

**RESOLUTION ON THE NEED TO IMPROVE PUBLIC ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION DURING THE 107TH CONGRESS**

- WHEREAS,** The American public has a right to access federal government information funded by their tax dollars; and
- WHEREAS,** An informed citizenry demands current and future access to government information in order to hold government accountable to the people; and
- WHEREAS,** The American Library Association has a long-standing record of support for a more electronic Federal Depository Library Program and for providing the public with government information in formats most appropriate to user needs; and
- WHEREAS,** Congress, federal agencies, and federal courts increasingly are disseminating government information in electronic formats/media while publishing fewer products in tangible formats; and
- WHEREAS,** There are no safeguards in place to ensure either the authenticity of electronic government information or the continuous and permanent access by the public to electronic government information; and
- WHEREAS,** As a result of the deficiencies in the present system and the lack of government-wide or coordinated responsibility for maintaining permanent public access to electronic government information, countless electronic government information products and databases continue to disappear each day from federal web sites and are irretrievably lost; and
- WHEREAS,** The diffuse and decentralized nature of Internet dissemination of electronic government information makes it more difficult for the public to identify, locate, and continually access government information; and
- WHEREAS,** Absent statutory change, current and future generations of Americans are in danger of losing access to government information, denying them a public right that is essential for a democratic society; and
- WHEREAS,** The American Library Association has endorsed and adopted the "Principles for Federal Government Information" that state:
- The public has the right to access government information.
 - The government has an obligation to disseminate and provide broad public access to its information.
 - The government has an obligation to guarantee the authenticity and integrity of its information.
 - Government information created or compiled by government employees or at government expense should remain in the public domain; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the American Library Association urge Congress to enact legislation during the 107th Congress to ensure permanent public access by:

- establishing the affirmative responsibility of the federal government to provide current, continuous, and future public access to government information at no fee to the public;
- ensuring the authenticity and integrity of electronic government information in all formats; and
- improving and facilitating public access to government information in all formats/media through comprehensive identification, cataloging, indexing, locator, and verification activities that are centrally coordinated by the Superintendent of Documents; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Library Association urge Congress to hold public hearings throughout this process and include members of the library community and users of government information.

Sponsored by: Committee on Legislation

Endorsed in principle by: COL Ad hoc Subcommittee on Government Information,
Intellectual Freedom Committee
Government Documents Round Table
Federal and Armed Forces Libraries Round Table

Policy: # 50.2

Prior history: CD 20.4, January 14, 1996 and others