

# Advocating equity: ALA's new campaign

By Linda K. Wallace

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*This year's National Library Week is April 14-20*

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**I**nformation is the currency of democracy. Just as libraries have traditionally provided books and other information resources for all people regardless of their ability to pay, today's libraries must also offer public access to electronic sources.

Led by President Betty J. Turock, the American Library Association (ALA) is focusing this year's advocacy campaign on "Equity on the Information Superhighway."

"Nothing is more important to the future of our country than equal access to information for all people," said Turock. "Our goal is to make sure that every American has access to information online at their school, public, college, and university libraries."

## Summit to explore technology

In addition to a 10-city media tour featuring Turock and other library leaders, several key activities are planned to help deliver the equity message. These include a summit with experts from various fields discussing the impact of new information technology; an Equity Petition to be sent to members of Congress; and "Log on @ the Library Day," designed to spotlight the role of libraries in putting the public online.

The summit titled "A Nation Connected: Defining the

Public Interest in the Information Superhighway" will take place February 20 at the Annenberg Center in Rancho Mirage, California. Harvard law professor Charles Ogletree will be the moderator with Turock serving as chair.

Panelists will include Arno Penzias, Nobel Prize-winner and vice-president of AT&T Labs; Andrew Blau, director, Communications Policy Program for the Benton Foundation; Esther Dyson, president of EDventure Holdings and newly appointed chair of the Electronic Frontier Foundation; Craig Howe, director of the D'Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian; Reed Tuckson, president, Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science; Herbert Schiller, professor of communications, University of California at San Diego; and Anne Branscomb, communications consultant at the Harvard University Program on Information Resources Policy.

The summit is designed to serve as a model for a series of "mini-summits" to be held throughout the country. The proceedings will be videotaped and highlights made available.

A "white paper" with reaction statements by library leaders will be published and distributed widely to policy-makers, the media, and others. The proceedings will also serve as the focus of discussion at the President's Program during the ALA Annual Conference in New York, July 4-10, 1996.

**Equity  
on the  
Information  
Super-  
highway**

## Support the Equity Petition drive

The Equity Petition aims to collect signatures from all

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Linda K. Wallace is director of the ALA Public Information Office; e-mail: [linda.wallace@ala.org](mailto:linda.wallace@ala.org)

those who agree there must be equity on the information superhighway and that it must begin with our nation's libraries. The goal is to deliver the petitions to key members of Capitol Hill on National Library Legislative Day, May 7.

The Equity Petition is available online from the ALA homepage at <http://www.ala.org>. Camera-ready art is available from the ALA Public Information Office.

### **"Log on @ the Library"**

All types of libraries—academic, public, and school—are invited to join in taking members of the public on a cruise down the information superhighway as part of "Log on @ the Library Day" to be held Tuesday, April 16, during National Library Week.

"Log on Day" will be promoted to national media as a way to highlight the wealth of information available online and the role of libraries in providing public access.

Turock noted that many academic librarians have been leaders in providing online connections and encouraged them to lend their expertise to other librarians who may need assistance. Those without connections can ask their colleagues, computer stores, or other volunteers to help them stage demonstrations and invite administrators to see for themselves why their library should be connected.

A "tour guide," including the White House, Congress, a jobs bulletin board, and other key sites, will be available at <http://www.ala.org/logon> day and other servers across the country.

A free "Advocating Equity" tip sheet with camera-ready art for the Equity Petition, sample media materials, and other information is available from the ALA Public Information Office at (800) 545-2433, ext. 5044/5041; fax: (312) 944-8520; e-mail: [pio@ala.org](mailto:pio@ala.org).



## **10 things you can do**

1) Start collecting signatures on the Equity Petition. Involve students and faculty. Post copies in the student union and other campus and community gathering places. Circulate the petition at speaking engagements or meetings that you attend.

2) Suggest "Equity on the Information Superhighway" and public access to electronic information as a topic for class discussions and campus forums.

3) Issue a news release about "Log on Day" to campus and community media. Submit a letter to the editor or opinion column to the newspaper. Schedule radio and TV interviews to talk about "Why Americans can't wait for equity on the information superhighway."

4) Stage a demonstration of the information superhighway in student, faculty, and community centers such as the student union or a shopping mall. Work with other types of libraries. Get students involved. Have petitions ready to sign.

5) Host special "Log on Day" demonstrations for campus decision-makers and funders, students, faculty, administrative and support staff. You may also want to invite the mayor and other community VIPs. Serve refreshments. Be sure to have those attending sign the Equity Petition.

6) Use "Freedom of Information Day" on March 16 and "Log on @ the Library Day" on April 16 during National Library Week 1996 as prime opportunities to collect Equity Petition signatures.

7) Post copies of the Equity Petition on your campus electronic bulletin boards and listservs.

8) Write a letter to your state or federal representatives urging their support for funding and policies that support libraries as onramps to the information superhighway.

9) Send signed petitions no later than May 1, 1996, to the ALA Washington Office, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Suite 403, Washington, DC 20004.

10) Assemble a delegation of student and faculty library advocates to deliver signed petitions to members of Congress on National Library Legislative Day, Tuesday, May 7, in Washington D.C.