President's Message:
BTOP, Broadband, E-Rate, and LITA

Karen J. Starr

By now, most LITA members have likely heard about the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) and the National Broadband Plan. The federal government is allocating grants to the states to develop their broadband infrastructure, and libraries are receiving funding to implement and expand computing in their local facilities. By September 30, 2010, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) will have made all BTOP awards. Information about these initiatives can be found at www2.ntia.doc.gov (BTOP), www.broadband.gov (National Broadband Plan), and www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oitp/index.cfm (ALA Office for Information Technology Policy).

On September 21, 2010, a public forum was held in Silicon Valley to discuss E-Rate modernization and innovation in education. The conversation addressed the need to prepare schools and public libraries for broadband. Information about the forum is archived at blog .broadband.gov. Established in 1996, the E-Rate program has provided funding for K–12 schools and public libraries for telecommunications and Internet access. The program was successful in a dial-up world. It is time to now address broadband access which is not ubiquitous on a national basis. While the social norm suggests that technology is everywhere and everyone has the skills to use it, there is still plenty of work left to do to ensure that people can use technology and compete in an increasingly digital and global world.

How does LITA participate? The new strategic plan includes an advocacy and policy goal that calls for LITA to advocate for and participate in the adoption of legislation, policies, technologies, and standards that promote equitable access to information and technology.

Within that goal are two strategies that lend themselves to the topics including playing a role with the Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP) with regard to technology related public policy and actively participating in the creation and adoption of international standards within the library community.

Colby Riggs (University of California–Irvine) represents LITA on the Office for Information Technology Policy Advisory Committee. She also serves on the LITA Technology Access Committee, which addresses similar issues. The committee is chaired by Elena M. Soltau (Nova Southeastern University). The Standards Interest Group is chaired by Anne Liebst (Linda Hall Library of Science, Engineering, and Technology). Yan Han (University of Arizona) chairs the Standards Task Force, which was charged to explore and recommend strategies and initiatives LITA can implement to become more active in the creation and adoption of new technology standards that align with the library community. The task force will submit their final report before the 2011 ALA Midwinter Meeting.

For ongoing information about LITA committees, interest groups, task forces, and activities being implemented on these and related topics, be sure to check out ALA Connect (http://connect.ala.org/) and the LITA website (http://www.lita.org). The LITA electronic discussion list is there to pose questions you might have. LITA members have an opportunity to advocate and participate in a leadership role as the broadband initiative sets the infrastructure for the next ten to fifteen years. LITA members are encouraged to pursue these opportunities to ensure a place at the table for LITA, its members, and libraries.

Karen J. Starr (kstarr@nevadaculture.org) is LITA President 2010–11 and Assistant Administrator for Library and Development Services, Nevada State Library and Archives, Carson City.