American Library Association (ALA)
Committee on Legislation
Legislative Agenda for 2021

America’s libraries are drivers for equity and inclusion during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they are every day. However, the pandemic has caused major financial losses and disrupted libraries’ work to support small businesses, students, and jobseekers. In 2021, policymakers must ensure libraries are equipped to safely meet their communities’ needs for technology access, learning, economic recovery, and wellbeing. Policies should support the contributions of school, public, and academic libraries, with emphasis on meeting the needs of underserved communities.

ALA’s Committee on Legislation encourages ALA members and library supporters to advocate on the following library priorities in 2021. ALA will monitor and engage on these and other federal issues that affect libraries. We urge ALA members and library supporters to sign up as advocates and use ALA’s advocacy resources to build strong relationships with decisionmakers.

Funding and Support

Equitable federal funding for library services is essential to ensuring that every community in America has strong libraries. Key issues for 2021:

COVID-19 relief: Provide emergency funding so that libraries, which have suffered thousands of furloughs as a result of COVID-19, can keep their communities connected, support online learning during the pandemic, and promote economic recovery.

Dedicated library programs: Increase and maintain funding for the:

- Institute of Museum and Library Services, which administers the Library Services and Technology Act;
- Innovative Approaches to Literacy program, which provides funding for school libraries through the Department of Education;
- Library of Congress, including the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled;
- National Library of Medicine and its network of libraries; and

Library-eligible programs: Continue and enhance federal programs for which libraries are eligible recipients or partners. Recognize and support libraries’ important roles in:

- K-12 education, including in reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act;
- Higher education, including in reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, and preserving eligibility of library staff for Public Service Loan Forgiveness; and
- Workforce development, including in reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
Library infrastructure and sustainability: Provide support to make library facilities more modern, healthy, safe, green, and accessible for all users.

Internet Access and Digital Inclusion
To promote digital equity and enable modern library services, libraries in all parts of the country must be able to serve their users with fast and affordable broadband, technology access, and digital skills training. Key issues for 2021:

E-rate: Preserve continued access for libraries to E-rate support. Improve outreach and technical assistance for applicants. Ensure eligibility of tribal libraries.

Technology access and training: Provide funding for libraries to strengthen internet and technology access and digital skills training.

Net neutrality: Restore net neutrality protections.

Copyright, Licensing, and Competition
Libraries rely on balanced and flexible copyright policy to enable vital library services. ALA supports a modern copyright system with effective user rights and limitations and exceptions to copyright that protect library services. Additionally, libraries rely on fair licenses and market practices in order to provide access to digital content such as e-books. Key issues for 2021:

E-books and digital content: Prevent unfair and anti-competitive practices that limit libraries’ ability to meet their users’ reading and information needs.

Copyright Office: Preserve the Librarian of Congress’ authority to manage and oversee the Copyright Office. Continue modernizing the Library’s and Office’s information infrastructure.

Government Information and Services
Libraries provide access to government information and services in communities across the country. ALA supports policies that assist libraries in providing no-fee permanent public access to government information and equitable access to government services. Key issues for 2021:

Federal Depository Library Program: Modernize the Federal Depository Library Program.

Public access to research: Ensure public access to publicly-funded research and data.

Approved August 6, 2020.