



NEWS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: 9/30/08

CONTACT : Barbara G. Preece, Executive Director
Boston Library Consortium, Inc. 700 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02117, (617) 262-6244

SPEAKERS AT UNIVERSAL ACCESS DIGITAL LIBRARY SUMMIT CALL FOR ACTION TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

Boston, MA — At a gathering organized by the Boston Library Consortium, Inc. (BLC) in cooperation with the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, leaders from the academic and research communities voiced concerns about restrictions on use of public domain works that are being scanned for commercial purposes from library collections. The Universal Access Digital Library Summit, held on September 24 and 25 at the Boston Public Library, was framed as a call for new approaches to the digitization of library collections that will unleash their full potential and turn back erosion of the public's rights.

Co-conveners Dr. Mark Huddleston, President, University of New Hampshire, Dr. Peter Nicholls, Provost, University of Connecticut, and Dr. Jack Wilson, President, University of Massachusetts challenged their fellow university and library administrators, educators, and public interest advocates to join with the nonprofit world, the government, and business partners to ensure that the fruits of human knowledge and human culture are freely available to people everywhere.

Issues that have emerged as library scanning has scaled up in recent years are laid out in "Free Our Libraries! Why We Need a New Approach to Putting Library Collections Online," a white paper by Richard K. Johnson, senior advisor to the Association of Research Libraries, that was commissioned by BLC for the summit. Johnson challenges libraries to devise new funding strategies, coordinate their action, and adopt forward-looking principles to guide their digitization. He suggests, "It's time to sort out the right roles and responsibilities for companies, libraries, governments, and private funders and to get about the work of building an Internet public library that puts the public first." The paper is available at www.blc.org.

Speakers contrasted two major digitization projects. The Internet Archive, working in cooperation with the Open Content Alliance, has digitized 500,000 works from library collections at an approximate cost of \$30 per volume (or 10 cents/page), making these materials accessible universally. The Google Book Project has digitized at least one million items that are available only through the Google search engine.

Keynote speakers at the event included: Senator Chris Dodd (Connecticut) who transmitted his remarks in a video recording from Washington; Maura Marx, Executive Director of the newly formed Open Knowledge Commons; Dr. Robert Darnton, Carl H. Pforzheimer University Professor and Director of the University Library, Harvard University; and Siva Vaidhyanathan, Professor Media Studies and Law, University of Virginia. Other speakers included representatives from the Internet Archive, the Google Book Project, HarperCollins, Oxford University Press, Science Commons, Columbia University, American University, NASULGC, and Berkeley Electronic Press.

The BLC, the first large-scale library consortium to self-fund digitization of its member's collections, announced that it has pledged an additional million dollars to the project, bringing the total BLC funding to two million dollars since it began in 2007.

A groundbreaking partnership between two BLC members, the State Library of Massachusetts and the University of Massachusetts Boston's Healy Library, was also announced at the summit. The two libraries will scan and electronically preserve 250,000 pages of Massachusetts state laws from 1620 to the present, making it easier for students, legislators, historians, genealogists, policy researchers, and interested citizens to have access to the vast wealth contained in these volumes.

Materials from both BLC projects are being scanned by the Internet Archive (<http://www.archive.org>) at the Boston Public Library under the Open Content Alliance Principles (<http://www.opencontentalliance.org/participate.html>).

Brinley Franklin, Vice Provost, University of Connecticut Libraries and President, Boston Library Consortium, noted: "What was once seemingly impossible is now attainable, given today's technologies. The twenty BLC members, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the Internet Archive, the Boston Public Library and the Open Content Alliance have blazed a trail for other libraries, museums, and cultural institutions to follow as we work collectively and collaboratively to make the world's knowledge accessible to everyone, unrestricted by choice of technology, geographic location, or socio-economic status."

For more information, contact Barbara G. Preece, Executive Director, Boston Library Consortium, Inc., 617.262.6244, bpreece@blc.org, or Brinley Franklin, (860) 486-0497, brinley.franklin@uconn.edu.

###

Boston Library Consortium (BLC), an association of 20 academic and research libraries located in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. The Consortium is dedicated to sharing human and information resources to advance the research and learning of its constituency. Members of the Consortium include: Amherst College, Boston College, Boston Public Library, Boston University, Brandeis University, Brown University, the Marine Biological Laboratory & Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, MIT, Northeastern University, the State Library of Massachusetts, Tufts University, University of Connecticut, University of Massachusetts Amherst, University of Massachusetts Boston, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, University of Massachusetts Lowell, University of Massachusetts Medical Center, University of New Hampshire, Wellesley College, and Williams College. Founded in 1970, the Consortium supports resource sharing and enhancement of services to users through programs in cooperative collecting, access to electronic resources and physical collections, and enhanced interlibrary loan and document delivery. Visit BLC on the Web at <http://www.blc.org>.