

Washington Brief
May 2008

NCCUSL Study Committee on Online Authentication of Legal Materials

Good news! We recently learned of an exciting new outcome of AALL's National Summit on Authentic Legal Information in the Digital Age convened by Immediate Past President Sally Holterhoff in April 2007. Delegate Michele Timmons, the Minnesota Revisor of Statutes and a NCCUSL Commissioner, submitted a proposal to NCCUSL in June 2007 to create a study committee to explore the complex issues regarding digital authentication. We received a letter in February informing us that the proposal was approved. The new Study Committee on Online Authentication of Legal Materials will investigate the issues and discuss the feasibility of a uniform law or model act on digital authentication. The chair and members of the new study committee will be named at the NCCUSL annual meeting in August. AALL has been invited to name an observer to the new study committee. You'll find comprehensive information about AALL's leadership on the digital authentication of online legal resources at <http://www.aallnet.org/summit/>.

AALL Commends Chief Justice John G. Roberts for PACER Pilot Program

In late February, AALL President Ann T. Fessenden sent a letter to Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr., thanking him for his leadership in establishing a joint pilot project to provide free access to the Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) system at selected depository libraries. The joint project between the Administrative Office of the United States Courts and the Government Printing Office (GPO) provides free public access to federal court records at 16 depository libraries, including ten law libraries, in fourteen states.

The Alaska State Court Law Library is among the depository libraries offering no-fee access to PACER. State Law Librarian Cathy Lemann reports that PACER is available at the State Court Law Library and at 16 branch locations. It is highly valued by customers. Cathy notes that, "The ability to view nationwide court dockets and documents helps us feel more connected to the lower 48. Alaskans sometimes feel isolated. It's wonderful that citizens of Alaska can review records without leaving the state. Of special interest to PACER users here in Alaska is the Exxon-Valdez case, recently argued before the Supreme Court, and the continued activity in the district court, where there are 8700+ docket entries."

AALL has been advocating for many years to make the PACER system available at no cost to users of federal depository libraries. In 2006, the AALL Executive Board endorsed a "Resolution on No-Fee FDLP Access to PACER" that urged GPO to work with the Administrative Office. This is yet another demonstration of AALL's effective national leadership on information policy. We are very pleased with the new PACER pilot program and applaud the Chief Justice for his support.

House Appropriations Subcommittee Looks at Legislative Branch Agencies

In early March, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch held hearings on the FY 2009 budget requests of the Library of Congress (LC) and GPO.

Emily Feldman, AALL's Advocacy Communications Assistant, attended both hearings, which were chaired by Rep. Debbie Wasserman-Schultz (D-FL-20). Librarian of Congress Dr. James H. Billington and Public Printer Robert C. Tapella appeared as witnesses. Chair Wasserman-Schultz plans to hold a hearing in late April for outside witnesses, and once again has invited me to testify in support of GPO's budget request.

The Library of Congress's budget request for FY 2009 is \$645.8 million, a 5.3 percent increase over last year. The budget includes a \$6 million increase for the National Digital Information and Infrastructure Preservation Program (NDDIIP), whose mission is to develop a national strategy to collect, archive and preserve digital content. The budget request also includes \$15 million for the Law Library of Congress. Priorities include the K reclassification project and the Global Legal Information Network. The reclassification project has been woefully under funded for many years, and approximately 650,000 titles remain classified under the old "Law" system.

The Government Printing Office requested a total of \$174.4 million for FY 2009 to cover Congressional printing and binding needs; completion of the initial release of GPO's Federal Digital System (FDsys); maintenance on GPO's aging building; and the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP). Of the GPO's total budget request, \$21.2 million (43%) is directly related to FDsys, the online system which will allow federal content creators to easily create and submit content that can then be preserved, authenticated, managed and delivered. FDsys is now due to launch in the fall. GPO requested \$43.4 million for the Office of Superintendent of Documents which funds the FDLP. Of that amount, \$5.7 million is for the digitization of the legacy collection and the expansion of GPO's web harvesting services.

Public Access to CRS Reports

The Congressional Research Service (CRS), one of the divisions of the Library of Congress, provides members of Congress with substantive research papers and support. These reports, though paid for with taxpayer dollars, are not easily accessible to the public other than through commercial databases. In December 2007, at the hearing for the *E-Government Reauthorization Act of 2007* (S. 2321), Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman (I-CT) introduced Sen. Res. 401 to make CRS reports publicly available through a centralized electronic system. A similar measure, HR. 2545, was introduced in the House by Rep. Christopher Shays (R-CT) in May 2007.

In February, Sen. Dianne Feinstein (CA), Chair of the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, asked CRS Director Daniel Mulhollan to develop a system by which senators would be able to place CRS reports more easily on their Web sites. We are pleased to see some progress on this issue by Congress and are committed to building the necessary momentum to make these important reports comprehensively available on the Web for free public access.

It's Not Too Late—Sign Up Today for AALL's Annual Advocacy Training!

The Government Relations Committee and Washington Affairs Office will host this year's advocacy training session, *Navigating the Advocacy Wilderness: Tools and Tips to*

Become an Effective Advocate, in Portland. Join us to learn how *you* can support AALL's policy agenda and practice skills to become a more effective communicator while meeting new colleagues and connecting with old friends. No specific background knowledge or experience is required. The training will be held on Saturday, July 12, from 8:30 a.m. to noon and will include a continental breakfast. Please register by June 1 by contacting Emily Feldman at ejf33@law.georgetown.edu.

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