

Resolution on the United States Information Agency

WHEREAS, The United States Information Agency (USIA) has, over the past years, developed an excellent record in fulfilling its mission "to understand, inform and influence foreign publics in promotion of the U.S. national interest, and to broaden the dialogue between Americans, their institutions and their counterparts, abroad"; and

WHEREAS, The USIA has not been an instrument for any single U.S. department or agency; and

WHEREAS, The USIA, through its exchange programs such as the Library Fellows Program, have contributed to the proper explanation and advocating U.S. policies in terms that are credible and meaningful in foreign countries; and

WHEREAS, The USIA programs have promoted cultural and educational cooperation and understanding between the U.S. and other foreign countries; and

WHEREAS, The USIA has demonstrated its ability to aid and assist developing countries to realize their ambitions through the exploitation of library and information technologies; and

WHEREAS, U.S. participants in USIA programs gain as much from their experiences as do the host countries; and

WHEREAS, The consequences of contacts between U.S. participants in USIA programs with international librarians and educators brings favorable attention abroad to U.S. products and services resulting in economic

advantage to U.S. vendors; and

WHEREAS, USIA educational and cultural exchange programs result in the expenditure of tens of millions of dollars at colleges and universities throughout the United States;

WHEREAS, When responsibility for international exchange programs was transferred from the State Department to an independent USIA in 1978, the primary argument for the transfer was that "public diplomacy" programs -- those that support unofficial contact between us and foreign opinion leaders -- should be administered consistent with, but separate from, the conduct of the nation's official diplomacy, an argument which remains valid today, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the American Library Association register its strong opposition to the proposed transfer of the USIA to the State Department; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the United States Congress should allocate the needed funds to enable the USIA to continue to operate independently and to maintain its ability and flexibility to manage the public dialogue abroad for each of the U.S. government agencies which have lead on policy issues of foreign affairs significance; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Library Association urges all members of the United States Congress to oppose legislation that will undermine the USIA by merging it with another agency, cutting back its funding, reducing or eliminating any USIA programs relating to library programs or the exchange of librarians and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution by submitted by the American Library

Association in person or by regular or electronic mail to all members of the U.S. Congress, including chairs of budget and foreign relations committees, the State Department, the White House and the media.

Sponsor of Resolution: ALA International Relations Committee

Based on ALA Policy

ALA Policy 57

Distribution:

The President, The White House, Washington, DC 20500

Warren Christopher, U.S. Secretary of State, United States Department of State,  
2201 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20520

Joseph D. Duffey, United States Information Agency, 301 Fourth Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20547