President's Column

<div align="right">Bonnie Postlethwaite</div>

Many things happen on the national front that affect libraries and their use of technology. Legislative action, national policy, and standards development are all arenas in which ALA and LITA both take an active role. LITA has articulated in its strategic plan the need to pursue active involvement in providing its expertise on national issues and standards development. LITA achieves these important objectives in a variety of ways.

LITA has several committees, interest groups, and representatives to ALA standing committees that address legislation, regulation, and national policy issues that pertain to technology. The charge of the LITA Legislation and Regulations Committee reads: "The Legislation and Regulation Committee monitors legislative and regulatory developments in the areas of information and communications technologies; identifies relevant issues affecting libraries and assists in developing appropriate strategies for responding to these issues." As its educational mission, the committee publicizes issues and strategies on the LITA Web site. The chairperson of this committee serves as the LITA representative to the ALA Legislation Assembly which advises ALA on positions to take regarding legislative and regulatory action. LITA also has a representative to the ALA Office of Information Technology Policy Advisory Committee who works closely with the Legislation and Regulation Committee on IT policy issues that may cross over into the legislative realm. LITA also appoints a representative to the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee whose purpose is "to recommend such steps as may be necessary to safeguard the rights of library users, libraries, and librarians, in accordance with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and the *Library Bill of Rights*."

Much has happened on the national front in the past few years that provides plenty of work for these LITA and ALA committees. The PATRIOT Act, CALEA, Net Neutrality, DOPA, ADA compliance, and debates over copyright and intellectual property rights in an electronic world are all examples of issues that require technological control or affect systems and network solutions. They also touch at the heart of what librarians have always stood for: protection of intellectual property, personal privacy, and intellectual freedom. Library technologists exert enormous time and effort protecting the privacy of patron records through data retention policies, system controls, and strong authentication systems all while providing authorized access to intellectual property according to copyright or licensing restrictions. Keeping LITA members apprised of all of these issues and the technologies required to abide by legal requirements is an enormous task of the committees and interest groups. These groups do this through programming, publications, and postings to the LITA Web site.

LITA has always been very active on the standards development front. From the start, LITA was involved with the MARC standards through the hard work of Henriette Avram. The number of standards that affect libraries has mushroomed. There are standards for all aspects of technology—data formats, hardware and firmware, and networking. ALA regularly calls on LITA to provide expertise on developing standards that pertain to library technology. LITA has a Standards Interest Group and shares membership with ALCTS and RUSA on the MARBI committee. Most LITA Interest Groups deal with standards of some sort at least occasionally. The LITA Board felt that LITA's work on developing standards was so important that in 2006 a new standards coordinator position was created and Diane Hillman, Cornell University, was appointed as the first person in this role. The standards coordinator identifies LITA experts to assist in calls for review of developing standards and seeks input from the membership. The standards coordinator works closely with the Standards Interest Group to help educate the membership. Because of the nature of digital information, networks, and the standards that enable the distribution of digital information and services, it has become impossible for any one person to understand all the standards that affect the library technologist. As standards proliferate, it becomes more important for LITA to provide educational opportunities alongside the involvement in the development of these standards that so impact our daily lives. The LITA Web site provides a wealth of information about standards. A new means of contributing to the dialogue about developing standards is to participate in the LITA Wiki where Diane Hillman will be leading the way in posting information about various library technology standards. Also, a great place to learn about various standards is right here in *ITAL*. Practically every issue has at least one article about one standard or another.

LITA's participation in technological developments on the national front is critical to all libraries. Policy, regulation, and standards form the infrastructure to technological implementation and are the cornerstone to library technology. LITA is the place where you can learn more about these developments and participate in the dialogue about them.

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