

ASA ENDOWMENT STILL GROWING

The ASA Endowment continues to build, thanks to the generous donations of our members and friends. Many ASA members responded to the appeal from past presidents of the Association and included Endowment gifts with their 1993 renewals. ASA membership secretary Beth Pearce reports that a large number of ASA members made first-time gifts this year. Others who responded have given as many as four gifts to date for the campaign. Remember, during the period of the Challenge Grant Campaign, the National Endowment for the Humanities will provide a matching grant of one dollar for every three dollars that we receive in private donations.

The ASA Board last year set a campaign goal of \$75,000 for individual giving by ASA members. As of the end of December 1992, ASA members had donated some \$37,000 in matching funds to the Endowment. In addition, eligible portions of lifetime membership dues have reached a total of \$21,600, which brings the total of ASA member gifts to nearly \$59,000.

As the list of names on p. 4 indicates, friends of Betsy Widenmann are creating a moving tribute to someone who was a loyal and active ASA member. It has been gratifying, too, to watch contributions arrive in honor of Gerald Hartwig, and to realize that though Jerry has been gone for more than a decade, his colleagues and friends remember him well. The Association expresses its thanks to SERSAS, the Southeast Regional Seminar in African Studies, for its leadership in conceiving this gift.

Enrolling as an ASA lifetime member continues to be a very cost-effective way of helping the Association and helping oneself. Dues are \$1200, of which our accountants estimate that two-thirds may be considered matching funds. ASA lifetime members are protected against dues increases, and avoid the hassles of remembering to write annual checks for their dues. To date, twenty-seven persons in the US and abroad have decided to become lifetime members. We hope that you will consider it too.

LETTER

The following letter from James H. Billington, the Librarian of Congress, was shared with us by 1993 ASA president, David Robinson. The letter has been edited because of space limitations.

Dear President Robinson:

I am writing to you in the hope that you will be able to share the information in this letter with the members of your scholarly association. We wish to inform our scholarly constituencies of the background behind certain recent actions taken by the Library.

The Library of Congress serves both scholars and the nation's 115,000 libraries in various ways and is an agency of the Legislative Branch. The Library received a 1.9 percent (\$6.1 million) increase in its budget for fiscal year 1993; however, \$412.5 million more than it received is required just to stay even—pay mandatory Federal pay and cost-of-living increases to its staff and inescapable price increases on the goods and services it buys. Just to keep up with its "mandatories," the Library, like many other Federal agencies, needs a 6 percent budget increase per annum.

In addition to paying for these "mandatories," the Library of Congress faces major core demands that cannot be further deferred: we need to ensure the security of our unique collections, preserve them for future generations, and reduce the backlog of unprocessed materials so that they can be made available to our users.

We have had to make painful choices about where diminishing resources should go. We do not have funds to fill a number of key reference and other public service va-

cancies for the foreseeable future, and reading rooms and bookstacks are inadequately staffed to give readers effective access to the Library's collections. Therefore, we plan to shorten reading room hours in the Business, Law, Local History and Genealogy, Main, Microform, Newspaper and Current Periodicals, and Science reading rooms. We have surveyed reading room use and found that Tuesday and Friday evenings, on average, are the least busy. We will close at 5:00 pm on those evenings, beginning Friday, January 29, 1993.

As I am sure your members realize, the Library must also modernize its aging technology, and continue to attract the best "knowledge navigators" as catalogers and reference specialists. In serving the nation as well as the Congress, the Library is developing plans to bring its key collections in all formats through modern technology to libraries, schools, colleges, and research institutions in all 50 states. Thus, at the same time as we seek to make our use of existing resources as effective as possible, we must seek additional funds—public and private—to bring the Library into the electronic age.

James H. Billington
The Librarian of Congress