

Federal funding for academic libraries

Congressionally appropriated funding provides millions of dollars, direct and indirect, to college and research libraries, as well as public, school, government, and special libraries. Every year, ALA members make a significant push to fight for funding to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

For libraries, IMLS provides \$189.3 million in funding for libraries through the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). A number of academic libraries receive direct LSTA grants. Two specific LSTA programs, the National Leadership Grants for Libraries and the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian, provide direct grants to academic libraries, including recipient universities such as Montana State University, University of Notre Dame, Duke University, and University of Buffalo, to name a few. For FY2018, grants to academic libraries under these two programs ranged from less than \$25,000 to more than \$500,000.

Direct federal funding to academic libraries supports a range of activities. Academic libraries at minority-serving institutions benefit from funding under Title III of the Higher Education Act, currently receiving several hundred million dollars in funding. Title III-D authorizes support for academic constructions and/or renovation projects, but libraries are eligible for funding of these projects.

College and research libraries often access federal and congressional agencies, programs, research, and national libraries. Many college libraries participate in the Federal Depository Library program, providing students and the general public access to federal collections.

Indirect federal funding benefits college and research libraries in several ways. A federal contribution to colleges and universities for nonlibrary functions allows schools to allocate local resources for services such as libraries. Federal loan programs allow a greater number of students to attend institutions of higher education who, presumably, will spend some time at a school library to study, conduct research, and use Wi-Fi and other services.

The challenge to federal funding for domestic programs, including IMLS, will be fierce in the 116th Congress. The administration has made its position clear that they intend to cut federal support for domestic programs, such as education, while seeking increases for defense priorities.

For a third straight year, ALA expects the administration to propose elimination or significant cuts to library programs. Gains by Democrats in Congress may increase vocal support for library funding, but action will be an uphill battle.

Engagement by ACRL members is a necessary part of the ongoing campaign to protect federal library funding, and the new Congress provides a fresh opportunity to establish or reinforce relationships with elected leaders that position libraries as an integral part of the communities they represent. Advocacy is a year-round activity, and it is only through the efforts of the local constituents that decision makers will look to libraries as the sources of innovation and education that they are.

Whether it is doing research on your member of Congress or preparing for a first visit with them or their staff in their field offices, ALA's Washington Office is here to support your efforts to engage decision makers at all levels. And if you have good relations with your members of Congress, please tell us so that we can support your advocacy in our work with offices on the Hill. *zm*

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