What has happened since legislation to establish the National Research and Education Network was signed into law last December? The NREN is the smaller part of the High-Performance Computing Act, with about 15 percent of the $3 billion authorized over a five-year period. The larger part is the National High Performance Computing Program. The NREN is an expansion of the existing array of research and education networks known as the Internet, with NSFNET (sponsored by the National Science Foundation) as its backbone. The NREN is a high-capacity, high-quality computer network to link research institutions, education institutions, government, and industry. Several federal agencies are participating in the further development of what is already called the "interim interagency NREN" with the goal of transmitting data at one gigabit (or 1 billion bits) per second by 1996.

Unlike most legislation which must wait a year or two after enactment for actual funding, some funding was already in place for the administration's High Performance Computing and Communications Initiative in FY 1992. Funding requested for FY '93 totals $803 million, of which $122.5 million would be for the NREN component, spread among eight federal agencies. The National Science Foundation, which is responsible for the NSFNET backbone, would receive $45 million of the NREN total.

Passage of legislation provided a long-term commitment to NREN development and a broadening of the constituencies to be served. This broad vision, encompassing all levels of education and libraries, is closer to the original intent of key sponsor Sen. Albert Gore Jr. (D-TN). However, early versions of the legislation offered a narrower science and technology research orientation reflecting the original intent of NSFNET to provide remote access to supercomputer sites. Broadening the legislation was resisted by the administration and certain mission agencies which preferred maximum flexibility in the operation of the program and maximum autonomy for agency networks carrying out their missions.

Despite the inevitable compromises among all the interests at stake, the library and education communities gained specific inclusion of libraries and schools in the legislation. The NREN is to provide users with access to libraries and to the electronic information resources maintained by libraries, and federal agencies are to work with libraries, etc., to ensure user access to the network. The National Science Foundation has primary, but limited, responsibility for assisting libraries to connect to the NREN.

Other gains include NREN linkages to every state, use of the NREN to provide for improved dissemination of federal agency data and electronic information science to the list of specialties in which education and training is authorized, a small but specific role for the Department of Education, and retention of provisions for promoting development of NREN information services and training of users.

These gains represent meaningful improvements achieved despite considerable resistance, but they lack specifics, including funding, to make them happen automatically. The current federal investment in the network is estimated at only 10 percent, with the rest coming from industry, individual institutions, and other levels of government. Given these realities, libraries will need to mine every possible funding source for NREN connections, as well as for training and for projects to help make the network easier to use, including federal library programs under the Higher Education Act and the Library Services and Construction Act.

The options are increasing for library access to the Internet, especially dial-up options for libraries on smaller campuses or those not housed in a parent institution of higher education or research. Commercial providers offer one option, as do the not-for-profit regional networks seeded by the National Science Foundation. Some library networks are exploring partnerships with the NSFNET networks in which Internet connections would be made available for libraries, and the library network would provide technical support and training. For instance, the CLASS library network of California offers Internet connections to library members through CERFnet. NYSERNET in New York has a New Connections program which is aggressively seeking Internet connections for smaller institutions, including libraries.

Carol Henderson is deputy director of ALA's Washington Office, (202) 545-4440; Bitnet: NU_ALAWASH@CUA.
A Ten-Year Compilation Through February 1992

Congressional Voting Guide
Fourth Edition

By Victor W. Bosnich
$34.95 U.S. and Canada, $36.95 other countries.

"The guide makes it convenient to find how each member of Congress voted on a particular issue, as well as to research a single member's voting on a variety of issues."
—American Reference Books Annual

An Election Year Special:
How Your Congress Voted...

Congressional Voting Guide is the first place to turn for up-to-the-minute information on how your senator and representatives in the 102nd Congress (January 1991-January '93) voted on the key issues of the decade, including the 1991 Civil Rights Act, Iraq War Resolution, and many others. Congressional Voting Guide is an ideal research tool for students and members of the general public.

Organized for Quick Access
Arranged in two main sections—House Voting Records and Senate Voting Records, Congressional Voting Guide presents:
◆ A brief biography—state by state—of each congressional member
◆ A record of how he or she voted on important measures since 1982.
Users can also turn to House Measures and Senate Measures, providing:
◆ A description of every bill
◆ The date and results of the vote
◆ A breakdown of the vote by political party.

Congressional Voting Guide offers:
◆ The facts you need to draw your own conclusions
◆ Precise text of amendments
◆ A ten-year compilation of voting records: 1982-1992
◆ Documentation of presidential support
◆ Voting records of 1992 electoral candidates.

Plus...
◆ Name Index
◆ Subject Index

To Order Call Toll-Free
800-367-6770
Outside of the U.S. and Canada, call 212-588-8400.
Telefax 212-590-1617.