

## NGI initiatives

Next Generation Internet (NGI) and access to government information have been two important issues moving forward even as much of Washington was absorbed in how the White House and Congress were resolving budget conflicts.

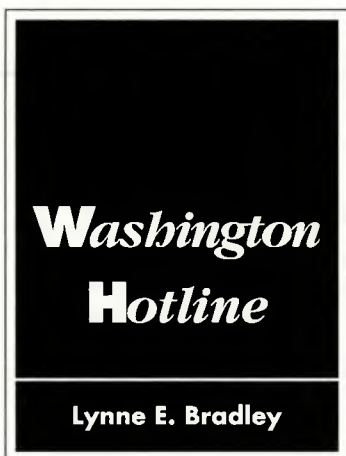
The Clinton Administration proposed an NGI initiative involving research and development programs across federal agencies, with \$100 million requested for FY98. The draft document was prepared by the Large Scale Networking Working Group of the Computing, Information, and Communications Research & Development Subcommittee and posted for public comments, due May 15.

The draft concept paper (<http://www.hpcc.gov/ngi-concept-08Apr97/>) notes that the present Internet technology, designed for a network of thousands, is laboring to serve a network of millions, but new technology, protocols, and standards can be developed to lead to an NGI at rates thousands of times faster than today. The Advisory Committee on High-Performance Computing and Communications, Information Technology and the Next Generation Internet had input into the draft and will be commenting further on it. Two members of the committee, Ching-chih Chen (Simmons College) and Sherrilynne Fuller (University of Washington) bring library experience to the issue.

It is expected that ALA will comment on a number of points including that a strong and specific plan be developed for diffusion of the NGI research and development results not just to industry but to government, education, and libraries; and that progress toward the NGI be balanced with interoperability with the first generation Internet. ALA also will emphasize that the NGI budget should reflect a civilian as well as a military focus.

## Congressional hearings

Key congressional hearings have focused re-



cently on access to government information and related proposals for the revision of Title 44.

Francis J. Buckley Jr. (chair of the Inter-association Working Group on Government Information Policy) testified in May before the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration on proposed revisions to the law governing government printing, dissemination, and the Federal Depository Li-

brary Program. The hearing focused on a draft bill, "Government Printing Office Act of 1997," which is the latest proposal to revise parts of Title 44 of the United States Code. University of Kentucky and Western Kentucky University staff have created a Web version of the April 14 version of the draft bill linking it to relevant parts of the U.S. Code (<http://www.uky.edu/Libraries/jcpbill.html>).

Senator John Warner (R-VA) chaired the first part of the hearing before turning the gavel over to Senator Wendell Ford (D-KY). Both senators, and every witness, said they were in favor of strengthening the Federal Depository Library Program. Senator Ford was impassioned in questioning Sally Katzen of the Office of Management and Budget about compliance issues, and was quite critical of the practices of the National Technical Information Service. The Department of Justice representative, Richard Shiffrin, was concerned only about the constitutional issues, believing that any government operational function, such as printing, should be performed in the executive branch.

Also in May, the House Subcommittee on Government Management, Information and Technology, chaired by Representative Steve Horn (R-CA), held a hearing on the Government Printing Office and executive branch information dissemination. Robert Oakley (Georgetown University Law Center) testified on behalf of the six major library organizations including ALA. Oakley stressed that users need both print and electronic formats, and a strong, centralized, coordinated program for efficient and effective access to government information. His statement is at: <http://www.ll.georgetown.edu/aallwash/lettest.html>. ■

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