Cuts to EPA budget could mean library closures

The President’s proposed 2007 budget for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), released in March, includes a $2 million cut that, if implemented, will likely result in the closure of the EPA Headquarters Library as well as many of its 27 regional and laboratory libraries.

Additionally, half of the FY 2006 serials budget, $500,000 out of $1 million, has been cut from the serials budget of the Office of Administration and Resources Management research libraries in Cincinnati and Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. The total budget cut to the EPA libraries is $2.5 million.

If the budget cuts are implemented, they will severely weaken or eliminate public access to the EPA’s scientific and technical information resources, as well as the expertise of the information professionals who know how to identify and analyze them.

EPA libraries are essential

Since its creation in the early 1970s, EPA has been a key source of essential information for the general public, for researchers across the country, and for the agency’s own scientists and staff, from whom the libraries handle more than 134,000 research requests each year. The libraries house unique collections, including an estimated 50,000 one-of-a-kind primary source documents that are available nowhere else.

In a meeting between EPA staff, ALA, the American Association of Law Libraries, and the Special Libraries Association, it was indicated that the agency is committed to digitizing all unique materials, and that they are reviewing how to phase-in that process. They do not, however, have either a business plan or a timeline for doing so. In the interim, significant resources are likely to be put in real risk of loss.

Your action needed

Urge your member of Congress to restore the $2.5 million needed for the EPA libraries to continue to operate at the same level in FY 2007 and to ensure continued public access to these essential resources. To contact Congress, visit www.onlineadvocacy.net/. Stay tuned to ALAWON for updates on this issue.