

“If the founding fathers came back to this country in this day and age, one of the things that would just thrill would be our public library system. . . Now there is a library in every town, every city, everywhere in the country. [The library] is the pure expression of democracy. . . . It is open to everybody and it’s all free. No other country in the world has anything like our public library system. . . . If you get down about the state of American culture, just remember there are still more public libraries in this country than there are McDonalds.”

-David McCullough

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Libraries: The Place of Opportunity

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INTRODUCTION

Opening the “Window to a Larger World” Libraries’ Role in Changing America

Libraries are “**sanctuaries of learning**” that represent “**a window to a larger world.**” All types of libraries – public, school, academic, federal and research – are resources the American public use to find jobs, support education and lifelong learning, gain access to information and telecommunications services, empower their families, and engage in civic activities. By promoting literacy, advancing research, and connecting communities, libraries serve as “**agents for change**” and offer individuals at all stages of life and in all types of communities the opportunity to access information and education and to develop the essential skills needed to function in the digital age.

Across the country, libraries are **helping Americans get back to work** by assisting people with job searching, providing financial information, and aiding small-business owners with obtaining information available nowhere else. Libraries still shine as **a safe place for children** to meet after school or to attend school and public library reading programs, a place where families can always afford to give their children one of the greatest advantages

any child can have: early literacy, and a place where students of all ages find resources for formal and informal learning.

American Library Association (ALA) research shows that public libraries are the **sole source of no-fee access to the Internet** for 73 percent of Americans without connectivity at home or work. That number rises to 83 percent in rural communities. In addition to utilizing everyday uses of the Internet, such as gathering and renewing contacts and using e-mail to stay in touch with friends and family, Americans use their local libraries to gain access to and assistance with e-government services such as online access to Social Security and Medicare information as well as tax preparation and filing.

Libraries continue to **level the playing field** by meeting the day-to-day information needs of all Americans regardless of age, economic status, educational background or geographical location. In addition to online and digital resources, libraries find that there is **increased demand for traditional services** because the online technologies make it possible for people to know more about what is available at libraries and how to obtain materials.

Libraries are critical to **openness and transparency in government**. The public must have access to

government information as well as online tools to participate in open government. Access to the Internet, online communities and e-mail are available through libraries to promote civic engagement. Online government information as well as traditional services such as the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) are available through all types of libraries. Libraries routinely offer voter registration and current information on government activities such as the digital TV transition and many other daily concerns. And, across the country, library facilities are used for town hall meetings and other venues for civic involvement.

With all levels of government providing online services, and in some cases only online, **library access to the Internet is absolutely necessary** for large parts of the American public. This has also created an essential role for libraries in disaster management in responding to community emergencies with pertinent local information and serving as a place where people can use online services for dealing with disasters through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

As a result of the increased need for access to digital and online resources, the ongoing demand for “traditional” library services, and society’s economic challenges, **Americans are using libraries now more than ever.**

The American Library Association and Equity of Access

Through advocacy and grassroots lobbying, ALA is active on many policy fronts to advance “equity of access” for the American public. Through its Washington Office, ALA is involved in the national debate to ensure that all people have access to the information and services they need.

Librarians take very seriously their responsibility to **serve as guardians of the public in assuring access to the most trusted, unbiased information.** Libraries and librarians are critical resources for the American public. ALA approaches these discussions with a strong and serious commitment to enabling the public’s right to access information, protecting personal privacy, promoting civil liberties, and protecting our democracy. ALA is a leader in the debates on universal access to broadband and advanced telecommunications technologies; in national and international forums on copyright and fair use; and, on federal programs, literacy and new digital applications, and funding for libraries so that everyone can get the services they need.

With over 66,000 individual members from academic, public and school libraries as well as

federal and research libraries, ALA's mission is "to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all." The association represents the nation's librarians, friends of libraries, trustees and the people who use the over 123,000 libraries in the United States.

BROADBAND

Libraries, Equity of Access and Broadband Connectivity

Libraries are thriving, busy places experiencing increased use across the country. This is especially so where libraries have access to high-speed telecommunications services. Access to this connectivity “levels the playing field” for those without Internet service at home or work. Access to online services provides crucial information library users need to effectively participate in the information economy, to meet their needs for lifelong learning, and to develop skills to successfully function in the workplace.

Affordable, universal broadband services are critical to serving in-library users as well as remote patrons. Libraries are bridging the digital divide by providing access to digital information resources and telecommunications services to assure equitable access for all.

With all levels of government providing online services, and in some cases only online, access for e-government services is absolutely necessary for the public. People use local libraries to access and find assistance with Social Security and Medicare information, tax preparation and filing and a host of

other governmental services. These services have also created a unique role for libraries in helping their local communities and institutions during times of disasters and emergencies by providing Internet access and pertinent local information.

In addition to utilizing everyday uses of the Internet, such as using e-mail for business and personal use, people come to libraries for online job searches and applications, healthcare information, support for formal and informal education and distance learning, and budgeting, financial and mortgage information.

Every type of library in this country is actively involved in trying to obtain broadband connectivity and increase service to their users – advances that will assist individuals, their communities and the nation as a whole. Local libraries are putting great emphasis on broadband infrastructure deployment that is universal and affordable. Research by the ALA and others, clearly shows that public libraries are the sole source of **no-fee access to the Internet for 73 percent of Americans** without connectivity at home or work. That number rises to 83 percent in rural communities. Libraries also report that the public need is such that they cannot keep up with the level of telecommunications services necessary to meet the ever-growing demands.

Libraries and Affordable Connectivity

Essentially all libraries have some level of connectivity, but not all libraries or their communities and institutions have access to high-speed, universal and affordable telecommunications services to meet the heavy public need. Across the country, levels of service vary widely and costs for libraries to obtain connectivity vary as well. In many communities, especially in rural areas, there is no local broadband service available, even if libraries could afford it. Many school media centers and public libraries rely on E-rate discounts, a program that is part of the Universal Service Fund administered by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), to help meet the ongoing costs of connectivity to their institutions. But as the nation moves forward with establishing universal broadband, the availability and costs for libraries and other public institutions must remain a serious concern for all levels of government.

The American Library Association...

...strongly advocates for equity of access while promoting development of a national broadband policy with strategic planning to achieve connectivity in all communities. Whether efforts call for “fiber to the library” or seek other technical solutions, increasing bandwidth capacity is necessary

for libraries because they serve many users simultaneously with bandwidth-intensive services. For example, distance learning, interactive online applications and teleconferencing are just some of the applications increasingly in demand. ALA also supports advanced deployment to homes, local government and other institutions as the nation seeks to level the playing field for all to enter the digital age.

In its ongoing efforts to protect and promote equitable access for all, ALA has participated extensively in national policy debates for many years as a voice for the American public on equity issues. In addition to build-out of affordable broadband services, ALA focuses on stabilization of the E-rate telecommunications discounts to K-12 public and private schools and public libraries (E-rate has provided over \$547 million to public libraries over the 10-year life of the program) as well as educating stakeholders about the need for advanced connectivity in all communities and at all levels of government and the role libraries play in meeting this need.

Equity of access also guides the association in its support for network neutrality in order to maintain a vibrant diversity of online viewpoints into the foreseeable future. As providers and distributors of

all types of information for their patrons, including a wide range of local digital information, Web pages and interactive Web communities, libraries are creators of information as well. Hence, the principles of network neutrality – an open and vibrant Internet system – remain important to ALA as well as the library community and its users.

Since libraries are critical to equitable Internet and broadband access, the Association also works to have library leaders recognized and included as important partners at every level of government for the planning and deployment of broadband. At the grassroots level, ALA provides information and guidance on telecommunications issues as well as training for library supporters to tell their library story to local, state and congressional lawmakers about the importance of broadband services. After all, it's all about equity of access.

CIVIL LIBERTIES

Libraries and Privacy

The commitment within the library community to patron privacy is so ingrained and widespread that 47 states and the District of Columbia have laws specifically protecting the confidentiality of patron records. Three other states have legal opinions from their respective attorneys general. Individuals should know that personal information about what one reads, researches, or finds through the nation's libraries is confidential and should not be available to law enforcement without a subpoena. At the local level, libraries of all types develop privacy policies about the confidentiality of patron records as well as interacting with law enforcement.

While there are long-standing privacy principles within the library community, the development of new technology and a heightened awareness of access and security issues, privacy has become an increasingly important concern for local, state and national policymakers as well. The expansion of e-government, e-commerce and other forms of electronic transactions raises many questions and about how our nation can balance the right to privacy with the need to investigate and thwart terrorism.

Confidentiality and the USA PATRIOT Act

At the national level, the library community's concerns about confidentiality have led many librarians to be involved in the debates about the USA PATRIOT Act, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), national security letters (NSLs) and related law enforcement practices. Librarians are especially concerned about the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) ability to conduct warrantless searches through the use – and abuse – of NSLs demanding that public institutions hand over their records and data on a group or an individual with no judicial oversight or subpoena.

The library community does not wish to hinder legitimate law enforcement investigations but, rather, seeks a balance between protecting our nation's civil liberties with the need for law enforcement to investigate and fight terrorism. A local case in federal court in 2006 reflects how one library organization successfully challenged the gag order and fought to protect a block of patron records from unconstitutional law enforcement access.

A regional library consortium in Connecticut, the Library Connection, received a national

security letter in 2005 from the FBI, along with its accompanying perpetual gag order, demanding a large block of library patrons' records. Section 505 of the USA PATRIOT Act, which authorizes the FBI to demand records without prior court approval, also forbids, or “gags,” anyone who receives an NSL from telling anyone else about receiving it. Four members of the consortium's executive board, later called the “Connecticut Four,” refused to comply and engaged the ACLU to file suit on their behalf to challenge the validity of the NSL and the gag order. With the ACLU, the “Connecticut Four” successfully challenged the validity of their gag order. Subsequently, in mid-2006, the FBI abandoned the lawsuit against the Library Connection.

Protecting Patron Privacy

ALA has been an active voice in the national debates on civil liberties issues and national security. On behalf of ALA, librarians have testified before Congress about the need for court oversight and due process in applying NSLs and other USA PATRIOT Act provisions in the library environment and elsewhere. Just as the ALA has developed guidelines over the years to help libraries develop their local privacy policies, the association has also developed

recommendations for local libraries on how to deal with law enforcement a post-Sept. 11 world.

In the many Congressional debates about the USA PATRIOT Act and other similar bills, ALA has consistently argued for a return to the rule of law and the inclusion of due process and Congressional oversight in implementation of these laws. As one of the “Connecticut Four” indicated when testifying before the 110th Congress:

“When the USA PATRIOT Act was signed into law, our Connecticut library community, like the American Library Association and many other librarians, were concerned about the lack of judicial oversight as well as the secrecy associated with a number of the Act’s provisions and the NSL in particular.”

ALA, in conjunction with many other coalitions and allies, has repeatedly sought legal reforms that would require subpoenas or search warrants needing court approval, for law enforcement to obtain specific or targeted patron information. Law enforcement should have some individualized suspicion to obtain a subpoena – and not be able to collect wholesale the library records about what a

large group or community is reading, researching, or accessing on the Internet. These issues of privacy and confidentiality will continue to be extremely important at the local and national levels for ALA and the entire library community.

Libraries and the Freedom to Read

Libraries and the freedom to read are inherently connected. As a truly American value, libraries are cornerstones of the communities they serve, providing free access to books and other media, ideas, resources and information so imperative for education, employment, enjoyment, and self-government. Our nation's libraries are beacons to the public for the freedom to read and to access information, free from government intrusion or censorship. Librarians have a long history of actively defending the right of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment. The library community sees intellectual freedom as a basic right in a democratic society and a core value of the profession.

As in other policy areas, the digital age has brought new challenges and opportunities for the freedom to read and other First Amendment rights as new

technological applications and online information and communities have evolved. To better serve the public, libraries provide a wide array of Internet education and digital literacy training so that library users not only understand how to use the technology but how to access and assess the vast amounts of information available via the World Wide Web. The value of Internet education is especially important as parents, librarians, teachers and others guide children of different ages to use the Internet safely, effectively and age appropriately. From their work with the public, and with children in particular, librarians recognize that Internet education is the most effective tool to protect children for parents and caregivers.

Public, school and academic libraries have developed local Internet use policy statements in conjunction with their respective communities of users. For example, more than 95 percent of public libraries have Internet-access policies created with community input. These policies set forth the community's rights and responsibilities for conducting productive, safe Internet use while helping the public understand their freedom to read, learn and research.

But the principles of freedom to read extend into all aspects of library services. For example, libraries defend the constitutional rights of all individuals, including children and teenagers, to use the library's resources and services. Libraries support families and affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents to guide their own children's use of library resources and services. The right to patron privacy is protected by local library confidentiality policies and procedures. And the diversity of our democratic society is celebrated and preserved by libraries making available the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions and ideas, so that all individuals have the opportunity to become lifelong learners - informed, literate, educated, culturally enriched and civically engaged.

By embracing these principles, all kinds of libraries contribute to a future that values and protects freedom of speech in a world that celebrates both our similarities and our differences, respects individuals and their beliefs, and holds all persons truly equal and free.

The American Library Association...

...is known as a leader in protecting the First Amendment and the public's right to read, to know, and to research. ALA continues to support the principles of network neutrality to ensure an open Internet so that the public has access to information and ideas across the spectrum of social and political thought, so people can choose what they want to read or view or listen to because the importance of having the broad range of information and ideas available is that it enables us to be a nation of self-governors. Just as these intellectual freedom principles apply in the traditional print environment, the library community uses these principles to seek an open Internet environment.

ALA and the library community are fully committed to our constitutional republic – a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. This form of government does not function effectively unless its electorate is enlightened. The electorate must have information available and accessible. And it does – in our nation's libraries.

The American Library Association, with a membership of 66,000 librarians, library trustees and

library advocates, is the voice of America's libraries and the millions of people who use libraries. ALA works to help decision-makers understand how the Internet is changing the way people live, learn, work, govern and interact with one another. If today's children are to succeed in a global economy, they must first learn the skills necessary to find, evaluate and use information effectively – and they must have access to technological resources. In short, they must be logged on and literate or they will be lost in the 21st century. America's First Amendment freedoms are absolutely necessary for people to read, explore, develop and be civically engaged. ALA remains committed to these important principles and will promote and defend these freedoms as inherent to "equity for all."

COPYRIGHT

COPYRIGHT

Libraries and the Balance of Copyright Law

Libraries rely on copyright law every single day because so much of the law defines and dictates how our libraries function. U.S. copyright law was developed to create a balance between the rights of creators of works – authors, photographers, etc. – and the rights of the public to use, borrow and excerpt from copyrighted works.

Copyright balance is achieved through numerous copyright exceptions or limitations created by Congress so that rights holders do not have a complete monopoly over their works. Key exceptions of U.S. copyright law are critical to library services. Such exceptions include the “first sale” doctrine, which permits libraries to lend materials to the public, and “fair use,” which allows the public to quote or use excerpts from copyrighted materials. In fact, the U.S. Constitution (Article I Section 8) defined the foundation of our copyright law by explaining its purpose, “...to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts.” Through this balance, the law was intended to foster creativity and the creation of new knowledge.

Since the dawning of the “digital age,” many new and

challenging copyright issues have arisen for libraries of all types. Libraries are concerned because some copyright holders continue to attempt to negate fair use and other copyright exemptions that should still be lawful in digital environments.

Without the first sale doctrine libraries could not loan books. Under copyright law, the first sale doctrine is a limitation of the copyright holder's right to distribute a work. Without the first sale exception, libraries would be unable to lend books, CDs, videos, or other materials. Also, the used book market would vanish, books could no longer be sold at garage sales, and protected works could no longer have a "second life" reaching new audiences and learners. This provision allows one to resell, lend, or otherwise dispose of a book or other work lawfully acquired (or purchased) without obtaining permission from the copyright holder. Therefore, copyright law allows copyright holders to control the primary market – the first sale of their work. After purchasing a copy of a work, for example, the buyer can resell or give the copy away – the rights holder can no longer place restrictions on the copy.

Without fair use and other exceptions, the public could not make photocopies, print an article from a journal database, quote from a work, and libraries could not preserve and archive materials

Library users also rely on certain exceptions that allow for other uses under certain conditions. Quoting from a work for purposes of criticism or research, making multiple copies of parts of works for classroom use, and creating parodies are all examples of fair use. The fair use exemption allows one to use a copyrighted work without permission, without signing a license, and without paying a fee. This provision ensures the free flow of commentary and criticism and enhances our ability to build on the work of others without prior permission from the copyright holder.

Libraries also rely on copyright law so that non-profit libraries and archives have the right to make copies from their collections in order to preserve our cultural heritage. Libraries can copy brittle and deteriorating works so continued access to these materials is ensured.

In addition, a provision in the copyright law allows the Library of Congress to provide books and magazines to people who are unable to access traditional printed material due to either a visual or physical impairment through the Talking Book Program.

Basic principles of library services such as access to information and the creation of new knowledge and creativity are advanced by fair use principles and

other lawful uses of protected works by the public and the libraries that serve them. Libraries are constantly working on developing the best policies and practices for their users within the constraints and opportunities allowed under copyright law.

The American Library Association...

...advocates for maintaining the balance between those who create copyrighted works and those who use them. Striking such a balance is a major ongoing battle against some very well resourced opponents. For this reason, the ALA closely follows federal legislation and makes its voice heard when proposed changes in copyright law threaten to affect the ability of libraries to meet the information needs of the public. Providing copyright education to the library community and developing grassroots legislative advocates on copyright issues are two other important roles for ALA. Examples of copyright issues of particular concern to the library community include advocating for legislation to make available to the public historic and cultural works whose copyright holders cannot be found (i.e., orphan works) and following court cases when fair use principles are challenged.

ALA is also a voice in the international copyright arena, advocating for policies that ensure the information needs of the public are met and helping

to shape international copyright treaty development that could affect policies and laws at home by participation in the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

ALA champions proposals that permit library users to access and use copyrighted works. The future of learning and innovation are dependent upon a copyright law that allows for the ability to build on existing works in creative and innovative ways. Unnecessary expansion of copyright law only stifles creativity and innovation – two concepts our country values and our economy depends upon, two concepts that libraries depend upon to serve the public.

E-GOVERNMENT

E-Government Services

At every level of government and in all types of agencies, the transactions of government are increasingly – and sometimes exclusively – online. In order for individuals to interact with their local, state and federal governments, they need access to e-government services. Libraries are often the only organizations offering no-fee access to help citizens interact with their government and access e-government services.

Many government agencies often refer people to local libraries for assistance because their offices are closed or have limited hours for the public. Some of the most noteworthy e-government initiatives launched in recent years include electronically filing taxes, making appointments for immigration interviews, accessing FEMA services, and applying for the Medicare prescription drug plan.

All types of libraries serve as critical public access points to e-government services and other government information. They provide a wide array of services including teaching individuals how to use the Internet to search for government information and forms. Librarians also teach patrons how to locate and use various job and other benefit programs whose applications are only available online.

For those without Internet access at home and work, especially low-income families and the elderly, libraries provide not just access to the Internet but equally important support and guidance from librarians. Even households with Internet access often use their local libraries because their connectivity or software is not sufficient for accessing e-government and they too want the knowledge, guidance and personal assistance of a trusted librarian.

The dramatically increasing demand for these services is another indicator of the need for broadband capacity in America's libraries. Yet, a 2007 study conducted by the ALA, titled "Libraries Connect Communities" reported that nearly half of the respondents said their library's connection speeds are inadequate to meet e-government user demands. Because e-government services have become a requirement, public, academic and school libraries continue to constantly look to get ever more connectivity to serve their users.

Access to Government Information

Libraries are not new to providing access to government information. The Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), administered by the U.S. Government Printing Office, is almost 200 years old and has served to ensure that there are collections of government information from all federal agencies available across the country. FDLP libraries serve as key resources for the American public by providing and preserving federal government information, and they also serve as regional access points for neighboring libraries and their patrons to use the vast amounts of information from the United States government, the largest publisher in the world. Additionally, FDLP libraries provide training to the public on using government information, answer a broad range of related reference questions, and are an important resource for neighboring libraries and their patrons. These services for federal information are mirrored in similar systems for state and local governments as well.

As more government information is “born digital,” libraries are addressing the new demands of the digital world with the same principles of open access to and preservation of government information for day-to-day applications and long-range research.

No other type of institution in the United States has this responsibility and this commitment to public access to government information.

With this same commitment, libraries promote civic engagement whether through public “town hall meetings” held in library meeting rooms or new online venues that promote and enable more public participation in community and government dialogues on important public policy issues.

The American Library Association...

...considers access to e-government services and information a very high priority and works to assure that libraries receive both the recognition and funding necessary to serve the American public. As a voice for the library community and the users of these services, ALA advocates for the inclusion of library provisions in any e-government legislation, the expansion of broadband deployment to meet the public’s needs and a robust and modern Federal Depository Library Program. ALA also works on other aspects of open government and the right-to-know issues including supporting the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), whistleblower protections and other laws and programs that promote open and transparent government.

ALA is involved with research including collecting data that can be used to further access e-government services and other government information programs. One example of this is the 2007 Public Libraries and the Internet study, conducted nationally with nearly 5,000 public libraries by the Florida State University's Information Use Management and Policy Institute and supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and ALA.

This research found that 73 percent of the public reports that public libraries are their only no-fee access point to the Internet. ALA is working with stakeholders to inform the government and the public about what libraries are doing and lobby for the passage of legislation to support libraries as access points for e-government services. ALA also works closely with the Government Printing Office (GPO) and other stakeholders in the discussions about the future of the FDLP in the digital age. All of these efforts are committed to preserving and expanding public access and to promote open and transparent government.

FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Libraries and Federal Programs

While libraries are primarily administered and funded by local and state governments, federal library programs are important to stimulating new statewide initiatives as well as supporting innovative collaborations for projects and new models of service in public, school and academic libraries.

Libraries implement a wide variety of federally funded projects to promote new uses of technology and permit new partnerships in ways not typically permitted just with local funding.

The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) consolidates federal funding for library programs which expand services for learning and access to information resources in all types of libraries and creates new ways to educate the next generation of librarians. It is administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and is distributed through state library agencies via a population-based formula.

LSTA links libraries electronically and helps provide library users access to information through state, regional, national and international networks. Federal resources help target library services to people of

diverse geographic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds to individuals with disabilities and to people with limited literacy skills.

Libraries are able to offer training on résumé development, help on Web searches of job banks, workshops on career information and financial literacy, links to essential educational and community services, assistive devices for people with disabilities (including the Talking Book Program for the Blind and visually impaired), family literacy classes, homework help and mentoring programs, information on religions and other cultures, access to government information, a forum for enhanced civic engagement and so much more.

The federal support promotes the development of innovative library services for the public, including special populations, as well as training to help library staff incorporate these new opportunities and efficiencies into their ongoing library services. Targeted research and assessment projects are also supported by LSTA leading to further improvements in library service to the public. Typically, local and state libraries evolve LSTA projects into ongoing services supported by local governments, schools or colleges and universities. This leveraging of other sources of support is another benefit of this unique federal program for libraries.

School Libraries: A Place for More Than Books

The success of any school in promoting high academic achievement depends fundamentally on the presence of a modern school library. Education is not exclusive to the classroom; it extends into school libraries. Long regarded as the cornerstone of the school community, school libraries are no longer just for books. Instead, they have become sophisticated 21st century learning environments offering a full range of print and electronic resources that provide equal learning opportunities to all students, regardless of the socio-economic or education levels of the community. School library media specialists collaborate with teachers and engage students meaningfully with information that matters to them both in the classroom and in the real world. They are a critical part of the instructional staff.

Across the United States, numerous studies have shown that students in schools with good school libraries learn more, get better grades, and score higher on standardized tests than their peers in schools without libraries. Tech-savvy school library media specialists are, in every level of education, the professionals who give students the skills they need for jobs in the 21st century workplace: computing, networking, and learning how to locate and utilize all the information available to them.

Using the library's many and varied resources, school librarians also teach students how to work collaboratively, which, combined with the information literacy skills, is ideal for ensuring college readiness. School library media centers contribute to improved student success by providing up-to-date instructional materials aligned to the curriculum and instructional practices and by collaborating with and supporting teachers, administrators and parents.

There are more than 62,000 state-certified library media specialists in U.S. public schools (but there are 130,000 public schools) and 3,909 in private schools. In schools with media specialists, they are part of the instructional staff fulfilling multiple roles – teacher, information specialist and program administrator. School librarians train and guide students and staff to be effective users of information and technology.

The ALA's Commitment to LSTA

The ALA is committed to working to assure that needed support is available to local community libraries through LSTA. ALA works to improve federal laws including funding to ensure that all Americans have access to the highest quality library service possible.

Additionally, ALA works to improve funding for federal and national libraries and related agencies such as the Library of Congress, the National Agricultural Library and the National Library of Medicine. ALA also actively works for funding for the Talking Books Program for the blind and visually impaired at the Library of Congress and the Federal Depository Library Program at the Government Printing Office.

Libraries and Literacy

Libraries and literacy go hand-in-hand. Libraries open “windows of opportunity” and foster lifelong learning by providing literacy programs and fostering a love for reading. Helping children and adults develop the skills they need to fully participate in an information society – whether it’s learning to read or exploring the Internet – is central to the mission of libraries.

School, public and academic libraries serve important roles in providing a wide variety of literacy services. As information and technology increasingly shape our society, the literacy skills adults need to function successfully have gone beyond reading. Modern literacy can be defined as “...an individual’s ability to read, write, speak in English, compute, and solve problems at levels of

proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family, and in society. ”

At least 30 million adults in the United States have below basic literacy skills. Approximately 44 million adults cannot read well enough to fill out an application, read a food label, or read a story to a child. Unfortunately, millions of Americans lack the literacy skills needed to find and keep decent jobs, support their children’s education, and participate actively in civic life. Libraries can help on all of these fronts – through adult literacy programs, job skills training, programs to supplement a child’s education, and even by ushering patrons through the civic opportunities such as registering to vote.

Most public libraries provide information on adult literacy programs in their communities. About one in three public libraries sponsors literacy programs for adults who wish to improve their reading skills. These include one-on-one tutoring, small group instruction and programs to help immigrants improve their English literacy skills.

A growing number of public libraries also sponsor family literacy programs that aim to help parents improve their reading skills and to help them rear children who are readers and lifelong learners.

Libraries are a place to bring their children, even babies, and begin a journey that will open children's eyes—and minds—to the endless realm of possibilities that a lifetime commitment to learning and reading provides. By teaching children to read at a young age, parents are preparing them to begin school by giving them the confidence they need to think of learning as fun and the intellectual stimulation they need to become successful learners.

As children develop, library reading programs and materials foster reading for personal enjoyment and academic success. For children, public and school libraries offer a full complement of programs, including preschool story hours, reading clubs, homework help and Internet training, to assist in developing reading and information literacy skills.

School and public libraries are critical to developing the library skills to prepare for higher education. Successful college students must understand when to seek additional information, where to locate the information, and how to use and evaluate that information effectively. That understanding begins on the day a child first walks into the library and receives his or her very own library card and continues through their K-12 and academic library experiences both online and in library buildings.

Academic librarians were among the first to recognize the need for a new model for libraries and learning in the education process. In school, colleges and universities, librarians teach students and faculty how to use information technology for research and other needs. These institutions believe that it is a college's or university's responsibility to not only teach subject matter but to also have students understand when to seek additional information, where to locate the information, and how to use and evaluate that information effectively.

Beyond traditional literacy training, computer literacy training is one of the greatest services libraries provide. In today's digital age, knowing how to safely and effectively use technology is crucial for success in higher education or in the workplace. Many children and adults have their first hands-on experience with computers at their local libraries. Many public libraries offer training for parents, business people and other adults who wish to develop the technical skills and knowledge they need to succeed. Families also participate in Internet training to understand and guide their children's computer and online activities.

Our nation's libraries also promote literacy in all its forms for people with disabilities and people in institutional settings. Some libraries have closed-captioned and audio descriptive videos for people with hearing and vision disabilities. Many libraries have books on tape and other alternative formats for those learning English as a second language, or who have print or learning disabilities. Our libraries are truly critical resources for promoting and supporting a literate society – and providing equitable access for all.

The American Library Association...

...has been a leader in literacy and education since its establishment more than a century ago. Through well-established channels for mobilizing libraries and developing community programs, the association has been instrumental in encouraging federal funding and legislation to support libraries as centers for literacy and lifelong learning. ALA provides leadership and support in the form of professional education, legislative advocacy, demonstration projects, public awareness and other activities.

Working with coalitions and other literacy partners, ALA supports federal literacy programs and resources for family literacy and adult learning. ALA advocates for full funding for literacy programs and promotes literacy activities through its work with other literacy organizations. Additionally, ALA advocates for technology and Internet literacy and promotes Internet education as the best tool to help children successfully and safely use online resources. Through these efforts, the association supports local libraries in their important role as partners in literacy to better serve the American public.

ALA ADVOCACY RESOURCES

Every person who owns a library card is a part of the library community and has a vested interest in the needs and concerns of America's libraries. What many patrons may not realize, however, is that becoming involved in library advocacy is a lot easier than it may seem. To help more users effectively educate elected officials on library issues, the American Library Association has built a strong advocacy network that focuses on education, advocacy and advocacy resources.

Some tools include:

The Legislative Action Center (LAC): The LAC is a central location to review updates about federal issues and then immediately fax or e-mail members of Congress to urge them to support libraries. This is an easy way for new and veteran advocates to get involved immediately.

Web site: <http://capwiz.com/ala/home/>

I Love Libraries: I Love Libraries is a forum and resource for non-librarian library advocates. I Love Libraries builds awareness of the health and vitality of today's libraries, as well as the issues that affect them, while providing resources and support

to enhance the advocacy efforts for all types of libraries, as well as the library profession.

Web site: <http://www.ilovelibraries.org/>

District Dispatch Blog & Podcast: View virtually all vital information from the ALA Washington Office. The District Dispatch is also an archive for past press releases and ALA Washington Office Newline (ALAWON) e-mails. Those who prefer to listen to updates about federal issues, policy and advocacy on their iPods, in their cars, or on their computers will want to check out the podcast series produced by the Washington Office.

Web site: <http://www.wo.ala.org/districtdispatch/>

National Library Legislative Day: Library advocates across the country convene in May in Washington, D.C., and meet with their Congressional representatives and speak about the library issues that matter the most.

Web site: <http://www.ala.org/nlld>

Virtual Library Legislative Day: Library advocates who cannot make it to D.C. can become part of a coordinated effort called Virtual Legislative Day, where they all phone and write their elected officials on the same day. The topics are usually similar to National Library Legislative Day.

Web site: <http://www.ala.org/vlld>

Webinars and Podcasts: The ALA Washington Office, in conjunction with advocacy expert Stephanie Vance from Advocacy Associates, hosts monthly Webinars on advocacy. Ms. Vance has more than 15 years of experience in Washington, D.C., both as a lobbyist and a Congressional aide, holding positions such as legislative assistant, legislative director and staff director for various members of Congress. Sample topics include “Communicating with Your Member of Congress,” “Building an Effective Grassroots Strategy,” “Grassroots and the Appropriations Process,” and many more exciting and timely topics. This page includes information Webinars on grassroots organizing.

Web site: <http://www.ala.org/onlineadvocacy>

ALA QUOTABLE FACTS

- More than 6 out of 10 adults (60 percent) use a public library at least once a year.
- Library visits to public libraries totaled 1.4 billion, or 4.8 library visits per capita annually.
- Nationwide circulation of public library materials is 2.1 billion, or 7.3 materials per capita annually.
- Circulation of children's materials was 728.1 million, or 35 percent of total circulation in 2006.
- Attendance in children's programs was 57.6 million in 2006.
- Academic librarians answer 97 million reference questions each year – almost more than three times the attendance at college football games.
- Yearly reference transactions in public libraries totaled 295 million transactions per capita.
- There are approximately 98,311 school library media centers – 77,000 in public schools and 17,000 in private schools.
- Most school library media centers spend less than \$7 a year per child on books – less than half the average cost of one hardcover book.

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“If the founding fathers came back to this country in this day and age, one of the things that would just thrill would be our public library system. . . Now there is a library in every town, every city, everywhere in the country. [The library] is the pure expression of democracy. . . . It is open to everybody and it’s all free. No other country in the world has anything like our public library system. . . . If you get down about the state of American culture, just remember there are still more public libraries in this country than there are McDonalds.”

-David McCullough

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Libraries: The Place of Opportunity

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