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## School Library Federal Funding

*Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL)*

**National Library Legislative Day  
May 7–8, 2013**

***ALA's Position: The American Library Association asks Congress to fund the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) program at \$28.6 million for FY 2014.***

In FY 2012, the first year of this redirected money, the *Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL)* program was appropriated at \$28.6 million. By law, at least half of this money (\$14.3 million) must be allocated to a competitive grant program for underserved school libraries. The remaining money is allocated to competitive grants for national nonprofit organizations that work to improve childhood literacy.

This program is important because school libraries, and the librarians who work in them, are the primary source for digital literacy training and the related education needed for students to gain the skills to function in careers and higher education in the digital age.

At this writing, the FY 2013 amount for this grant has not yet been released. However *IAL* will be subject to the 5.23 percent across-the-board cuts from sequestration just like all federal discretionary spending.

### **Background:**

From 2002 to 2010, the *Improving Literacy through School Libraries* program had been the primary source of federal funding for school libraries. However, in recent years the President and U.S. Congress have consolidated or zero-funded this program. ALA gives a special thanks to Sens. Jack Reed (D-RI) and Thad Cochran (R-MS) who recognized that school libraries need a direct funding source in the federal budget.

In FY 2012, through report language in the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, the two senators had money redirected to the U.S. Department of Education for the *IAL* program.

With an earlier program, *Improving Literacy through School Libraries* being defunded, *IAL* has become the primary source of federal funding for school libraries. Focusing on low income schools, these funds help many schools bring their school libraries up to standards. This money is not enough to help every school library, but it does provide some support for disadvantaged schools to update materials and equipment, allowing their students to have school library services and gain skills to become college and career ready.