

This resolution was adopted by the ALA Council on July 1, 2013

Resolution on Library Service to the Community in a Disaster

Whereas libraries provide critical information for their communities throughout the year;

Whereas libraries serve as centers of the community, providing access to technology and print resources, as well as welcoming residents and visitors for educational, informational and leisure pursuits;

Whereas the American Library Association has recognized and encouraged library service to local communities during disasters in the past;

Whereas, when Super storm Sandy arrived in the northeast in October 2012 and Hurricane Irene in 2011, communities were severely affected, experiencing severe flooding, destruction of property and long-term disruption of Internet access and electrical power;

Whereas many residents of these areas were isolated without access to electrical power, internet access, heat or important information about storm relief and recovery efforts;

Whereas many libraries, even if in areas affected by the storm were able to serve as gathering centers for their community, providing information, a warm location, a place to recharge cell phones and access to wifi and internet;

Whereas these libraries increased their efforts to serve their communities, by extending hours, increasing staff presence, scheduling special programs, providing resources to shelters and even by simply adding multiple power strips for recharging purposes;

Whereas library support staff such as maintenance and custodial workers responded to the needs of their community in an emergency situation, by ensuring that generators had fuel, ensuring safety in buildings that were affected, and working overtime to ensure that facilities could be opened as soon as possible after the storms; and

Whereas these libraries clearly demonstrated that a library serves as the center of the community and can go beyond traditional roles to meet the immediate needs of the residents of a community: now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the American Library Association (ALA), on behalf of its members:

1. acknowledges that many libraries across the country have provided library and emergency services in disasters including storms, fires, earthquakes and floods and applauds those actions;
2. recognizes the significant contributions of libraries and library staff who have provided effective emergency response/recovery services, and responded to the needs of their communities following hurricanes Sandy and Irene in ways that go above and beyond the regular call of duty; and
3. sends a letter acknowledging the work and contributions of libraries and library staff to the State Chapters in the affected states to be passed on to the appropriate parties and ensure that such a letter is sent whenever libraries lead community recovery.

Adopted by the Council of the American Library Association
Monday, July 1, 2013
in Chicago, Illinois



Keith Michael Fiels
ALA Executive Director and Secretary of the ALA Council