

## New Pew report: Libraries key to American dream

An overwhelming majority of Americans acknowledge that public libraries offer more than just books and provide community-tailored programs that improve the quality of life, according to “How Americans value public libraries in their communities,” a report released from the Pew Research Center in December. The report found that 95 percent of Americans agree that libraries play an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed. The Pew Research Center study found that 72 percent of all Americans adults have either used a public library in the past year or live in a household with a family member who is an active library user.

## NSA surveillance examined by three branches of government

Reforms to the National Security Agency’s (NSA) massive unconstitutional surveillance program may soon be underway. In the same week in December 2013, the surveillance reform debate was enjoined in all branches of government.

- Executive Branch: In December, President Obama’s Review Group on Intelligence and Communications Technologies released a report calling for transparency, online security tools, and organizational reforms to the NSA.

- Legislative Branch: ALA joined more than 50 businesses, civil liberties groups, and public interest organizations in opposing the FISA Improvements Act, a bill that will legalize and extend NSA mass surveillance programs. Opposers to the bill include the American Civil Liberties Union, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, PEN American Center, TechFreedom, and others.

- Judicial Branch: D.C. District Court Judge Richard Leon ruled that NSA’s surveillance practices on millions of unsuspecting Americans may be unconstitutional. One week later, a district court in New York found just the opposite, ruling that the bulk collection of telephone data does not vio-

late the Constitution. ALA expects that the surveillance issue will be taken to the U.S. Supreme Court.

## ALA submits comments, testifies on Department of Commerce green paper on copyright

In November 2013, ALA, with the Library Copyright Alliance (LCA), submitted comments in response to the Department of Commerce’s green paper, “Copyright Policy, Creativity, and Innovation in the Digital Economy.” The Internet Policy Task Force of the Commerce Department issued its report in July 2013 and proposed recommendations in three areas: updating the balance of rights and exceptions, assessing and improving enforcement tools to combat online infringement, and realizing the value of the Internet in commerce via online licensing.

Any changes in the law in these three areas will impact libraries if exclusive rights are expanded in the digital environment, if online service providers (like libraries who provide public access to computers) are held liable for the infringements of others. At a public meeting held in December 2013, LCA sat on a Department Commerce panel about online transactions. LCA is concerned about mandatory licensing regimes that make the assumption that all uses can be licensed will restrict fair use. In addition, existing licensing mechanisms and clearinghouses have a history of fraud.

LCA will follow up with reply comments on the public meeting. Additional public roundtables are tentatively scheduled in spring 2014. *ZZ*

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