Many thanks to all our members who voiced their support on our behalf by contacting state representatives urging them to strike from the bill the provisions to reduce county support for law library associations. It has been reported that the Ohio State Bar Association has negotiated an additional year before cuts are implemented in order for law library advocates to draft and present legislation revising the current funding statutes. Updates on this issue will be forthcoming.

Commenting on the cost-saving legislative proposal to close the State of Georgia Law Library, Fulton County Law Librarian Sandra Howell warned of an “impending digital dark age as an increasing amount of the information online is available by subscription only.”

Which of the following remarks in regard to the future of libraries have you heard?

“It’s all on the Internet. I never use books.”

“I find all the information I want by using Google.”

“Web resources and the Internet are free.”

For pleasure, for leisure, and for interactive communication the Internet and its free or low-cost search engines are truly a modern marvel, but electronic access to authoritative or value-added information is not free nor is it low-cost and it disenfranchises those who cannot keep up with the rates.

For over thirty years the growing body of case law, statutes, regulations, and secondary materials has been warehoused electronically. But in many cases, the rising subscription costs to the premium information databases impedes access to the authoritative and up-to-date materials that are required for a just and proper practice of law. As with other forms of telecommunications, be it cell phones or cable TV, the more that is offered, the higher the cost.

Just as law libraries have, for centuries, maintained print subscriptions that are too costly or inconvenient for practitioners to possess, access to the wider and more encompassing databases has become the province of an organized library serving a legal community. In addition, search techniques employed by information specialists are often faster than a “Google.” As reported by the State Law Librarian of Montana, “Half the reference questions we get are from people who’ve already spent 45 minutes looking for it online.”

Ignorance of the importance of qualified information sources and specialists must not lead to the extinction of practitioner-oriented law libraries. Rather, negotiated subscription rates and cooperation among libraries must be legislatively supported in order to reduce costs and to prevent the coming of a “digital dark age.”
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KF 924 .Z9 R87 2004  ABCs of the UCC: (Rev.) Article 7: Documents of Title.
KF 4842 .Z9 T66 2004  Post-Conviction Relief for Immigrants.

OSBA/CLE Institute Presentations

KF 320 .A9 F49 2004  The $5,000 Law Office.
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WHISTLEBLOWERS