

## Werk

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## Prepared Remarks

JAMES H. BILLINGTON  
*Librarian of Congress*

Dr. Billington highlighted the benefits of a National Digital Library. His objective is to make the significant and unique collections at the Library of Congress available electronically to a broader audience than those who can travel to Washington. Of special interest are those items that further the study of American history and culture and an understanding of the nation's democratic process.

The Library does not intend to usurp the role of the private sector in delivering digital data. If private industry can provide a service, the Library will work with those companies. However, if important services that are in the national interest are not provided by industry, the Library will strive to fill that void.

The Library does intend to act as a consensus-building force, particularly in the area of intellectual property rights. The Clinton Administration's Information Infrastructure Task Force is considering the issues of intellectual property rights in the electronic world. The information superhighway needs "traffic rules." Intellectual property rights will help provide these.

The Library has begun to digitize its collections, and plans, in collaboration with other repositories, to make more than 5 million items available electronically by the year 2000. As the Library makes its materials available digitally, retrieval will present a significant challenge. The Library will explore ways to improve finding aids for digital information to enhance the retrieval of information.

Dr. Billington expressed hope that the information superhighway would reinforce the best values and productive dynamism of American society: "This emerging interactive world does, after all, engage the active mind in intellectual-calisthenics and in creative interplay with useful information." But the cargo transported on the information superhighway will greatly affect how beneficial the new infrastructure will be to society. "If the highway provides just entertainment and high-priced information on demand, the gap will probably widen between the information haves and have-nots," Dr. Billington emphasized. Americans must not forfeit the inexpensive and broad access to knowledge that public libraries and public education systems offer today, and, with the help of the new technology, can offer tomorrow.

The Library of Congress expects to routinely receive significant amounts of new material in digital form. Items such as films, music, encyclopedias, legal records, maps, scientific paper, and government documents will be stored in electronic collections. The Library also will work to digitize its most useful existing paper, audio, and film collections for electronic distribution. Dr. Billington is particularly interested in providing these electronic collections to schools and local libraries without charge or at reduced rates: "This effort has great potential to help schools achieve the high national education standards newly approved by Congress, and can help the country, we think, to come out of the educational slump that began during the 1960s."

The Library of Congress already has become a major presence on the Internet. More than 7,000 network visits are made to the Library each day. The Internet now offers access to more than 40 million Library records, including the entire Library of Congress catalog, summaries and status of federal legislation, copyright registration records, and abstracts and citations for foreign laws. The images and accompanying texts from the Russian Archives, Columbus Quincentenary, Treasures of the Vatican Library, Scrolls from the Dead Sea, and the African-American Mosaic. More than 400,000 electronic visits to the Russian exhibit alone have been counted.

The transition to a National Digital Library already has begun. A five-year pilot of the Library's American Memory project is nearing its conclusion. That project has made possible the digitization of 24 Americana collections, including prints and photographs, manuscripts, sound recordings, and motion pictures. As part of the test, 44 schools and library sites received the multimedia collections. By the year 2000, the Library in collaboration with other institutions plans to offer 5000 to 1,000 collections containing more than 5 million Americana items.

The National Digital Library is a means to provide unenhanced archival transfer of the Library's collections. Private sector entities can add value to the collections, and local groups or individuals can reshape them in meaningful ways that provide educational value. The electronic services will expose library users to new technology and old values, memory of the past and imagination for the future.

Several projects already under way are moving the Library of Congress toward a National Digital Library. They are:

- The Electronic Copyright Management System, a testbed supported by the Library and the Advanced Research Projects Agency. The project involves developing and evaluating a system for electronic copyright deposit, registration and recordation.
- The Electronic Cataloging in Publication project, which is testing online transmission of galley proofs from several publishers using the Internet. The test is designed to ease the preparation of cataloging

information and build a foundation for an electronic library of machine-readable books.

In January 1995, the Library added a major electronic source of congressional information called THOMAS; in honor of Thomas Jefferson.