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Before the Committee on House Administration
United States House of Representatives
“Oversight of the Library of Congress”
July 10, 2024

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the invitation to appear before the Committee on House Administration today. I am pleased to have the opportunity to update the Committee on the programs and activities of the Library of Congress (Library).

My colleagues and I have had the pleasure of engaging with many of the Members of this committee throughout the 118th Congress and it is my sincere hope that every Member of Congress will take the opportunity to use our collections and services, as well as connect our vast resources to your constituents across the nation. The Library of Congress is truly a library for all, and we embrace this mission with enthusiasm each and every day.

Since its founding in 1800, the Library has provided the U.S. Congress access to a collection of information that is unmatched anywhere in the world. Each day, the Library and its dedicated staff collect, preserve, and share these treasures with Members of Congress and the American people in support of our mission to engage, inspire, and inform our users with a universal and enduring source of knowledge and creativity. With more than 178 million physical items and a growing digital collection, the Library takes tremendous pride in our role as the steward of the national collection and a repository for our shared cultural heritage. However, it is not enough that the collection be preserved. It must also be usable. Members of Congress use our collections to inform legislation. Our foreign law specialists and law librarians conduct research on domestic, foreign, comparative and international law for Congress and other branches of the federal government. Historians utilize our diverse collections from the papers of Founding Fathers, oral histories from our Veterans History Project, and our growing digital collections to research their books. Families

research their ancestry using our genealogy resources, and curious book-lovers everywhere tune into our virtual events and author talks.

Serving Congress and the American People

There are many ways for our users, Congress's constituents, to connect with the Library virtually and in-person. Our buildings welcome millions of visitors, researchers, and congressional stakeholders each year. In fiscal year (FY) 2023, the Library welcomed over 726,000 visitors to the historic Jefferson Building, a 95% increase over the previous fiscal year. Our robust and expanding online presence recorded over 153 million visits to the Library's websites and over 532 million page views from those who could not visit in person. The Library responded to more than 681,501 reference requests from Congress, other federal agencies, and the public. The Congressional Research Service (CRS) published nearly 1,200 new products and handled more than 76,000 congressional requests, 3,000 more than the previous fiscal year. The Congressional Relations Office administered 806 events, displays, and tours for Members of Congress throughout the fiscal year. The U.S. Copyright Office issued in a timely manner more than 441,500 copyright registrations. With the investment of staff resources and ongoing efforts to strengthen the national copyright system, the average registration time now sits at 2.1 months or as little as 1.2 months for electronic claims not requiring correspondence. The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) circulated more than 24.5 million copies of braille, audio, and large-print material as the principal provider of accessible reading materials for the blind and visually impaired population of the United States.

The Library in FY2023 continued its mission to be a steward of the nation's rare and treasured cultural collection. The Library took millions of preservation actions to keep its collections available and ensure the longevity of its resources. The Library also acquired almost 2.5 million items for its collections, expanding the agency's digital and physical collections greatly to benefit current and future users. This includes, for example, completing the digitization of the Hebrew Manuscript Collection, digitizing the U.S. Congressional Serial Set, and embarking on the digitization of U.S. Supreme Court Records and Briefs. In addition, our Researcher and Collections Services unit processed more than 4.1 million items from the collections arrangement, making these unique materials in special formats newly available for users, and reduced the net amount of

unprocessed materials by more than 2.4 million items, surpassing annual targets and helping to make available to users records from the AIDS Memorial Quilt and additional historic records from the NAACP, among other items.

Technology Modernization and Continuous Development

Major technology enhancement milestones are being achieved in several service units across the Library. The Library, with funding from Congress, is investing in the technology it uses to manage and service the collection by building the Library Collections Access Platform (LCAP). LCAP will replace a key legacy library management system and modernize our core library service operations including cataloging, acquisition, and collections access. The Library recently began training staff in preparation for our phase one launch in the fall, and additional releases will follow in 2025.

Other Library modernization initiatives are also being made possible thanks to Congress' strong support and commitment. The Library has fundamentally rebuilt our IT infrastructure and most management practices over the last decade. To quote our Chief Information Officer, Judith Conklin, technology is now baked into everything we do as an agency. With that in mind, the Library is taking a continuous development approach that builds on the technology modernization work that has already been completed and will make certain the agency continues to regularly invest in its digital capabilities to keep our data both secure and current to meet the dynamic needs of its users. In a practical sense, continuous development means that the Library never stops updating and moving its technology forward. It is an iterative approach to software application development that has become a staple in the private sector and is serving the Library well.

The Library is constantly enhancing the online availability of legislative data with continuous development of Congress.gov, adding new functionality every three weeks based on user feedback. Last year, the Library completed seventeen major Congress.gov upgrades, improving functionality for congressional and public users and adding new content and features including enhanced bill alerts, new search fields requested by congressional staff, and thousands of historic bills and other congressional data. We released the Congress.gov Application Programming Interface (API),

making legislative data more accessible, reliable, and now machine readable. The Library is committed to ensuring Congress.gov continues to meet congressional needs and we are continuing to work with our data partners across Capitol Hill in the Office of the Clerk of the House, the Secretary of the Senate, the Government Publishing Office, and others to modernize the data ingest functions that support and expand information on the website.

Similarly, CRS has been working closely with the Library's Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) to modernize CRS technology systems under the Integrated Research and Information System (IRIS) initiative, a multi-year effort to update CRS's mission-specific information technology to provide CRS staff with the best resources to create and deliver products and services to Congress. During FY2023, we launched a new congressional request management system, which replaces a previous legacy system and will support CRS's customer service to Congress. Since launching last fiscal year, 11 update releases have been made as part of the continuous development approach implemented by OCIO. CRS was migrated to the Microsoft M365 platform, which provides specialized authoring, publishing, content management and congressional relationship management tools. Under our continuous development approach, we will keep adding features to IRIS for CRS staff, and we expect to release a new content management system, workflow management, enterprise search engine, and redesigned CRS.gov this year.

The NLS moved its web-based Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) service to the cloud, and in doing so, more than tripled its capacity for NLS users while making it both faster and more stable. NLS continues to iterate on a modernized version of the service, BARD 2.0, which optimizes the look and feel of the patron experience, including adding enhancements for low-vision individuals. Prioritizing accessibility and usability, the interface provides vastly improved search function, patron privacy, reading wish lists, reading histories, and book and magazine subscription capabilities. This modernization is also helping NLS meet the requirements of a large patron base with various reading accessibility needs.

We are also exploring options for the next-generation NLS devices, including testing smart speakers, voice recognition, digital delivery, and other advanced options for user interface and

content management such as audio streaming, automatic Wi-Fi and hot spot searches, and Text to Speech (TTS) capabilities. Approximately 10,000 new e-reader devices have been distributed to patrons under an ongoing project that has grown from a pilot program to now serving all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories.

In the U.S. Copyright Office, much progress has been made to date with building a new Enterprise Copyright System (ECS). The new online Recordation System is in production with over eighty percent (80%) of documents recorded electronically last year, and the new Copyright Public Records System (CPRS) which provides access to registration and recordation data with advanced search capabilities, filters, and improved interfaces, is operating successfully.

The most complex component of ECS is the Registration application, which is currently in development. The Copyright Office and the Library's OCIO are currently working in tandem on three components: the application used internally by copyright registration examiners, a public facing application, and data handling tools used for upload and examination of deposits. All of this work will improve the efficiency and intuitiveness of the Copyright Office's online systems for users. By the end of this calendar year, a limited pilot of both the eDeposit upload functionality and the Standard Application will launch, both of which will allow select users to inform further development of the system.

I am also pleased to share that user satisfaction is high based on feedback from stakeholders who participate in the Library's Copyright Public Modernization Committee (CPMC). In 2021, I appointed the CPMC to enhance communications with external stakeholders about the technology-related aspects of developing the ECS and other initiatives. While the CPMC was originally established for a three-year term, I have reauthorized the CPMC for an additional term. The deadline for applications for membership was June 18, 2024, and once the new members are selected, CPMC meetings and briefings will resume before the end of this year.

User Engagement and Enhancing the Visitor Experience

The Library's strategic path ahead embraces and continues to build on our digital transformation. Launched in the fall of 2023, the Library's FY2024 – 2028 strategic plan, "A Library for All," integrates the Library's digital strategy and strategic plan into one document. It reflects both the progress made and our continued focus on digital transformation across the agency.

In addition, the plan continues with user-centered goals to expand access, enhance services, strengthen capacity, and foster innovation. The Library has moved forward in substantial ways to enhance the ways we engage users both onsite and online, deepening their connection to the Library. In FY2023, CRS hosted over 12,000 congressional participants in virtual and in-person CRS seminars and training programs for Members of Congress and congressional staff. This also includes updating the Veterans History Project website to make it more mobile-friendly and increase user access to more than 117,000 veterans' stories online.

The 2024 National Book Festival will take place August 24, with the theme "Books Build Us Up," reflecting on how books can help open the entire world to us all. A lineup of more than 90 authors will connect with and delight live audiences in Washington D.C. and those who log on virtually to loc.gov/bookfest. The Library's Center for Learning, Literacy, and Engagement has been introducing new programs, initiatives, and activities to bring the Library to new audiences. "Live! At the Library" Thursday night evening events welcomed more than 40,000 in-person guests in FY2023 and garnered additional audiences with several events being streamed online via YouTube. For visitors to Capitol Hill, a pilot program allowing visitors to explore the Main Reading Room during specified hours received an overwhelmingly positive response, with 700 visitors daily, and over 100,000 visitors total in FY2023. I am excited about opportunities like this to open our treasure chest as well as the many opportunities that lie ahead to make our physical spaces more engaging for Members of Congress and their constituents who visit Washington.

As you know, the all-new Visitor Experience initiative is a top priority the Library has been executing in partnership with its authorization and appropriations committees and the Architect of the Capitol (AOC), to invite visitors to discover more of our treasures, programs, and services. The

Library is excited about the Visitor Experience project and grateful to Congress for its ongoing support. The first component opened in June with the unveiling of the new David M. Rubenstein Treasures Gallery and a new Library store. This dedicated space serves to display the wonder, scope, and history found within our special collections, and periodically will rotate exhibits. The first exhibition “Collecting Memories: Treasures from the Library of Congress” explores the ways people have preserved their history, culture and personal recollections through a variety of artifacts, including comic panels drawn for the Spider-Man origin story, Oscar Hammerstein’s drafts lyrics from “The Sound of Music and Abraham Lincoln’s reading copy of the Gettysburg Address, neatly handwritten on a browned sheet of Executive Mansion stationery.

A Youth Center will open in late 2025, attracting new audiences to interact with the collection and exercise their creativity in a dedicated space. The last component to open will be a visitor Orientation Gallery in early 2027. This space will include Thomas Jefferson’s Library; a look into the stacks for all those visitors who wonder where and how we store the world’s largest book collection; 8,600 new square feet of exhibit space to help better tell the Library’s story; and engaging media interactives. And at the heart of the Visitor Experience project is a commitment to preserve and celebrate the historic elements of the Thomas Jefferson Building.

The Committee’s direct involvement with monthly briefings and bi-weekly reporting over the last 17 months, and the Congress’s unwavering support of the project as evidenced in the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024, are a testament to the collective desire to further the legacy of the collection and ensure future generations of Americans can continue to enjoy the splendor of our deep rich history. In partnership with the committees and the AOC, we look forward to delivering on this congressionally driven initiative in the months and years ahead.

Legislative Initiatives

Lastly, but importantly, the Library is requesting several changes in our legislative authorities this year that will help us enhance our service to Congress, improve our operations, and continue to meet our mission. This includes language to strengthen our workforce by improving our recruitment tools and allowing the lending of detail employees between the Library and other

federal agencies. We're also seeking a legislative authority change to make our transfer authority process with the Architect of the Capitol more efficient for Library building and grounds projects, and propose the creation of a signature programs revolving fund to help the agency better manage the long-term fiscal planning of signature programs with a national audience, such as the National Book Festival and the Gershwin Prize concert. I look forward to working with the Committee on moving these important initiatives forward this Congress and strongly urge their consideration.

Conclusion

The Library takes great pride in serving the Congress and the American People. With Congress' support, the Library's collection and services will continue to be an unmatched national resource both within the Legislative Branch and in states and districts throughout the country. I thank this Committee for its continued interest in the Library and look forward to remaining closely engaged with you as the Library moves forward in providing quality service to Congress, investing in our technology future, and enhancing the engagement and experience of all users.