

**Comments sought on NCLIS access to government information study**

The ALA Washington Office encourages academic librarians, whether they are officially “documents librarians” or not, to follow and make comment on the current study on government information being conducted by the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS).

The Commission is proceeding rapidly with its study of the federal government’s policies on access to government information. With an extremely challenging schedule, NCLIS has established four study panels and a Board of Experts to address a broad range of issues in order to “identify reforms necessary in the federal government’s public information dissemination machinery.”

NCLIS is interested in seeking public comment from many stakeholders, and certainly the academic library and higher education community are important stakeholders in this arena. To participate, academic librarians are encouraged to follow the status of the study and see the various public reports and comments at the NCLIS web site at: <http://www.nclis.gov/govt/assess/assess.html>.

**Background and panel membership**

Based upon a request from Senator John McCain (R-Arizona), chair of the Senate Commerce Committee, NCLIS expanded its efforts to study government information issues based upon work begun when the proposal came forward from the Clinton Administration to close the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) in August 1999. That proposal suggested disbanding NTIS and moving its functions to the Library of Congress. It was broadly recog-

nized that the efforts of NCLIS and others on the NTIS issue could not be “addressed in an isolated event” and should be seen as “part of a framework of reforms needed in public information dissemination overall.”

NCLIS now has a December 15, 2000, deadline to provide a final report to Congress and the Administration. The four study panels are: Panel One—NTIS Business Model; Panel Two—Internal government Users; Panel Three—External (to government) Users; and Panel Four—Public-Private Sector Partnerships.

ALA President Nancy Kranich, University of Illinois Library Director Sharon Hogan, Superintendent of Documents Francis Buckley, and ALA’s Director of the Office of Information Technology Policy Rick Weingarten are some of the members of the panels.

Members of the Board of Experts, including Thomas Susman, a consultant to ALA on government information issues, will be developing various white papers and providing an overview of the work of the various panels. Susman will review Title 44 reform legislation to determine “whether there are any ‘lessons learned’ that could be relevant to the study’s findings and recommendations.”

**Congress and administration negotiating FY2001 appropriations**

At this writing, congressional conferees and representatives from the Clinton Administration are behind closed doors in final negotiations on the several appropriations bills remaining for FY2001.

Having only returned from their summer recess after Labor Day, Congress cannot end this session and go home to campaign until all work is done on the FY2001 budget items. True hard ball is being played behind those closed doors, so watch for more information in next month’s column. ■

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