



February 2, 2007

The Honorable Barbara Boxer  
Chairman  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Boxer,

As representatives of the Medical Library Association (MLA) and the Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (AAHSL), we are writing to express our opposition to the administration's \$2 million cut to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Library Network. This \$2 million cut reduced the EPA Library Network's budget by 80%. In response, the EPA has begun to shut down libraries and reassign staff.

Over the past 35 years, the EPA libraries have accumulated a vast trove of information on public health and the environment, including over 504,000 books and reports, 3,500 journals, 25,000 maps and 3.6 million items on microfilm. Unfortunately, in the process of closing the libraries, the EPA is dispersing and destroying many of these materials.

MLA and AAHSL are very concerned about the loss of the materials. We agree with the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), which represents more than 10,000 EPA scientists and whose letter of June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2006 contends that the closing of the libraries threatens thousands of scientific studies and hinders emergency preparedness and anti-pollution enforcement activities.

Furthermore, MLA and AAHSL believe that the role of librarians in knowledge management and the value that they bring to the delivery of the EPA's information services must be addressed. Prior to the closing of the EPA libraries, each one of them was staffed by experts who assisted the EPA's staff and the public in accessing the library's materials. Librarians have the training, the skill and the expertise to collect, find and organize information. While individual scientists can accomplish a great deal on their own, librarians possess specialized knowledge that allows them to access the most accurate, reliable and up-to-date resources in the most effective way. Since librarians are central to the intellectual capital of the EPA, it is essential that these key personnel not be lost through the closing of the libraries.

The valuable information maintained by the EPA libraries must be preserved. MLA and AAHSL respectfully ask that you support the full restoration of funding for the

EPA Library Network. We also ask that you request clarification and justification from the EPA on how the agency will ensure that the information services provided by the EPA libraries are preserved and continue to be made accessible during this time of transition. As associations of health information professionals, MLA and AAHSL believe that it is crucial to have a clear road map for how the EPA will manage information to support sound science and effective regulation. For this reason, we ask that you direct the EPA to keep the libraries open, and the collections and services intact, until these issues have been fully explored and brought to successful resolution.

Thank you for your leadership on environmental issues, and for scheduling this timely hearing on "Oversight of Recent EPA Actions." The hearing is especially critical in light of PEER's January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2007 press release that documents problems librarians are having in gaining access to the EPA online collections. MLA and AAHSL appreciate the opportunity to share their views with you.

Sincerely,



Jean Shipman, AHIP, President  
Medical Library Association



Elaine Russo Martin, DA, President  
Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries

*MLA, a nonprofit educational organization, is comprised of more than 4,500 health sciences information professionals. 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 health information research.*

*AAHSL is composed of the directors of the libraries of 142 accredited American and Canadian medical schools that belong to the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC). AAHSL's goals are to promote excellence in academic health sciences libraries and to ensure that the next generation of health practitioners is trained in information-seeking skills that enhance the quality of healthcare delivery.*