

ALA moves forward in e-book arena

More than 700 librarians, publishers, and media representatives participated in the ALA's Virtual Town Hall on Ebooks October 23, 2013. ALA President Barbara Stripling led a discussion that highlighted ALA's successes from the past two years and the association's plans to address the challenges ahead.

During the town hall, ALA Immediate Past-President Maureen Sullivan recounted the grim situation for libraries seeking to grow their ebook collections in 2011 and into 2012, Digital Content Working Group (DCWG) Co-chair Sari Feldman summarized the current status with respect to the Big Five publishers. Despite this progress, libraries still face major problems such as high prices, little digital rights management, and limited availability of titles from some publishers.

A key part of ALA advocacy actually consisted of education. DCWG Co-chair Robert Wolven, associate university librarian at Columbia University, explained how both publishers and librarians needed to learn about the others' world views, needs, and rapidly evolving situation in the digital environment. Later, ALA Executive Director Keith Michael Fiels discussed the high level of media attention on the ebook library lending issue. Alan S. Inouye, director of ALA's Office for Information Technology Policy, explored emerging issues in the ebook lending arena, including digital preservation, improved library access to self-published works, libraries as publishers, accommodations for people with disabilities, and privacy.

ALA leaders and DCWG will continue to provide updates on the *American Libraries* E-Content blog. Though 2013 thus far has been a remarkable year of library ebook achievements, the road ahead remains a long one.

Jazzy Wright is press officer of the ALA Washington Office, e-mail: jwright@alawash.org

ALA welcomes USA Freedom Act

In October, ALA rallied librarians to support the USA Freedom Act, a bill that will improve the balance between terrorism prevention and personal privacy protection. The USA FREEDOM Act, which was introduced by Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and PATRIOT Act author Representative Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI), would place restrictions on bulk phone and Internet government surveillance and permit companies to make public the number of FISA orders and National Security Letters received. The bicameral legislation would rewrite section 215 of the PATRIOT Act—also called the “library provision” because of the library community's concerns about the PATRIOT Act—and impose new limits on section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. The bill would also require the government to make disclosures about the intelligence surveillance it conducts and establish a process for declassifying opinions issued by the FISA Court.

ALA ready to bring high-capacity broadband to libraries with FCC's O'Rielly and Wheeler

ALA congratulates Tom Wheeler and Michael O'Rielly on their Senate confirmation to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). This is a pivotal time in communications history, and it is prime time for visionary leadership. ALA is ready to shape a vision for broadband access for America's libraries and the communities they serve. ALA also thanks acting Chair Mignon Clyburn for her leadership during the interim period. In the immediate future, the current e-rate proceeding holds the greatest promise for America's libraries to ensure they have access to affordable, high-capacity broadband today and over the next decade. ALA appreciates the strong support of Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) for the e-rate program and thanks him for bringing its importance to the attention of the newest FCC commissioner and chair. ALA looks forward to working with the full commission in the coming months. ♪