

Academic librarians and the 105th Congress

Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) and new initiatives on intellectual property and copyright legislation will be critical legislative issues important to academic librarians to be addressed by the 105th Congress when it convenes this month.

Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act

(HEA). HEA reauthorization is a critical legislative initiative for higher education advocates and academic librarians. Congress is expected to begin its work on HEA immediately though some predict it will not be completed until 1998. Two key issues for debate are the costs of higher education and the future of various student aid programs.

The U.S. Department of Education has requested public comments regarding reauthorization of HEA. As published in the *Federal Register* (November 19, 1996, 58937-40), the Department's initial questions for public comment deal almost exclusively with student aid programs and related management issues. ALA has been in contact with other higher education groups that also seem to be focusing on the cost and finance issues. However, this is still an excellent opportunity to weigh in on important issues.

Academic librarians are encouraged to respond to Secretary of Education Richard Riley's request for comments, suggestions, or ideas regarding reauthorization proposals. Write to: Adam Ochlis, 600 Independence Ave., SW, ROB-3, Room 4050, Washington, DC 20202 or to the following e-mail address created specifically for reauthorization: reauth_l@ed.gov. Comments must be received on or before January 31, 1997.

New initiatives on intellectual property and copyright legislation. Intellectual property and copyright legislation will continue to be a critical issue before the 105th Congress.



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Legislation that would have fundamentally upset the current balance in United States copyright law was rejected in the last Congress because of its potentially negative effects on American industry, education, and public access to the Internet. Similar international proposals were debated—and potentially adopted—by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) during a three-week December

Diplomatic Conference in Geneva, Switzerland. Just prior to international copyright negotiations at WIPO, five major library associations urged U.S. delegates to reconsider their positions and not to negotiate on issues on which there is no consensus. In addition to ALA, the other four associations were the Association of Research Libraries, the American Association of Law Libraries, the Medical Library Association, and the Special Libraries Association.

Stay informed of legislative initiatives

There are a number of resources available to you to keep up-to-date on these and other issues. ALAWON, the ALA Washington Office Newsline, is a regular e-mail publication. To subscribe electronically visit <http://www.ala.org/washoff/subscribe.html> or send the message: subscribe ala-wo [your_firstname][your_lastname] to listproc@ala1.ala.org. ALAWON is also available at <http://www.ala.org/washoff/alawon/>. The monthly *ALA Washington News*, fact sheets, and other updates on key federal legislative issues covered by the ALA Washington Office and the Office for Information Technology Policy are also found at <http://www.alawash.org>.

The monthly *ALA Washington News* is also published in paper form for \$35/year. Contact the ALA Washington Office at (800) 941-8478 for subscription information.

The ALA Washington office welcomes your ideas on other ways to communicate with academic librarians and how ALA can be of further support on legislative issues. We look forward to working with ACRL and its members on these and other critical issues during the 105th Congress. ■

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