

2002-2003 CD #20.5
2003 ALA Annual Meeting

**RESOLUTION CONCERNING
THE EDUCATION RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)**

- WHEREAS**, improving American education has been recognized as a national priority by the Congress and successive administrations; and
- WHEREAS**, for more than 35 years the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) has provided extensive access to education-related information to the world; and
- WHEREAS**, ERIC is an invaluable resource to parents, educators, researchers, librarians, and policy makers interested in providing quality education to our people both young and old; and
- WHEREAS**, each year ERIC provides expert reference and referral service in response to more than 150,000 telephone calls and e-mail messages; and
- WHEREAS**, each month more than 10 million people connect to ERIC-provided web pages, making it the most popular federally sponsored education program; and
- WHEREAS**, successful implementation of the “No Child Left Behind Act” and the “Education Sciences Reform Act” requires extensive use of the full range of ERIC system resources; and
- WHEREAS**, on April 10, 2003, the Department of Education posted a draft "Statement of Work" (SOW) that replaces the current subject-focused clearinghouses with a centralized contractor, focuses on efficiency and mechanized processing rather than quality and usability for ERIC database production, limits the role of subject experts and thereby threatens the scope and quality of both the database and existing public outreach functions, and fails to mandate adequate archiving for continuing access to ERIC resources; now, therefore, be it
- RESOLVED**, that the American Library Association (ALA) supports having experts serve the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) Clearinghouses and urges the Department of Education to propose a database construction method that continues to use this valuable network of proven expertise; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that ALA believes that the current Internet environment makes expert assistance in information gathering more crucial than ever and that the service orientation of the current ERIC system and its use of high-level expertise to provide services is a core asset that provides an important complement to the role of library reference services; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that ALA supports full coverage of education journals in the ERIC database and urges the Department of Education to continue to make use of highly qualified experts to identify appropriate individual items from other sources; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that ALA supports the inclusive scope of the current ERIC database as evidenced by the broad interpretation of their focus employed by each of the current Clearinghouses, including the adjunct ERIC Clearinghouses; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that ALA commends the high quality of the indexing in the current ERIC database and is concerned by provisions in the Draft Statement of Work (SOW) that might reduce the quality and consistency by using indexing and abstracting generated by authors, publishers, and computers; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that ALA urges that new ERIC contracts require the maintenance of such user services as the digests, toll-free telephone assistance, Ask ERIC, and extensive web pages offering multiple modes of access to ERIC resources; and be it further

RESOLVED, that ALA urges that new ERIC contracts require the maintenance of an independent archive of documents to assure their long-term availability; and be it further

RESOLVED, that ALA asserts that the quality, scope, and consistency of the ERIC database and the expertise and service orientation of the clearinghouse network must be maintained to fulfill our national commitment to education; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that ALA forwards this resolution to U.S. Department of Education Secretary, Rod Paige; U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences Director, Grover J. Whitehurst; and the appropriate Congressional committees.

Adopted by the Council of the
American Library Association
Philadelphia, PA
June 25, 2003

Keith Fiels
Secretary of the ALA Council