

Almost a year ago, ALA and COSLA (Chief Officers of State Library Agencies) began thinking about reauthorization of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). Interested groups came together to create a task force to start discussion on the reauthorization of LSTA and what it should look like in the 21st century.

The task force met for the first time in June 2000 and began a series of in-depth discussions. Every library interest was represented, including ACRL, represented by your Executive Director, Althea H. Jenkins. We discussed how the program had been envisioned, how it was working, and what needed to change. We concluded with a strong consensus that this program had to continue serving all library constituencies in a very flexible way. We believe it can.

There was a commitment by COSLA to consider all types of libraries, including academic libraries, in their states as they develop their state plans, and to develop those plans in a consultative manner. There was also recognition of a geographic inequity in the formula that was made by doubling the requested minimum allotment to the small states, which has been recommended to Congress.

When LSTA was originally passed in 1996, the national leadership grants section of the law (a 4% set aside of the total amount appropriated) was established to provide competitive grants for projects with national scope. They include education and training, research and demonstration, and preservation and cooperative projects between libraries and museums. Examples of some of the recent grants can be found on the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Web site at <http://www.imls.gov>. You will see there that many of these grants have gone to academic libraries. Additionally, in many states academic libraries participate in state library networks, often with some LSTA support.

There was also the realization that library programs have not always been evaluated in a manner comparable to other federal programs. So a new IMLS requirement for an annual evaluation of some parts of this program has also been recommended to Congress. This should give the library community data to demonstrate its effective use of federal money in serving the public.

The representatives at these meetings agreed that all parts of the library community must come together to support and advocate for this reauthorization. LSTA is authorized and funded within the Museum and Library Services Act and administered through IMLS. The largest part of the LSTA program is distributed through state library agencies with funding to each state based upon a long-standing formula.

We have now suggested to the staffs of Senators James Jeffords (R-Vermont) and Edward Kennedy (D-Maine) that it should be reauthorized at the \$500-million level. It has most recently been funded at \$207.2 million. Jeffords, chairman of the Senate HELP Committee, and Kennedy, the ranking Democrat, have agreed to co-sponsor this bill and we are awaiting the draft bill language. It will take a great deal of work on our part to get this bill into committee as we want it, reported out of committee, and then successfully funded at the budget level we have stipulated.

Everyone is needed to participate in this effort:

- everyone with a good story of library service to the community must share it;
- anyone with a good relationship with a member of Congress must make use of it; and
- every type of library must enlist its users to help us in this effort.

ALA has created a special Web site with the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies to collect and share "stories" that can be used to demonstrate how we serve the public in very real ways. Look for it by the end of May on the ALA Web site at <http://www.ala.org>. ■