

Statement of Dr. James H. Billington
The Librarian of Congress
Before the
Subcommittee on Legislative Branch Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Fiscal 2016 Budget Request
February 26, 2015

Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the honor and pleasure of providing testimony in support of the mission and fiscal 2016 budget request of the Library of Congress.

The Congress of the United States created in 1800, and has generously supported ever since, this amazing one-of-a-kind institution. We who work with and for you at the Library of Congress are deeply grateful for the annual appropriation you entrust to us. We are in continuing awe of the enduring mission you have shaped for us through a series of historic mandates. We are, at the same time, public servants living in a time of both continuing budget constraints and a continuing revolution in how knowledge is generated, communicated, and used.

I come before you today in the midst of an extraordinary year of unprecedented, purely internal, library-wide self-examination from the bottom up and top down. This collaborative process is preparing us to produce by the end of fiscal 2015 an altogether new strategic plan for fiscal years 2016-2020. It will be designed both to maximize efficiency and to minimize the cost of the Library's already proven strengths and make the nation's oldest federal cultural institution one of its most innovative.

Congress's library now acquires, preserves, and makes accessible free-of-charge the largest and most wide-ranging collection of humanity's recorded knowledge ever assembled anywhere in the world by any one institution. We also house an unparalleled collection of the multi-media cultural and intellectual creativity of the American people.

For fiscal 2016, we are asking for \$666.629 million, a 5.7 percent increase over our 2015 budget. Because of the unique skills of so many of the Library's staff, we have kept to a minimum cuts in our pay budget. But irregular funding for mandatory pay raises and price increases, attrition in our aging workforce, and limitations on new

hirings have already weakened key areas of our expertise, and they can no longer be replaced by redeployments from base funding. Therefore, the Library's budget request for fiscal 2016 is needed to cover a few critical resource additions (\$13.9 million), but mostly just mandatory pay and price level increases (\$21.9 million).

The unique services performed by the Library's dedicated and multi-talented staff include:

1. Our highest priority of providing all Congressional members and committees with authoritative, timely, and non-partisan research and analysis to support the legislative and oversight work of both houses of Congress, through the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and the world's largest Law Library (LAW).
2. Encouraging, protecting, and preserving the work of America's innovative creators through the U.S. Copyright Office (COP), which registers these works, records copyright documents, and administers the nation's copyright law.
3. Providing the only free public library reading service for blind and physically handicapped Americans wherever they live, thanks to the Library's National Service (NLS) and its home delivery of braille and talking books through local libraries.
4. Providing as the de facto national library of the United States multiple and unique services that almost invariably could not be done as well or better by any other existing institution. Library Services (LS) supports the entire library system of America through our cataloging standards and services and our multi-formatted preservation research and practices. And for 20 years the Library has been providing massive, curated, primary documents of American history and culture online for the education and inspiration of K-12 teachers and students and for life-long learners of all ages.

Congress's Library is in many ways America's strategic information reserve: a unique multi-media resource of growing importance for America in the turbulent information age. At the beginning of the current fiscal year on October 1, 2014, the Library contained more than 160 million analog items in virtually all languages and formats, and 5 petabytes of stored digital content. The Library also continues to receive, index and store copies of half a billion Twitter messages a day.

We have put in place an entirely new and collaborative top management team to bring our traditional analog and digital services closer together. We now have an outstanding new Deputy Librarian of Congress, Chief of Staff, and Associate Librarian for Library Services. All three have already successfully exercised multiple responsibilities within the Library of Congress and in the broader library community.

We have also made four additional new appointments to assure the highest quality for future core Library services: a former Dean and President at two leading universities as the director of all of the Library's Scholarly Programs; two widely experienced technologists as Interim Chief and Deputy Chief Information Officers of the Library; and a deeply experienced new permanent head of the Library's financial services division, which also does work for other Legislative branch services.

All of this new leadership – as well as our year-long, staff-level Futures Program – has been added from within the Library without any additional expenses. We are doing much more work with far fewer employees. Since 1992, the Library has added its massive digital programs to its still growing traditional analog collections and services despite losing 1,429 FTE's.

Last year, the Library provided reference services to more than 467,000 individual researchers, recorded more than 78 million visits to our web sites, and provided more than 23 million copies of braille and recorded books and magazines to more than 890,000 blind and physically handicapped reader accounts.

In recent years, the Library has operated with progressively fewer resources. The total federal appropriation has decreased in excess of 7.8 percent: from \$684.3 million in fiscal 2010 to \$630.9 million in fiscal 2015.

Our fiscal 2016 budget request will further reduce the number of authorized FTE positions across the Library by 405 – 11 percent – because we cannot support them with current funding. We have cut critical infrastructure, deferred important investments, consolidated broad program areas, and strengthened governance processes.

We will need in the near future more flexibility in hiring an expert staff – not just for this Library, but for our country. The erosion of basic funding is already compromising our ability to deliver high-quality knowledge resources to the Congress and the American people. And we must make key new investments in the critical infrastructure of our aging physical plant and information technology.

The following are some of the most pressing challenges that the Library faces if it is to avoid unintentionally slipping into a decline that might be easy to overlook but impossible to reverse.

The Library's Congressional Research Service provides objective, nonpartisan information and analysis solely in support of the Congress. Last year, in the 100th year of its founding, CRS served 100% of Congressional Members and standing committees through tailored briefings, varied programs, and confidential memoranda. The Service supported Congress with a full range of written analyses and personal consultations for which the Director's testimony provides a detailed chronicle. CRS must often move quickly to marshal resources from a variety of disciplines across and beyond the Service to provide Members and committees with legal and policy options to confront complex and fast-moving national and international problems.

CRS has lost senior expertise in areas that cannot easily be back-filled: trade, defense, natural resources, social policy, and public finance — and continues to need dynamically to reshape its workforce to continue to provide the authoritative and objective research and analytical support that have been the Service's hallmark for the last 100 years.

Storage Space: Delays in executing the Ft. Meade master plan have left the Library's existing facilities functionally beyond capacity. Nearly a million books are currently stored on the floor or on book trucks in the Jefferson and Adams buildings, with more than 175,000 new volumes arriving every year. Continuous growth of the collections without a commensurate increase in acceptable storage space has led to a crisis of significant proportion, posing threats to the safety and well-being of Library staff; the preservation and security of collections; the ability needed to serve the Congress, researchers, and the nation through free interlibrary loans; and preserving the structural integrity of the book stack areas of the Jefferson and Adams Buildings. We urgently seek \$4.8 million to expand collections storage capacity through the installation of compact shelving and lease of interim collections storage space until planned Ft. Meade modules are available. We are grateful for fiscal 2014 funding for the construction of Ft. Meade Module 5; however, even when Module 5 is fully built and available in fiscal 2018, we will still be unable adequately to meet our storage needs and unable to mitigate the issues of overcrowding and safety violations. In the long run, completion of the storage modules at Ft. Meade will be vastly more cost effective.

The Law Library is a small enterprise with a critical mission that is now unable to address fundamental collection needs after multiple years of unfunded pay increases and direct budget cuts. Additional funding is essential to ensure that the Law

collections are cataloged in compliance with accessibility and classification standards and accessibility widely accepted by all researchers. As of September 30, 2014, approximately 408,000 volumes remained unclassified.

Skill Gaps: Over the last five years, the Library has developed significant skill gaps that have opened up serious holes in word-class expertise, many of which are caused by the Library's inability to back-fill. Holding positions vacant is one of the few means available to accommodate mandatory pay raises in the absence of new funding. Identifying and filling skill gaps was one of the strongest recommendations of the staff in the Futures Program.

Library Services, the largest unit of the Library, recently lost the language and subject matter expertise and technical skills of its sole South Asian expert, seriously reducing the servicing of collections and reference questions about India. We also lost our Turkic language expert, radically diminishing our acquisitions and reference service material from the many different Turkic-language-speaking countries. The Manuscript Division now lacks high-level subject matter expertise in legal, military, science, and technology. And many Library Services divisions, as well as the Law Library, need more skilled technologists to work with our growing digital content.

The U.S. Copyright Office: A Scholar in Residence recently delivered to the Register a comprehensive report with recommendations for transforming the operation of publicly recording copyright-related documents, including copyright assignments and licenses. It was the first substantive analysis of document recordation in several decades and will assist the Register in planning activities necessary to bringing recordation online in fiscal 2015 and 2016. The Copyright Office also recently published a major policy study on the current music licensing system, *Copyright and the Music Marketplace*, which one leading industry publication called a "rare instance of government getting out in front of moving technology." The many challenges of copyright in the digital age are discussed in detail in the separate report of the Register of Copyrights to the committee.

Despite our many challenges, this is a time of great promise for the Library. In all areas, digital technology is transforming the way we do our work and deliver services to the Congress and its constituents.

We are asking for \$2 million to fund the Digital Collections Center, to provide proper stewardship of the Library's rapidly growing digital content. Over the last five years, the Library's traditional analog collections have averaged 3.6 million added pieces per year. During this same period, stored digital content has grown

exponentially from roughly 125 to 582 terabytes, increasing stored digital data by an annual average of more than 73 percent. The development of a dedicated Digital Collections Center, with the capacity to manage and sustain all this digital content, is an essential investment to fulfill the Library's collections stewardship mission now and into the foreseeable future.

The Library's strategic management of its information technology assets and operations is a significant issue addressed in the report language of this committee last year and in recent findings of the GAO. Management of recommendations in strategic planning, enterprise architecture, human capital management, investment management, system acquisition and development, security, service management, are all challenges that our Interim Chief Information Officer and her Deputy are now moving aggressively to address, and the Library is conducting a national search for a permanent Chief Information Officer, whom we expect to have in place by the end of this year.

Last year I spoke of the Futures Program that will inform the next strategic plan. Library staff from many different programs and levels, below the Executive Committee, suggested new 21st century approaches to fulfilling the Library's historic service missions. The Futures Program's recommendations have generally built on the Library's unique strengths and required minimal new resources. They retained the historical integrity and objectivity of all Library of Congress services, keeping the Library free from any commercial or political advocacy agendas, demonstrating the Library's importance for sustaining American leadership in an increasingly knowledge-dependent world, and launching new initiatives.

The Library is also meeting the challenges of minimizing duplication in performing its services – placing a much greater emphasis on shared services both across the Legislative Branch and within the Library. Currently, the Legislative Branch Financial Management System (LBFMS), which holds the financial system not only for the Library but also for four other Legislative Branch agencies, resides at the Library. In fiscal 2016, the Architect of the Capitol will become the fifth cross-serviced agency.

The Library collaborated with the House and Senate and with other Legislative Branch agencies to more effectively exchange and present legislative information by adding new online features and data to Congress.gov and by contributing to the Speaker's Bulk Data Task Force. Internally, the Library is moving forward with a range of shared service initiatives, such as implementing a Library-wide geospatial information system to address the mutual needs of staff in CRS, Library Services, and the Law Library in responding to congressional requests. Other examples of service

and economy-motivated joint opportunities are the execution of a Library-wide plan for the contract and use of mobile devices, development of a business case for Library-wide performance of IT security certification and accreditation requirements, and forming the requirements for a single authoring/publishing system for research performed at the Library.

The Library's Veterans History Project (VHP) was unanimously mandated by both houses of Congress, is now the largest oral history project in America. VHP will celebrate its 15th anniversary in October and will soon reach 100,000 recorded oral histories. Over the last year this program has collaborated with more than 150 congressional offices, providing constituent services, briefings, and volunteer training sessions for interviewing those who served in the military in all America's wars during the last century.

In 2014, the Library continued its very popular evening services of Congressional Dialogues on Great American Presidents, provided exclusively for Members of Congress. The Library's new James Madison Council Chairman, David Rubenstein, skillfully interviewed renowned experts like David McCullough, Scott Berg, and Doris Kearns Goodwin about the challenges and accomplishments of seven iconic Presidents: George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson. Members then asked questions and made off-the-record comments, having previously studied key original documents from each President's collections in the Library's vast holdings of early Americans. We are continuing this series into 2015, expanding it to include great Americans. These unique events regularly attract at least 120 Members of Congress, and this year's series opened on February 3rd with a well-attended dinner and dialogue on Benjamin Franklin.

The Library has presented a particularly rich array of public exhibitions and special events over the past year. More than 112,000 visitors viewed the *Magna Carta: Muse and Mentor* exhibition at the Library from November 6, 2014 to January 19, 2015 in honor of the 800th anniversary of this document. The King John 1215 Magna Carta, loaned by the Lincoln Cathedral, was its centerpiece, and rare items from the Library's rich collections showed the Magna Carta's importance on the development of constitutional law in the United States. Seven United States Supreme Court Justices took part in the celebratory events along with a former Chief Justice of the United Kingdom, and HRH The Princess Royal, the only daughter of Queen Elizabeth II.

Other new Library exhibitions last year included *Mapping a New Nation: Abel Buell's Map of the United States, 1784*; *A Thousand Years of the Persian Book*; and *The Civil*

Rights Act of 1965: A Long Struggle to Freedom, with Martin Luther King, Jr.'s original copyrighted "I Have a Dream" speech.

The Library of Congress had an unusually rich year of free poetry readings and concerts. Particularly memorable was a program led by the great baritone Thomas Hampson celebrating the different historical stages and version of our national anthem and a star-studded program at a packed Constitution Hall honoring Billy Joel with the Gershwin Prize for lifetime achievement in popular song. PBS extended the length of its nation-wide television broadcast from its customary hour to a first-ever 90 minutes.

On February 4, 2015 the Library formally opened to researchers the Rosa Parks collection of approximately 7,500 manuscripts and 2,500 photographs. On loan to the Library for ten years from the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, the collection includes personal correspondence and photographs, and letters from presidents. A small display of items from the collection will subsequently be on public exhibit.

From March 4-7 we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's great speech at his Second Inaugural with a rare public display of the President's original reading copy. The 15th annual National Book Festival will take place this September.

The Library of Congress is the world's preeminent reservoir of knowledge. The Library embodies and advances the distinctly American ideal of a knowledge-based democracy. We will be grateful for your consideration of our fiscal 2016 funding request.