

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, D.C. 20515**

April 26, 2007

The Honorable Stephen L. Johnson  
Administrator  
Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20460-0001

Dear Administrator Johnson:

We are writing to request an update on your management of the library system at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In particular, we are interested in understanding how the Agency is complying with your commitment not to close any additional EPA libraries and not to dispose of any additional EPA materials.

Over the years, the Government has built an extensive and extremely valuable collection of scientific, technical, and regulatory materials in EPA libraries. Agency scientists and other staff use EPA library materials to provide scientific and other factual information to support the development of rules, reports, enforcement efforts, and other EPA actions. Additionally, we understand that State and local agencies, academics and interested citizens use these libraries to address public health and environmental concerns in their communities and nationally.

Given the Government resources that have been used to build these libraries and the need for facts to inform environmental decision-making, we were distressed to learn last year that EPA had closed several libraries without consulting with Congress or the public. Last August, Reps. Gordon, Dingell, and Waxman asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to investigate these closures, a request which Senator Boxer has now joined.

In a January 12, 2007, letter to Chairmen Gordon, Dingell, Waxman, and Oberstar, you agreed to a 90-day moratorium on closing additional EPA libraries or disposing of EPA library materials. You appeared before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works on February 6, 2007, and went further by committing that you would not close any additional EPA libraries or dispose of any additional EPA library documents. Specifically, you testified:

**Senator Boxer:**        Would you agree to a moratorium on closing these libraries and disposing of documents until we have a little time to sort all this out? Would you agree to that today?

**Mr. Johnson:** Madam Chairman, we are not closing any more libraries. And so it is easy to agree to a moratorium, because we are not closing any more.

**Senator Boxer:** So you would agree not to close any more, and not to dispose of any more documents?

**Mr. Johnson:** And we have not been disposing of any documents. We have been boxing them up...

We were pleased with this commitment, particularly given the ongoing GAO investigation of what appears to be a severely flawed library closure planning process. It is important that all EPA libraries and library materials be preserved intact until the investigation is completed and EPA undertakes an appropriate public process (including consultation with Congress) to decide whether and how to proceed with a library modernization process.

We therefore request that EPA brief Committee staff no later than May 4, 2007, on the status of the EPA library system. This briefing should include answers to the following questions:

1. Which EPA libraries are open? For each library that is open, please provide:
  - its hours of operation;
  - any changes in the level of services it provides to EPA staff, the public, and non-EPA researchers compared to two years ago;
  - a description of how the public and non-EPA researchers can access that library's collection;
  - a description of how EPA staff can access that library's collection, including any current or planned changes in user charges for library or librarian services;
  - any changes in funding levels from fiscal year FY2006 to FY2007; and
  - any changes in funding levels requested for FY2008.
  
2. Which EPA libraries are closed? For each closed library, please provide:
  - the current status and location of all parts of the collection;
  - any plans to change the status or location of any part of the collection;
  - the status of efforts to digitize the documents in the collection;

- a description of how the public and non-EPA researchers can access the documents that had been contained in that library's collection; and
  - a description of how EPA staff can access the documents that had been contained in that library's collection.
3. What is the status of the Agency's digitization efforts? What funding is provided for these efforts in FY 2007? What funding levels has EPA requested for FY 2008 for these efforts?
  4. What, if any, process is EPA using to determine the status of the Agency's plans for the future of EPA's libraries, including issues related to continued access to the entire collection, digitization of the collection, reference and research support, and any charges or fees that may be levied on EPA program offices, non-EPA libraries, or the public that may be under consideration for use of the collection?
  5. What changes, if any, is EPA considering regarding any library policies, including policies regarding the location of library materials and their disposal (including dispersal)? What process does EPA intend to follow before taking any action to implement any changes to library policies?

Thank you for your continued attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please contact us or have your staff contact the following staff: Jean Fruci of the House Committee on Science and Technology (202-225-8844); Krista Boyd or Alexandra Teitz of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (202-225-5051); Lorie Schmidt of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce (202-225-2927); Ryan Seiger of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (202-225-4472).

Sincerely,



Bart Gordon  
Chairman  
Committee on Science and Technology



John D. Dingell  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce



Henry A. Waxman  
Chairman  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform



James L. Oberstar  
Chairman  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure