



February 24, 2006

The Honorable Charles H. Taylor
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Room B-308, Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6023

The Honorable Norman D. Dicks
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Room B-308, Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6023

Dear Chairman Taylor and Ranking Member Dicks:

On behalf of the American Association of Law Libraries, the Special Libraries Association, the American Library Association and the Association of Research Libraries, we write today in opposition to the proposed \$2.5 Million cut in the FY 2007 budget of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that will likely result in the closure of the Headquarters Library as well as many of its 27 regional and laboratory libraries. The proposed cuts to the EPA's FY 2007 budget put their libraries' collections and services at risk and will seriously harm the public's ability to access the Agency's valuable resources.

Together, our associations represent over 139,000 libraries throughout the United States and the millions of library patrons who use our facilities and services. We work collaboratively on a host of important information policy issues that support our Nation's libraries and promote access to information for creative, research, and educational uses. Our members know first hand how important the EPA library collections and services are to the American public.

The EPA libraries provide access to important environmental resources including unique primary source documents produced by the Agency. Their mission is to serve the information needs of EPA's own scientists and staff as well as members of the general public, including your constituents. With this proposal that could eliminate many of its libraries, EPA's leadership is making it more difficult for the agency's policymakers and the public to leverage the extensive knowledge found in high quality, accurate information to make important decisions on our Nation's environment, potentially compromising the public's health. We urge you, at a minimum, to restore the \$2.5 Million needed for these libraries to continue to operate at the same level in FY 2007. We further request that you urge the EPA to follow recommendations made in several recent EPA reports to transform the operations of the EPA Libraries by implementing centralized and coordinated services.

It is especially disappointing that these budget cuts to the EPA Libraries follow the good faith efforts of their staff over the past few years to analyze their network and develop a vision for centralized and coordinated services to improve their operations. The findings, recommendations and action plans in three important reports—*Business Case for Information Services: EPA's Regional Libraries and Centers* (January 2004), *Transforming EPA Libraries: Creating a national capacity for information management and retrieval* (June 2004) and *EPA Library Network: Challenges for FY 2007 and Beyond* (November 2005)—have been all but ignored by the Agency. They provide new models for information services to reduce duplication, cut costs and improve the national capability of the EPA. If implemented, these proposed new models would align resources with an optimal structure for leveraging investments, staff and vision.

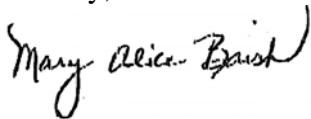
The importance of the EPA's libraries cannot be underestimated. Each year, they handle more than 134,000 research requests from the Agency's own scientific and enforcement staff; house and catalog an estimated 50,000 unique documents that are available nowhere else; and operate public reading rooms that provide your constituents with access to EPA publications and databases. The regional libraries maintain public reading rooms that are required by law, such as the Risk Management Plans' Office of Consequence Analysis reading rooms, Superfund dockets, and FACA or FOIA reading rooms. They also serve as public information centers and coordinate publication of the EPA Region's technical reports.

EPA's draft FY 2007 budget contains a \$500,000 budget reduction for the EPA Headquarters Library and for Library Network coordination projects, both of which are managed by the Office of Environmental Information. The EPA Headquarters Library provides all the core services for staff of most program offices based in the Washington, D.C. area and provides public access to its unique collections. Together, the EPA Headquarters, regional and laboratory libraries serve as the institutional repositories for both internal documentation as well as the commercially published literature about the topics agencies regulate, investigate, and research. Their collections support the information needs of users of public, academic, research, law and special libraries throughout the country.

In conclusion, we are very concerned that the cuts in the EPA's FY 2007 budget will risk the closure of its Headquarters Library and many of its regional and laboratory libraries. It is especially disturbing that this action comes at a time when important recommendations and an action plan for improved centralized and coordinated services have been proposed by knowledgeable information professionals. If these cuts are implemented, they will severely weaken or eliminate public access to the EPA's scientific and technical information resources as well as the expertise of the information professionals who know how to identify and analyze them.

We urge the Subcommittee to restore the \$2.5 Million needed for the EPA libraries to continue to operate at the same level in FY 2007 and to require the EPA to develop an innovative information management strategy for the 21st Century that provides for continued public access to the collections and services of EPA Libraries. We look forward to working with you and the EPA to help them implement the recommendations of their recent reports. We also ask that you please include this statement as part of the March 2nd hearing record on the EPA's FY 2007 appropriations. Thank you very much for your consideration in this important matter.

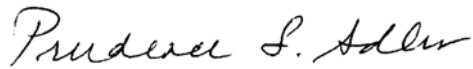
Sincerely,



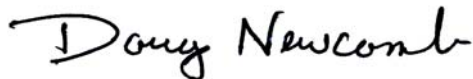
Mary Alice Baish
American Association of Law Libraries



Emily Sheketoff
American Library Association

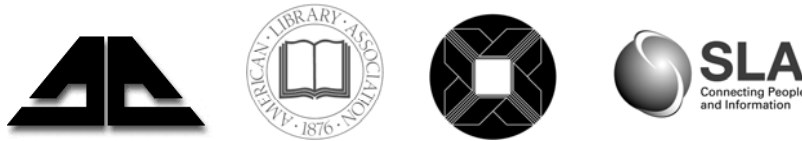


Prudence S. Adler
Association of Research Libraries



Douglas Newcomb
Special Libraries Association

cc: Stephen L. Johnson, Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency
Linda Travers, Acting Assistant Administrator and Chief Information Officer



The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) is a nonprofit educational organization with over 5,000 members nationwide. AALL's mission is to promote and enhance the value of law libraries to the legal and public communities, to foster the profession of law librarianship, and to provide leadership in the field of legal information and information policy. <http://www.aall.org/>
Contact: Mary Alice Baish (202-662-9200)

The American Library Association (ALA) is a nonprofit educational organization of over 65,000 librarians, library trustees, and other friends of libraries dedicated to improving library services and promoting the public interest in a free and open information society. <http://www.ala.org/>
Contact: Patrice McDermott (202-628-8410)

The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) is a nonprofit organization of 123 research libraries in North America. ARL's members include university libraries, public libraries, government and national libraries. Its mission is to shape and influence forces affecting the future of research libraries in the process of scholarly communication. ARL programs and services promote equitable access to and effective uses of recorded knowledge in support of teaching, research, scholarship and community service. <http://www.arl.org/>
Contact: Prue Adler (202-296-2296)

The Special Libraries Association (SLA) is a nonprofit global organization for innovative information professionals and their strategic partners. SLA serves more than 12,000 members in 83 countries in the information profession, including corporate, academic and government information specialists. SLA promotes and strengthens its members through learning, advocacy and networking initiatives. <http://www.sla.org/>
Contact: Doug Newcomb (703-647-4923)