



July 1, 2008

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public
Works
U.S. Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bart Gordon
Chairman
Committee on Science and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
2310 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John D. Dingell
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Henry A. Waxman
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
2204 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Boxer:

The American Association of Law Libraries, the Medical Library Association, and the Special Libraries Association together represent more than 21,000 information professionals and librarians. Our members rely on access to current and historic scientific, environmental, legal, and other government information and are frequent users of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) libraries.

We write to thank you for your continued commitment to reopen the closed EPA libraries, including the three regional libraries in Chicago, Dallas, and Kansas and the Headquarters and Chemical libraries in Washington, DC. We appreciate your letter dated May 22, 2008 to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) requesting further review of the reorganization of EPA's library system and EPA's plan to digitize library holdings. We value and appreciate your many efforts to investigate the library closures and ensure that EPA reopens the libraries with proper planning.

However, we believe that EPA still has not adequately addressed many of the necessary details to ensure that the libraries reopen successfully. Three important points, laid out in EPA's *National Library Network Report to Congress*, need to be further examined. First, EPA should further define the scope of the libraries' required core collections. Second, EPA should lay out the requirements for hiring knowledgeable professional staff. And third, EPA must work with the relevant unions and other stakeholders to ensure adequate

space for the libraries. We urge you to request that EPA clarify its plans on these three items, and make them publicly available to all stakeholders.

Representatives from our associations first met with EPA officials about the library closures in spring 2006. At that time, we expressed our concerns, in part because EPA had announced the closures of several of its libraries, but had provided few details of how it would go about ensuring the same level of service necessary to meet the needs of library users. Since then, EPA has remained ambiguous and not forthcoming about its plans. We applaud GAO's recent review of EPA's library reorganization, *EPA Needs to Ensure That Best Practices and Procedures Are Followed When Making Further Changes to Its Library Network*, which included recommendations that EPA improve its outreach efforts and ensure sufficient oversight and monitoring of the reorganization. However, EPA has not adequately responded to these recommendations.

We were extremely disappointed with EPA's *National Library Network Report to Congress*, the report required by the FY 2008 appropriations omnibus bill (H.R. 2764). We find the report lacks a substantive plan for the reopening of the libraries and we continue to have many concerns about its lack of specificity. Our first concern is the ambiguity of the scope of EPA's proposed "core collection" of reference materials for the regional libraries. EPA fails to define what the core collection will include or how it will make certain that each library includes the items in the collection. We expressed these concerns during a conference call that EPA held for us earlier this year. Unfortunately, EPA representatives could not define the materials beyond a suggested set of reference materials for each library. We believe it is imperative that EPA define the core collection to ensure that it meets the needs of library users.

Second, during the conference call, we questioned how EPA would ensure the hiring of knowledgeable library professionals to staff the libraries. With the library closings, EPA lost many skilled and talented librarians who had critical knowledge of the agency's institutional memory. EPA told us that because the agency contracts out its staffing for the libraries, the company under contract, rather than EPA, determines the qualifications for the new hires. It is imperative that EPA hire knowledgeable and experienced library professionals. EPA must make that a condition for the contracting entity.

Third, we are concerned that the reopened libraries will be housed in inadequate space, making it difficult for the libraries to properly serve their patrons. Adequate space is needed to house the EPA materials and also to ensure that patrons have the resources and space they need to conduct research. Library staff must also have enough work space. We understand that EPA and PEER have recently begun negotiations on the reopening of the Chicago regional library and hope that adequate space for that library will be found.

We thank you again for your continuing oversight of the EPA library closures and hope that you will consider pressing EPA on the issues we have raised. We especially appreciate your request that EPA consult with all interested and affected groups. The agency's communications with the library community at-large have been infrequent and largely non-substantive, and we hope EPA takes a more proactive communications role in the future.

It is imperative that EPA goes about its reorganization and reopening process responsibly. We are happy to meet with you to discuss these and other concerns, including EPA's failure to finalize standards for their digitization efforts. Please contact Mary Alice Baish, Acting Washington Affairs Representative of the American Association of Law Libraries, at (202) 662-9200 with any questions.

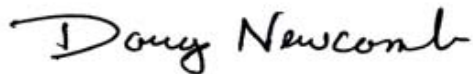
Sincerely,



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American Association of Law Libraries

MAXIMIZING THE POWER OF THE LAW LIBRARY COMMUNITY SINCE 1906

The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) is a nonprofit educational organization with over 5,000 members nationwide. AALL's mission is to promote and enhance the value of law libraries to the legal and public communities, to foster the profession of law librarianship, and to provide leadership in the field of legal information and information policy. <http://www.aall.org/>

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The Medical Library Association (MLA), a nonprofit, educational organization, is a leading advocate for health sciences information professionals with more than 4,700 members worldwide. Through its programs and services, MLA provides lifelong educational opportunities, supports a knowledgebase of health information research, and works with a global network of partners to promote the importance of quality information for improved health to the health care community and the public. <http://www.mlanet.org/>

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The Special Libraries Association (SLA) is a nonprofit global organization for innovative information professionals and their strategic partners. SLA serves more than 11,000 members in 70 countries in the information profession, including corporate, academic and government information specialists. SLA promotes and strengthens its members through learning, advocacy and networking initiatives. <http://www.sla.org/>

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