

EPA National Library Network Report to Congress

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REPORT TO CONGRESS

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report is being submitted as directed by Division F of the Explanatory Statement accompanying the FY 2008 consolidated Appropriations Act (H.R. 2764).

“The amended bill includes \$1,000,000 above the request to restore the network of EPA libraries recently closed or consolidated by the Administration, instead of \$2,000,000 as proposed by the Senate. The Agency is directed to submit a report to the Committees on Appropriations regarding actions it will take to restore publicly available libraries to provide environmental information and data to each EPA region within 90 days of enactment of this Act.”

With this report, EPA is stating its commitment to providing publicly available libraries in each Region and at EPA Headquarters. The report addresses how EPA libraries will:

- provide on-site library presence in all Regions and at the Headquarters and Chemical libraries for the public and EPA staff,
- continue to provide and enhance access to the Agency’s library collections,
- continue to provide valuable library services for both the public and EPA staff,
- ensure the availability of environmental information to EPA staff and the public, and
- build upon past successes to strengthen the network of EPA’s libraries.

INTRODUCTION

In the recent past, EPA’s National Library Network has functioned as a collection of independent local libraries, catering primarily to the needs of its local EPA staff audiences and walk-in visitors from the public. To better serve these groups across the country, EPA will work collectively as a distributed and coordinated network in order to maximize access to library resources and reduce redundancies. The libraries in the Network vary in size, target audience, subject focus, and depth of collection. A more coordinated network will improve document access and core information services at all local EPA libraries, while at the same time enabling individual libraries to streamline operations and eliminate redundancies.

While the subject of this report is largely about service delivery through the direct services of a professional librarian, the EPA National Library Network must continue adapting to a change affecting libraries everywhere: accommodating the information delivery needs of customers whether they request services at an EPA library location or at another more convenient location. EPA remains fully committed to meet customer needs by harnessing technology. Through enhanced and expanded electronic delivery of information, EPA staff members can access full-text journals, newspapers, and other information materials via the EPA Desktop Library. The digitization efforts, once our careful review is completed, will provide immediate electronic availability of EPA documents and technical reports - heretofore available only in hard copy – to the public and EPA staff. Over time, the Agency will pursue other technological advances in library service delivery as appropriate.

1.0 CURRENT STATUS OF EPA'S NATIONAL LIBRARY NETWORK

Presently, seven of the ten EPA Regional libraries are open for on-site access. Region 5 in Chicago, Region 6 in Dallas, Region 7 in Kansas City, and the EPA Headquarters and Chemical Libraries in Washington, DC, are closed to walk-in access. Although changes were made to the physical structure of the library network during the reorganization, EPA undertook steps to ensure that library services remained available to EPA staff and the public. In the locations where libraries are scheduled to re-open, current information services are being requested and delivered electronically by library staff in designated Lead Service Center Libraries. The Lead Service Center Libraries are located in Cincinnati and Research Triangle Park. Region 3 serves as a lead service center for business reference. Customer service satisfaction feedback from EPA staff using this service indicates that this strategy is very successful.

The current EPA National Library Network consists of a variety of library service delivery models which are commonplace in most library systems. In planning the future direction of the Network, EPA will consider the most appropriate mix of library service models to achieve balance and cost-efficiency that reduces or eliminates redundancies.

EPA is working with the Federal Library and Information Center Committee (FLICC) of the Library of Congress on its plans for the future delivery of library and information access services. FLICC provides advice to federal libraries and information centers in all branches of government, and its mission is to foster excellence in federal library and information services through interagency cooperation. FLICC has established a board of advisors to work with EPA staff to address challenges and share collective expertise and experience. The board is working with EPA to advise on strategic direction and procedures to support operations within the Network.

In April 2007, EPA issued the Interim Policy for the EPA National Library Network which established uniform governance and management for the Network under EPA's Chief Information Officer. Standard operating procedures have been developed to guide the Network and are under review. When finalized later this spring, the policy and the accompanying procedures will provide a framework for EPA's libraries, further ensuring a standard level of facilities and services across all libraries to meet the information needs of EPA staff and the public.

2.0 THE PLAN FOR EPA'S LIBRARIES

EPA will re-establish on-site libraries for EPA staff and members of the public in Region 5, Chicago; Region 6, Dallas; Region 7, Kansas City; and at the EPA Headquarters Repository and Chemical Library in Washington, DC. EPA remains committed to continued access to on-site libraries in the other regions as well. The Agency has already undertaken steps to facilitate a managed re-opening of on-site libraries in the aforementioned locations. The subject libraries will reopen on or before September 30, 2008. EPA's strong preference would be to reopen these locations earlier than the end of September. However, careful planning is necessary to ensure that the needed resources are in place when a location reopens, and the amount of time

that will require varies depending on the location. Therefore the exact date of each library's reopening may vary, depending on procurement processes necessary to secure and outfit space, retain professional library staff, and organize an on-site collection. A major priority of this planning process is to ensure a smooth transition for the local patrons and to provide continued access to services.

2.1 Region 5 Library, Chicago

EPA will re-establish an on-site library in Chicago's Region 5 facility. Appropriate space is currently being identified and will be designed to provide facilities for library operations, including library staff functions, patron-staff interactions, and an onsite collection. Region 5 will retain a professional library staff to provide on-site support to EPA staff and the public. The Region 5 Library will institute and maintain an on-site collection of core reference materials and additional library resources to meet specific local needs. Region 5 will provide core library services to EPA staff, including Reference/Research Assistance and Interlibrary Loan/Document Delivery, and will provide public access to the library and its collection.

2.2 Region 6 Library, Dallas

EPA will re-establish an on-site library in the Region 6 office in Dallas. Region 6 officials have identified space in their regional offices for the new library facility and are making appropriate plans to outfit the space for library operations, including room for library staff functions, patron-staff interactions, and an on-site collection. The new Region 6 library will be staffed by a librarian who can provide on-site support to EPA staff and the public. The Region 6 library will maintain core reference materials and additional library resources to meet specific local needs. Region 6 will ensure that EPA staff have access to core library services, including Reference/Research Assistance and Interlibrary Loan/Document Delivery, and will provide public access to the library and its collection.

2.3 Region 7 Library, Kansas City

EPA will re-establish an on-site library in its Region 7 facility in Kansas City. The original library space in Region 7 remains available and will be renovated to provide library services. Professional library staff will be on-site in the Region 7 library to provide support to EPA staff and the public. Region 7 Library's collection remains mostly intact and will be evaluated and updated as necessary to ensure that current core reference materials are available, as well as resources required to meet specific local needs. The Region 7 library will provide core library services, including Reference/Research Assistance and Interlibrary Loan/Document Delivery, to local EPA staff and will provide public access to the library and its collection.

2.4 EPA Headquarters Repository and Chemical Library

EPA will re-establish an on-site library at its Headquarters offices in Washington, DC. The new library space will house consolidated operations of the Headquarters Repository and the

former Chemical Library. The new combined library operations will be managed by the Office of Environmental Information (OEI) in partnership with the Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances (OPPTS). OEI will institute and maintain a core collection of reference materials in addition to a specialized chemical collection. A professional librarian with knowledge of chemical information will be available to assist EPA staff and the public. OEI will ensure that EPA staff have access to core library services, including Reference/Research Assistance and Interlibrary Loan/Document Delivery, and will provide public access to the library and its collection.

2.5 Operational Standards for EPA's Regional and Headquarters Libraries

Network standards have been developed with respect to physical space, on-site collections, staffing and services of EPA's Regional and Headquarters libraries. As full members of the EPA National Library Network, the libraries in Regions 5, 6, and 7 and EPA Headquarters will initiate operations in compliance with the required standards as follows:

- Libraries must provide adequate space and resources to accommodate in-person interactions between library staff and patron(s). This includes separate workstations for library staff and patrons, including EPA staff and the public. Workstations must provide a computer with appropriate software for access to electronic resources and EPA's digital collections, along with printing and copying capabilities.
- Libraries must establish and maintain an on-site collection of materials developed and tailored to meet local/regional needs. Library facilities must provide appropriate shelving for library collections. Initial acquisition of core collection materials will be through FEDLINK services offered by the Library of Congress.
- All libraries will be staffed by one or more library professionals with appropriate expertise and experience to provide services to EPA staff and the public via phone, email, or in person.
- The libraries must provide access for EPA staff and public patrons at least four days per week on a walk-in basis or by appointment during core business hours. The mechanism for public access to the library and its resources may vary to some extent, depending on local facilities and security requirements of individual sites. Some sites may be open for walk-in public access while others may require access by appointment.
- All libraries will meet standard service requirements and will provide core services of Reference/Research Assistance and Interlibrary Loan/Document Delivery.
- Libraries may enhance their local service offerings through agreements with Lead Service Centers, designated Network libraries with expanded capabilities to provide services. The service centers can assist with Reference and Research Assistance, as well as some of the technical aspects of library operations such as cataloging and Interlibrary Loan/Document Delivery, which can be done more efficiently from a central model.
- All libraries will follow Network procedures on various library services. These procedures are being finalized and will be implemented to ensure that all EPA libraries maintain or exceed standard service levels in accordance with library best practices.

2.6 Additional Services and Electronic Resources

EPA's core library services and local collections are supported and supplemented by additional services and electronic resources. Interlibrary Loan/Document Delivery services enable Agency staff to access materials they need but are not owned by a Network library. EPA libraries actively participate in Interlibrary Loan services to provide the public with access to Network library materials upon request. All Network library collections are augmented by an increasing array of digital resources, including the EPA Desktop Library, a large selection of electronic tools and resources available to EPA staff; the Online Library System (OLS), EPA's online card catalog of library holdings, available to EPA staff and the public; and the growing digital archive of EPA publications, publicly accessible via the Internet.

3.0 EPA'S PLAN FOR ALLOCATING RESOURCES

EPA's Chief Information Officer, with valuable input from Regional managers and the Agency's library professionals, has given thoughtful consideration to the plan for utilizing the funds from the aforementioned appropriations bill. Discussions on this topic and the planning process have focused on library best practices and the importance of access to EPA's environmental information to EPA staff and the general public.

EPA will use the following funding principles to prioritize the allocation of the Congressional appropriation of \$1 million to support the restoration of publicly available libraries to provide environmental information and data to each EPA region:

- Re-establish on-site libraries in Region 5 in Chicago, Region 6 in Dallas, Region 7 in Kansas City, and the consolidated EPA Headquarters Repository and Chemical Library in Washington, DC.
- Enable Regional EPA libraries to update their collections, facilities, and equipment to meet Network standards.
- Conduct a formal needs assessment for EPA library services to support future development.

4.0 FUTURE DIRECTION OF EPA'S NATIONAL LIBRARY NETWORK

At the direction of EPA's Chief Information Officer, the Library Network is engaged in a strategic planning effort. This process will result in a guided direction for EPA's libraries consistent with Agency needs, stakeholder interests, and library best practices and trends. Goals are being established that will ensure continued access to EPA's environmental information for Agency staff and concerned citizens. The Agency will foster the growth of an effective Network of coordinated services provided by professional library staff that focus on the customer's access to information.

5.0 NEXT STEPS ON PLANNING

This report provides a high level overview of EPA's plans to ensure publicly available libraries in each of EPA's regions and headquarters by September 30, 2008. Over the next few months, we will continue to engage affected stakeholders (including our employee unions) as we finalize our specific plans for each library. The Agency is committed to working with its employees and outside parties on its future digitization plans (based on the third party review), a customer needs assessment, and long term strategic planning efforts.