TO: ALA Executive Board

RE: Report on Washington Office Activities

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:
For information purposes. No action requested.

ACTION REQUESTED BY:
No action requested.

CONTACT PERSON:
Emily Sheketoff, 202-628-8410, esheketoff@alawash.org

DRAFT OF MOTION:
None.

DATE: April 15, 2009

BACKGROUND:
The Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act

Last August, Congress passed legislation titled the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (CPSIA). This legislation seeks to decrease the levels of lead and phthalates in products intended for children under 12 and will be enforced by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

In December, the CPSC General Counsel wrote to the American Association of Publishers the CPSIA law to be retroactive, thus requiring every school and public library to remove all children’s books from the shelves until they can be tested for lead or ban children from the libraries. In January, OGR communicated with the CPSC and Members of Congress, and it became clear that a grassroots effort would be necessary to resolve this issue. The American Library Association initiated our grassroots network and was successful in receiving a one year stay of implementation – meaning, the legislation will not be implemented until February 10, 2010.

Additionally, OGR has been working closely with Congressman Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE), who has proposed legislation specifically to exempt ordinary books from the CPSIA. ALA will continue its grassroots outreach to collect co-signers and push for the passage of the bill should it come to the Floor for a vote.

Economic Stimulus Package

Completing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was a long and arduous process for the Obama Administration and the new Congress. Now that President Obama has signed the bill into law, our nation can begin the journey of restoring our economic stability through the programs and initiatives this law will make possible.

Throughout the process of creating this law, the Washington Office worked to inform our leaders in Washington about the programs and services libraries across the country are providing to help America get back to work, such as assistance with resume building and online job searching as well as free classes to teach the public 21st century job skills.

Due to the confusing nature of this legislation, the ALA Washington office launched bi-monthly calls to ensure that ALA members have the most up-to-date information possible. Previous topics included updates on the state stabilization fund and Senior workers. Details on the broadband programs will be covered as more information becomes available. ALA Chapters have an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback for upcoming agendas.

The calls have been successful, with over 35 states participating in each call. The Washington Office will continue these calls as long as they remain informative and relevant.
As part of funds from ALA for 2010 Projects, we were able to retain expert consults from e-Copernicus, a company headed by the former Assistant Secretary of NTIA and the former Assistant Secretary of RUS, to help our members position themselves as critical stakeholders in the development of a national Broadband policy. They join the expertise we already had on the FCC. They are providing expert help and guidance about NTIA and RUS, the two agencies administering the new ARRA broadband funds.

To better inform the membership about the details surrounding ARRA funds, we will have a number of presentations at ALA’s Annual Conference, including a workshop within the Washington Office Update Session, two Membership Town Hall Meetings, a session for the Virtual ALA Annual Conference and two targeted meetings with the Office of Information Technology Policy Subcommittees.

And finally, we are using some of the funds to travel to some state chapter meetings and develop a series of podcasts, webinars and screencasts to help ALA members in their efforts to apply for these ARRA grants.

FY2010 Budget

President Obama released a budget outline in February, which specially mentioned the importance of libraries. President Obama stated in his FY2010 outline, “To give our children a fair shot to thrive in a global, information-age economy, we will equip thousand of schools, community colleges and universities with 21st Century classrooms, labs and libraries.” The Administration is expected to release program allocations in April. ALA will be pushing for increases for numerous library programs and grassroots efforts will be important to the success of those request.

OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY POLICY (OITP)

Broadband Stimulus Federal Funding

OITP, in collaboration with the OGR and other units within ALA, has been working to advocate on behalf of the library community to maximize the possibility that we can benefit from the broadband stimulus federal funding that will be available from the Departments of Commerce and Agriculture.

OITP’s efforts have been focused on the broadband funding, $7.2 billion, appropriated for NTIA and RUS. We’ve been involved in an intense effort to understand what’s going on and attempt to influence grant programs to the benefit of the library community. Details may be found at the www.ala.org/knowyourstimulus Web site.

Launch of the Broadband Strategy Advisor Activity

OITP participated in the formal launch meeting of the Opportunity Online Broadband Grant Program of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in Seattle.
The OITP representatives met with the state librarians from the seven pilot states and their staffs, and the staff of Connected Nation, the Foundation's other partner in this initiative. OITP participated in its first field meeting for this activity – in Topeka, Kan. – on February 16 and 17, providing advice and a written profile of the state’s connectivity to state librarian, Christie Brandau.

**New OITP Employee**

Marijke Visser joined the OITP staff beginning January 20, 2009, to support the Program on Networks. Her major responsibility is to provide support for OITP’s new Broadband Strategy Advisor activity. In addition, Marijke will support OITP’s E-rate advocacy and education initiatives and other activities in the Program on Networks. Marijke is completing her Master’s in Library Science degree at Indiana University.

**Google Book Search Settlement Meeting**


ALA participants included President Jim Rettig, ACRL President Erika Linke, COL Chair Ken Wiggin, and OITP Chair Mitch Freedman. Under the proposed settlement, Google and the American Association of Publishers and Authors Guild resolve their legal dispute over the scanning of millions of books provided by research libraries. The settlement still requires approval of the presiding judge. During this meeting, there was agreement that the library community submit an amicus brief that outlines recommendations for modifications of the proposed settlement to better reflect ALA values and objectives. The executive boards of all organizations agreed.

**Traditional Cultural Expression Meeting**

In mid-February, a dozen experts met at the Washington Office to discuss principles for traditional cultural expression and to begin the process of writing a statement of principles. This working meeting followed the information collection activities at the panel sessions of the conference that OITP held on this topic in November 2008. The participants are planning to have draft principles in time for the 2009 ALA Annual Conference so that feedback from the ALA membership may be obtained.

**Copyright Lessons for the Digital Age**

OITP, AASL, and the National Council of Teachers of English released a revised version
of copyright lesson plans for middle school students. New features of the lessons include models of collaborative teaching between classroom teachers and school library media specialists and connections to AASL’s Standards for the 21st Century Learner.

**OITP Staffer Publishes Article in Library Technology Reports**

In the January 2009 issue of *Library Technology Reports*, OITP IT Policy Analyst Timothy Vollmer has a piece titled "On-the-Ground Lessons from OITP's Public Library Connectivity Study." His article discusses findings from the 2007 OITP Connectivity Study, examining the exploding demand for broadband connectivity at public libraries, analyzing barriers to increasing connectivity, and suggesting ways libraries and policymakers may better plan for and implement fast connections in public libraries.

**University of Michigan Alternative Spring Break**

OITP has had the pleasure to host two students from the University of Michigan School of Information for a week during the school’s Alternative Spring Break program. Greg Grossmeier and Michael Perry, graduate students interested in information policy, spent their break working on short research projects and learning about the work of the ALA Washington Office and its allies inside the beltway.

**OITP Director Presents at RAND**

On February 18, Alan Inouye gave a presentation at RAND Washington, with remote participation by staff at RAND Pittsburgh and RAND headquarters in Santa Monica. The presentation described the library community, ALA, ALA OITP, and the Program on America's Libraries for the 21st Century.

**Section 1201 of DMCA**

The American Library Association (as a member of the Library Copyright Alliance, along with the Association of Research Libraries, the American Association of Law Libraries and the Special Libraries Association) and the Music Library Association have filed response comments supporting proposed exemptions to Section 1201 rulemaking during the second round of proceedings by the U.S. Copyright Office at the Library of Congress.

**OUTREACH**

Staff met with White House Director of Public Liaison to discuss library issues and actions the federal government could take to improve our ability deliver quality library services. Those discussions are ongoing.
Staff continues to reach out to new groups and government agencies, which are concerned with the new library priorities like workplace skills and job-searching activities.

In an effort to get members of Congress to sign onto a “Dear Colleague” letter for increased funding for LSTA and Improving Literacy Through School Libraries, CapWiz tracked 1,090 emails, and we got 26 Members of Congress to sign the letter in less than a week – an increase of 8 members over last year’s signees to the letter.

Military librarians are talking about how they can reach out to the first lady Michelle Obama and get her involved in our efforts for an increase of $25 million – specifically for base libraries – in the Defense Appropriations bill. We have been in contact with military librarians to seek examples of good services they are providing to military families so that we can share these stories with the White House and hopefully garner Michelle Obama’s interest and encourage her to visit one such library during her travels. We also asked for examples of areas of need so that we can communicate these needs to Congress and assure them that additional funding would be used to enable military libraries to better serve families.

Staff met with IMLS officials and staff from another association to encourage IMLS to promote opportunities to access resources to public libraries and help prepare them to make use of these resources.