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Report to the President on Digital Libraries: Universal Access to Human Knowledge, February 9, 2001

Transmittal Letter to the President

President's Information Technology Advisory Committee

February 9, 2001

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The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Given the high priority focus of your new Administration on the importance of education and educational technology funding to strengthen us as a Nation, we believe that you will find the enclosed report on digital libraries of special interest.

Over the past year, the President's Information Technology Advisory Committee (PITAC) has focused much of its attention on providing a vision for information technology's role in driving progress in the 21st century, particularly progress in education and human development for all citizens. One of two PITAC panels focusing on educational issues examined the status of digital libraries -- the networked collections of digital text, documents, images, sounds, scientific data, and software that are the core of today's Internet and tomorrow's universally accessible digital repositories of all human knowledge. We are especially pleased to forward to you this report, ***Digital Libraries: Universal Access to Human Knowledge***, because of the profound relevance of this technology to advancing quality education in every school, learning center, and home in the country.

Realizing the full potential of digital libraries will take strong leadership and a steady commitment of resources to tackle the substantial technical and policy barriers that inhibit our rapid progress toward universally accessible knowledge libraries. The PITAC offers four key recommendations that will make digital libraries more pervasive and usable by all citizens:

- Expand research in new systems for organizing online content, and address issues related to system scalability, interoperability, archival storage and preservation, intellectual property rights, privacy and security, and human use;
- Create several Federally funded large-scale digital library testbeds;
- Provide Federal funding to make all public Federal content persistently available in digital form on the Internet; and
- Have the Federal government play a leadership role in evolving policy to fairly address intellectual property rights in the digital age.

The PITAC strongly urges the Federal government to continue its leadership role in the research and development efforts needed to extend the capabilities of digital libraries. We believe that the recommendations in our report can help move the Nation toward realizing the enormously powerful vision of anytime, anywhere access to the best of human thought and culture, so that no classroom or individual is isolated from knowledge resources. Digital libraries can and should be an essential resource for human learning and development in the new century.

We look forward to working with you, your Administration, and members of Congress to dramatically improve our education system through the use of information technology. As PITAC strives to provide sound, well-researched advice, we hope that you and members of your Administration will feel free at any time to discuss these and other important issues with the Committee.

Sincerely,

Raj Reddy, Ph.D.
PITAC, Co-Chair

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Enclosure