

News Release: American Library Association

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From: Peggy Barber, Director
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For immediate release

Washington, D.C. - Robert Wedgeworth, Executive Director of the American Library Association, has urged the U.S. Senate to reject President Ford's nomination of historian Daniel J. Boorstin to be the twelfth Librarian of Congress.

He noted that it was just as unreasonable to expect a person who is unfamiliar with the administration of a large library to become a successful librarian of Congress as it would be to expect someone unfamiliar with the law to become an outstanding Attorney General.

Wedgeworth's remarks came in testimony Wednesday afternoon before the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration. Boorstin's nomination is subject to confirmation by the Senate.

"Selection (of the Librarian of Congress) must be made on the evidence that a candidate is knowledgeable about the activities of the institution which he is going to administer and sympathetic with the goals of the field in which he is expected to be a leader," said Wedgeworth in his testimony.

The membership of the ALA, which encompasses some 35,000 librarians, library trustees, publishers, authors, information scientists and citizens, adopted resolutions opposing Boorstin's appointment during its annual conference held recently in San Francisco.

"Our major objection to Dr. Boorstin's candidacy is simply that we have found no evidence of managerial expertise...and no evidence of experience in the

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direction of any significant library programs," said Wedgeworth. He said the ALA's officers and membership have concluded that there is no relationship between Dr. Boorstin's distinguished career as an author, historian and a Smithsonian official and the specific duties and responsibilities of the Librarian of Congress.

Boorstin's appointment culminated a two-year search for a successor to L. Quincy Mumford, who retired as Librarian. During that time, the ALA continually urged that selection of the next Librarian of Congress be based on proven administrative experience and leadership capability as well as extensive professional knowledge of libraries and prominence in library affairs.

"This recommendation was based," said Wedgeworth, "not on myopic pre-occupation with the profession of librarianship, but on the practical knowledge of the complex and far reaching decisions which must be made if the Librarian of Congress is to fulfill the promise of Dr. Mumford's tenure."

Emphasizing that the selection of the Librarian of Congress was an issue "with profound implications," Wedgeworth said: "During the next few years, the Librarian of Congress will be expected to exercise judgment which will affect the lives of libraries and library users throughout the world. These decisions will involve sophisticated issues in information science and administration."

The Librarian of Congress, he pointed out, will have to direct an institution which employs over 4,000 persons and has an annual budget of nearly \$120 million -- "an institution," said Wedgeworth, "which has been continually plagued by racial problems and managerial difficulties and which is to be reorganized and expanded into a major new facility."

Wedgeworth projected that certain ongoing elements of the Library of Congress will become increasingly important in future years, including use of computer technology for bibliographic services, a national reference network, service to the blind and physically handicapped and the preservation of library and archival materials.

"The person named Librarian of Congress must act as the leader in an emerging

network of state and local library systems which are gradually connecting the university, college, public and even school libraries of this country into one cooperating resource for citizens everywhere," said Wedgeworth.

"American libraries," he said, "are now on the verge of being able to launch a truly nationwide library system."

"To de-emphasize the professional experience and competence which has been concentrated on developing access to library collections in this country is to misunderstand the genius of American librarianship," said Wedgeworth.

"In selecting a person to administer this great institution, it is essential that Congress choose a librarian who will be sensitive to the complex role demanded of this national institution in the critical years to come.

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