



Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) June 2009

LSTA

Every day across the country, libraries are meeting the needs of their communities by providing a broad range of services for people of all ages and backgrounds. Nationwide, recent statistics show that last year, libraries hosted more than 1.3 billion visits. Studies have shown that in times of economic downturn, libraries become even busier. More people, in more communities, in every state are turning to their local library for access to information and services to help them in today's economy.

LSTA was reauthorized as part of the Museum and Library Services Act of 2003 (H.R. 13) and signed into law by the president on September 25, 2003 (P.L. 108-81). LSTA is the only federal program exclusively for libraries. It is administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). LSTA is up for reauthorization in 2009.

LSTA funding enables libraries to pursue innovative opportunities, recruit and educate the next generation of librarians, and support research that is critical to libraries of all types. State libraries use the funds to support statewide initiatives and also distribute the funds through subgrants or cooperative agreements to public, school, academic, research and special libraries.

LSTA funds expand services for learning and access to information resources in all types of libraries for individuals of all ages. LSTA helps link libraries electronically and provide users access to information through state, regional, national and international networks. In many states, the state library network provides enriched content databases for information access to all in the state.

Around the country, knowledgeable librarians use LSTA funding to help patrons access essential information on a wide range of topics. They offer training on résumé development; help on Web searches of job banks; workshops on career information; links to essential educational and community services; assistive devices for people with disabilities; family literacy classes; homework help and mentoring programs; information on religions and other cultures; access to government information; a forum for enhanced civic engagement; and so much more.

While Internet use has increased substantially in the United States, nearly half of all American households still do not have computers or Internet access. Every day, libraries across the country are using LSTA funding to help provide no-fee public access to computers and the Internet in some of our most distressed communities.

According to a recent report released by the American Library Association titled, "Libraries Connect Communities: Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study 2008-2009," 71 percent of all libraries nationwide report they are the only provider of free Internet access in their communities. In rural areas, the role of the public library is even more critical as 79 percent of libraries are the only non-fee Internet provider. As a result, many libraries have begun reporting double-digit growth in computer usage in 2008.

LSTA helps libraries serve as an important link to the business community, assisting with job creation and training programs as well as assisting with business development initiatives. While this federal funding cannot provide for all library funding needs, it serves as seed money for new, innovative projects or collaborations.

Action Needed:

Library advocates should reach out to their members of Congress and inform them of ALA's priorities for the reauthorization of LSTA, which include the following:

1. Ensuring that funds made available to State Library Administrative Agencies remain flexible and allow grants to be used in a manner consistent with the purposes of LSTA including to:
 - Promote improvement in library services in all types of libraries in order to better serve the people of the United States;
 - Facilitate access to resources in all types of libraries for the purpose of cultivating an educated and informed citizenry; and
 - Encourage resource sharing among all types of libraries for the purpose of achieving economical and efficient delivery of library services to the public.

2. Ensuring that the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has the statutory authority to assume the:
 - Duties and functions of the National Commission on Library and Information Sciences (NCLIS); and
 - Responsibility for administering the National Commission for Education Statistics (NCES) programs for public and State library statistics.

3. Incorporating the "21st Century Librarian Program" at IMLS into the statute (without reducing funding for the Grants to States program) to help ensure federal funds support projects to:
 - Develop faculty and library leaders;
 - Recruit and educate the next generation of librarians;
 - Conduct research;
 - Attract high school and college students to consider careers in libraries;
 - Build institutional capacity in graduate schools of library and information science; and
 - Assist in the professional development of librarians and library staff.