

WASHINGTON HOTLINE



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Congressional interest in preservation issues has been increasing. House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Sidney Yates (D-IL) held a hearing April 21 in an open forum setting on brittle books microfilming, deacidification, and use of permanent paper. He had invited representatives from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Library of Congress, the Commission on Preservation and Access, several large research libraries, conservation centers, foundations, associations, the Government Printing Office, and paper manufacturers.

Most discussion centered on preservation microfilming, the plans of the Commission on Preservation and Access, and the NEH budget (which is under Interior Appropriations Subcommittee jurisdiction). Although NEH has officially requested \$4,495,000 for its Office of Preservation for FY '89, Chairman Yates requested and received a "Capability Budget" for the Office for FY 89-93 showing what could be done with an increase in funding. This thoughtfully prepared NEH document suggests \$12.5 million for the Office in FY '89, rising to \$20.3 million in FY '93.

The NEH analysis showed that a budget of \$12.5 million in FY '89 could support \$7.5 million for preservation microfilming of brittle books (including national cooperative projects and projects in individual research libraries), \$2.2 million for the U.S. Newspapers Program, \$.8 million to preserve special collections at humanities institutions, \$1 million for education and training of preservation personnel, and \$1 million for such activities as state planning projects, research and development, and conferences. The hearing indicated that libraries and other agencies were ready to increase the microfilming of brittle books, and that NEH was prepared to handle effectively a significant increase of funds for this purpose. At this writing, Yates' subcommittee had not yet made funding recommendations.

On deacidification, Librarian of Congress James Billington said he had asked Congress to approve a new approach for development of a DEZ facility. LC would license its patents for the DEZ process to a chemical company which would construct and run a facility at its own expense. Part of the contract negotiations would be to establish a treatment price per volume, estimated at \$4-5, for both LC and other libraries' volumes.

Rep. Yates asked a few questions, but deferred to the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee. However, he offered to speak to Chairman Vic Fazio (D-CA) on LC's behalf. On May 5, Fazio's subcommittee approved LC's request to contract with the private sector for a mass deacidification facility, but said it was not willing to support a "sole source" technology solution. Any procurement should specify, in addition to the safety, mass production and quality standards required by LC and the library community, only the results or product required, not the technology to be used. LC had also wanted to double its preservation microfilming; the House subcommittee approved about half the increase requested.

On the use of permanent paper, Rep. Yates was interested in plant capacity, cost comparisons, increased use by GPO, and what incentives would increase its use. ALA's Midwinter Resolution on Use of Permanent Papers (CD #34) was offered for the hearing record.