Washington Insider

Library of Congress and UNESCO Sign World Digital Library Agreement

Librarian of Congress James H. Billington and UNESCO Assistant Director for Communication and Information Abdul Waheed Khan recently signed an agreement at UNESCO headquarters in Paris pledging cooperative efforts to build a World Digital Library web site. The World Digital Library will digitize unique and rare materials from libraries around the world, including manuscripts, maps, books, musical scores, sound recordings, films, prints, and photographs, and make them available for free on the Internet. The objectives of the World Digital Library include promoting international and intercultural understanding; increasing the quantity and diversity of cultural materials on the Internet; and contributing to education and scholarship.

NAS Panel Calls for More Social Science Research on Science and Security Issues

Following a pattern of recent National Academies' (NAS) reports, a new one from the NAS National Research Council, Science and Security in a Post 9/11 World, called for the National Science Foundation (NSF); the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, Health, and Human Services; and the intelligence agencies to increase funding for the social sciences, particularly for area studies and languages, and to fund additional research in the fields of security risk assessment and the cost-benefit analyses of security strategies that are affecting university research and the movement of foreign students and scholars. The report further contended that the social sciences are "critical to developing the knowledge base needed to understand the social, cultural, and political bases of terrorism and to identify and characterize potential adversaries, threats, effective organizational and inter-organizational response strategies, and opportunities to reduce or eliminate those threats."

Academies' Publication on Encouraging Minorities to Pursue Research Careers Available

The National Academies recently released its publication, *Understanding Interventions that Encourage Minorities to Pursue Research Careers: Summary of a Workshop*. The report is a summary of the discussion at a May 3–4, 2007, workshop organized by the National Academies and supported by the National Institutes of Health's Division of Minority Opportunities in Research. The publication highlights examples of previous research, discusses elements for conducting effective research, and summarizes considerations for developing a research agenda related to understanding the efficacy of interventions. The report is available as a free download from: http://books.nap.edu/catalog/12022.html.

National Personnel Records Center Opens More Than Six Million New Military Personnel Files

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) will open for the first time all of the individual Official Military Personnel Files (OMPF) of Army, Army Air Corps, Army Air Forces, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard military personnel who served and were discharged, retired, or died while in the service, prior to 1946. This is the second step in the progressive opening of the entire paper and microfiche OMPF collection of more than 57 million files. Additional files will be made available each year until 2067, when the entire collection has been made public. Information about the records is available at www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/index.html.

Higher Education Act Renewal Emerges from House Committee

After numerous extensions of the expired Higher Education Act (HEA), Congress seems poised to finally reauthorize its non-student loan provisions. On November 15, the House Education and Labor Committee, chaired by Rep. George Miller (D-CA) reported out its version of the bill, H.R. 4137. The Senate passed its version in July. The bill reauthorizes the Javits Graduate Fellowship program, the Thurgood Marshall Legal Educational Opportunity program, and the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. The Committee also renewed the provisions relating to the Title VI programs in international education and foreign languages, which had been controversial in earlier versions of the reauthorization with the inclusion of an oversight monitoring board. The latest extension of HEA expires March 31, 2008. Congress hopes to complete the bill by then.

Sources for this column include press releases from the National Archives, the National Humanities Alliance's "NHA-Announce," the Consortium of Social Science Associations' Washington Update, and the National Coalition for History's Washington Update.

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