

# Washington Hotline



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According to ALA President-elect Richard M. Dougherty, two overriding needs will affect ALA's recommendations for reauthorization of the Higher Education Act: (1) assistance in taking advantage of the continued and increasing extent to which technology is altering the profile of library service, and (2) aid in combating the increasing shortage of library professionals, especially Ph.D. faculty members, minorities, and certain specializations.

Dougherty, professor at the School of Information and Library Studies at the University of Michigan and former director of libraries there, was scheduled to testify on November 20 in Washington, D.C., at the last of several regional hearings on HEA held by the Department of Education. In its notice (54 *Federal Register* 39972-74) announcing the hearings, the Department asked two questions about library programs: "Is there a need for Federal support of college and university libraries? If need exists, how should a Federal program or programs be structured to disburse Federal funds to address those needs?"

Dougherty called for a visible federal role because college and university libraries collectively represent the resource infrastructure which supports not only undergraduate and graduate education, but academic research and development as well as laboratory, experimental, and developmental research by scholars and researchers at locations beyond the campus. The benefits of access to library resources and to librarian expertise flow freely beyond those who teach or pay tuition at any one campus. This "public good" characteristic of academic and research libraries is in the national interest as it fosters U. S. educational achievement, economic development, and informed government and citizen decision-making.

With the stimulus of federal funds, librarians have used technology to enhance this "public good" aspect of information flow to share library resources across institutional, local, and state boundaries. A federal stimulus is needed for cutting edge developments as well as for assisting smaller and more isolated libraries to enter the world of shared electronic information, for preserving library materials, and for links to the proposed National Research and Education Network.

On the supply of professionals, Dougherty indicated that shortages are critical in the areas of school media, children's and young adult services, science reference, and cataloging. In addition, the number of minority librarians with master's degrees has declined, paralleling the decline in HEA II-B fellowship funds. The shortage of appropriately prepared faculty members in graduate library schools is severe and growing, a situation with profound implications for the education of the next generation of librarians, and for future research in the field.

Together with the higher education community and the Association of Research Libraries, ACRL/ALA is in the process of formulating specific recommendations for the upcoming HEA reauthorization. Other librarians who commented to the Department of Education on HEA are urged to send a copy to the ALA Washington Office, 110 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, DC 20002.

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