals, we are re-submitting three vital requests that were not funded in the 2024 budget request. These initiatives support the 2024-2028 strategic goals of expanding access, enhancing service, strengthening capacity and fostering innovation. The initiatives are:

CRS: Expanding Data Analytics Capacity (Strengthening Capacity & Fostering Innovation)

will enable both CRS and the Office of the Chief Information Office (OCIO) to expand CRS's quantitative data analysis and policy simulation capacity. It will augment CRS's 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. Congressional Members and Committees have expressed interest in CRS investigating how artificial intelligence (AI) technologies could enhance its work for the Congress.

CRS is working to diversify its new product offerings. Examples include the American Law Division's weekly Congressional Court Watcher distributed to congressional clients interested in notable federal court cases, an infographic on Middle East Natural Gas, a podcast on AI noting the availability of a published report on the same subject, and a bill summary available in voice version.

CRS 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 their 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.

Language from the Joint Explanatory Statement, accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 Public Law 117-328, directs CRS to explore ways in which it could expand the ability to perform quantitative analysis of research data and conduct a feasibility study. The study was completed and presented to Oversight and Appropriations Committees in the House and Senate. In September 2023, the Library awarded a one-year contract to pilot a small set of cloud-based quantitative data models for CRS consistent with the guidance in the feasibility study. CRS has also initiated an AI working group to explore how AI technology can enhance work for the Congress.

Expanding the Digital Accessibility program (Expanding Access) will more equitably enable the Library to meet its mission in the information age. The Library's digital products, materials, and services must be accessible to all, including those with disabilities. With that in mind, the Library established a small digital accessibility program in fiscal 2020 with one FTE. This office provides in-house digital accessibility expertise and guidance for Library IT projects and other digital initiatives, utilizing supplemental resources from another office. 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. Establishing greater capacity and tools in the Digital Accessibility program will enable the Library 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. 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 seeks to expand the program so that accessibility is addressed at the same time 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 includes training staff and integrating accessibility from the beginning of the software development lifecycle.

Expanded Contracting and Grants Directorate staffing (Strengthening Capacity) is requested in response to the staffing shortages stemming from increased contract complexity, and unusually high and sustained FTE attrition. Expanded contracting staff will support comprehensive, optimal acquisition planning, execution, contract management, and oversight. The Library, like other federal agencies, is facing substantial attrition of its contracting staff as workloads increase and contracts become more complex, particularly for IT-related acquisitions. These are already hard-to-fill positions and a government-wide shortage of contract specialists makes recruitment and retention even more challenging. Additional staffing will support technology innovation and development contracts, integrate digital accessibility into the Library's IT acquisition process and contracts, monitor the Library's 400-plus Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) workforce, and strengthen oversight of policies and procedures. The ability to properly handle increased contract volume and complexity in areas such as development of major IT systems and digital accessibility will be resolved. The requested funds will also be used to integrate a web-enabled solution for the grants lifecycle to support grant application, award, and management processes into the eAcquisition system. By integrating the Grants Management System with the eAcquisition System, an efficient, fully automated CGD office that connects the grants process with the acquisition and financial IT systems will be established.

In closing, the fiscal 2025 budget request carefully furthers the modernization efforts of recent years and supports the goals of the new fiscal 2024-2028 Strategic Plan. In a time of rapid change, in technology, in society, and in the world, the Library has a responsibility to preserve and use its resources for the greatest benefit today and for decades to come. With the consistent support of the Congress, the Library has never and will never stop enhancing and extending its service to this country.

Chairman Amodei, Ranking Member Espaillat, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you again for supporting the Library of Congress and for your consideration of our fiscal 2025 budget request.