

# A NATIONAL POLICY AGENDA FOR LIBRARIES

## The Policy Revolution! Initiative

### INTRODUCTION TO THE AGENDA AND INITIATIVE

Libraries are in a digital revolution, fueled by rapid advances in technology. This digital revolution brings compelling opportunities to build upon what libraries already do well: empower and engage communities and contribute to the missions of our national institutions.

But the digital revolution also brings with it many challenges. The roles, capabilities and expectations of libraries are changing rapidly. At the same time, national investment in libraries is lagging. This is due in large part to a lack of understanding by decision makers and influencers about how libraries uniquely contribute to society in the digital age.

The extent to which the U.S. library community can position libraries as *essential* to the fabric of our society will establish our value proposition for decades to come (see Figure 1). If we fail to build support from government entities, companies, foundations, associations, and other non-profit organizations, then libraries will be unable to meet our missions, and society will be the poorer for it.

**Figure 1: Spectrum of perceptions of libraries that impact funding & policy opportunities**



The goals of this national policy agenda are to change the conversation about libraries—from a nostalgic character in our history to an essential player in our nation's story—and to help focus and guide the library community's collective outreach to key decision makers and influencers.

We built this agenda on a thoughtful understanding of national political, economic and demographic trends. The baseline political outlook is a Republican-controlled U.S. House of Representatives for the next few elections, a Republican-controlled U.S. Senate until at least January 2017, a Presidential election in the fall of 2016, and a new Administration beginning in January 2017. The baseline economic outlook includes the assumption that the trend of increasing commercial influence and control over the public's access and engagement with

information will continue. Other trends such as widening income disparity and shifts in demographics also are assumed to continue.<sup>1</sup>

With this environment as backdrop, the agenda presents ways we can capitalize pragmatically on library strengths and values. To create the agenda we explored the following questions:

**What are the library priorities that may be of most interest to decision makers and influencers in the coming two to five years? And where might there be windows of opportunity to advance a particular priority at this particular time?**

This shared agenda is intended to provide guidance for the U.S. library community. Thus, *this* document is not intended to be used directly outside of the library community—other public-facing documents will be developed for advocacy purposes. *This* agenda was developed exclusively for library leaders and close allies in the United States.

This agenda is extensive—created with a national scope in mind—and is not meant to serve as the specific policy agenda for any given entity in the community.<sup>2</sup> Rather, we encourage library entities to fashion their policy priorities under the rubric of this national policy agenda so that we may build shared momentum. The agenda also may serve as a model or template for focused and coordinated planning and action at the state and local levels.

This agenda is being pursued through the Policy Revolution! initiative,<sup>3</sup> led by the American Library Association Office for Information Technology Policy and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Major library organizations contribute to and advise the initiative through a Library Advisory Committee (see the Appendix for roster). The three-year initiative has three major goals: to develop a national policy agenda, to initiate and deepen national stakeholder interactions based on policy priorities, and build library advocacy capacity.

Our strategic approach is to focus on the high-level “Library” story rather than on the silos of academic, school, public, government, and special or other libraries. We do so to create more holistic policy solutions and harness the power of our diverse community. Moreover, many decision makers and influencers do not understand or care about our silos—rather, the brand is “library” insofar as a brand exists.

We invite you to read through this agenda and share your questions, comments and contributions of research, examples and stories by emailing [oitp@alawash.org](mailto:oitp@alawash.org). Updates on the agenda and outreach, as well as complementary materials and resources are available at <http://www.ala.org/oitp>.

---

<sup>1</sup> The many trends that inform the future context for libraries are discussed in the [report](#) “Snapshots of a Turbulent World,” prepared under the auspices of the Policy Revolution! initiative.

<sup>2</sup> “Communities” refers to the broadest use of the term. The most common understanding refers to towns and cities or subsets of them. But the usage here also can refer to a K-12 school community, a college or university community, or other communities directly tied to various other library types.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.ala.org/news/node/9649>.

## LIBRARIES: AN EXTRAORDINARY RESOURCE FOR THE UNITED STATES

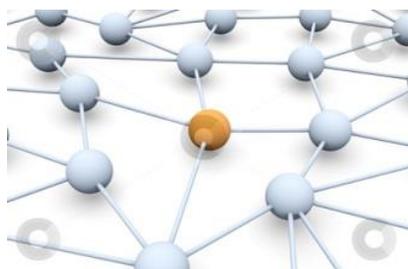
From story time to school and college research to 3D prototyping, libraries of all types are catalysts of opportunity and progress over lifetimes for individuals and our nation. Equitable access, intellectual freedom, creating knowledge, diversity, preserving and sharing the nation's cultural heritage, literacy and lifelong learning are core values that serve as the foundation for library programs, services, administration and advocacy. These are values that must be emphasized and situated within the context of an increasingly digital and networked world to affirm libraries' continued essential role in a digital society and to drive policy conversations.

### *A National Critical Infrastructure*

We see these values especially in U.S. libraries' role as an equalizer in our diverse nation, serving people of every age, income, location, ethnicity, or physical ability. Libraries provide a full range of tools and resources needed to live, learn, govern, and work. The domain for equitable access includes the gamut of books, media, and online access; emerging technologies and services; and the expert assistance of librarians in effectively using these resources. Literacy is a basic building block for engaging with these resources and for full civic participation—the first step among a lifetime of learning needed to meet changing technology and workforce demands, and libraries are a door to literacy. In this way, libraries provide a digital safety net, as well as a launching pad to exploration and innovation.

Libraries also promote intellectual freedom through inclusive and diverse collections, non-commercial public spaces that encourage open information exchange and debate, protection of privacy and confidentiality, and advocacy for government transparency, uncensored communications networks, and free expression. These values of equity, opportunity and openness are quintessentially democratic values, as well.

The digital age has the power to both expand and limit who has access to information resources. The increasing proliferation of digital information, networking, and services challenges libraries to increase their focus on bridging skills gaps, while managing digital information abundance; enabling experiential learning, creation and curation; and building community connections.



Libraries today represent a national critical infrastructure that delivers services and engages communities—with a long history of accomplishment connecting people with each other and with diverse physical and increasingly digital materials. Libraries also are one of the leading institutions that promote the values of the knowledge society in a philosophical and cultural sense—advocating for what the knowledge society could and should become.

The nation derives economic and operational efficiency and effectiveness by using this existing infrastructure, rather than reinventing such a network to deliver services (e.g., jobs centers, computer labs, or data repositories). Collaborations with and investments in libraries to fulfill national needs serve the public good and are fiscally sound.

### *An Agenda for Advancing National Priorities Through America's Libraries*

Though contemporary libraries and librarians have evolved in the context of the digital revolution, this shift is not widely understood by decision makers and influencers, who often have memories of libraries from decades past. This gap inhibits policy conversations about building library capacity to meet changing community needs. Thus, any policy goals must include aggressive communication of the roles, capacities, and possibilities of contemporary libraries. The nation will be well-served with increased investments in libraries, and especially in areas of notable opportunity that advance the agendas of national decision makers.

Finally, effective solutions for U.S. libraries and the communities we serve need to be informed by the international context. The diffusion of digital information and worldwide networks cause information flows, technologies, and practices to be porous across national borders. National policy, whether conducted by the U.S. government, information-sector corporations, or other entities, is inherently connected with the policies and practices of other countries.

The remainder of this document connects library practice and policy needs to move America forward. Each goal under Ensuring Essential Services and Enabling Policies includes a brief characterization of library contributions or interests and desired outcomes with the associated policy directions. The document also identifies specific populations for which there are significant demographic shifts and/or bipartisan opportunities to address specialized needs.

## **ENSURING ESSENTIAL SERVICES**

### **Building Capacity to Advance National Priorities**

Libraries serve communities in diverse and interdisciplinary ways through essential services.<sup>4</sup> Several of these essential service areas intersect with national priorities, and provide us with a unique opportunity to influence policy. These areas include: education and learning; employment and entrepreneurship; health and wellness; access to government information and services; and preservation of the nation's digital heritage and history. We will outline each of these areas and potential policy directions further below.

---

<sup>4</sup> One conception is encapsulated in The E's of Libraries™: Education, employment, entrepreneurship, community engagement, and individual empowerment. See [http://www.ala.org/offices/oitp/Es\\_of\\_libraries](http://www.ala.org/offices/oitp/Es_of_libraries).

## *Education & Learning*

Libraries are instrumental in education and learning for all ages. For children in their first years of life, early learning programming and services boost school readiness for young children and directly serve parents and caregivers as their children’s first teachers. Many libraries also have outreach programs to Head Start and child care centers.

Students in K-20 use libraries as interdisciplinary settings guided by teacher-librarians and research specialists to support college and career readiness. Embedded within educational institutions, school, college, and university libraries develop students’ ability to effectively find, evaluate, synthesize, communicate, and produce information. Libraries of all kinds also curate and broker homework and research resources.

Continuing education becomes more important in a time of educational disruption in which technology creates new mechanisms for personalized and distributed learning. Massive open online courses (MOOCs) and digital badging represent early forms of this trend in which libraries provide physical access to broadband infrastructure, devices, complementary content, proctoring, and face-to-face mentor or peer learning for otherwise digital-only providers. Non-traditional students such as those schooled at home, seeking GEDs or online certifications, or developing basic literacy, are served by libraries.

Digital literacy is enabled by providing new information technology, services and training. From laptop labs to maker spaces to 3D printing, librarians provide both formal and informal learning opportunities to gain familiarity and confidence using technology. More generally, libraries provide an array of programs that span goals and functions, such as summer reading programs; resources and services that advance science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) knowledge; and afterschool enrichment and tutoring programs.

Embedded within this program area is a basic building block of learning—literacy and active development of a reading culture. As information “containers” (such as books and periodicals) take new forms, the need to engage and encourage a love of reading as a means of growing knowledge, feeding curiosity and building connections among people cannot be neglected. Literacy is more than comprehension; reading involves the heart, as well as the head. Diverse and robust library collections and programming that are thoughtfully curated to community and campus needs cultivate global perspectives and personal empowerment. Libraries promote reading and learning that demand access to diverse materials. Educational, research and other projects may depend on access to tens, hundreds, or even thousands of (e-)books. Library lending enables deep knowledge.

The fundamental policy goal is to increase awareness and understanding by decision makers of library roles in education, leading to additional library capacity for these educational opportunities through strengthened and new collaborations and funding by the federal government, non-profit organizations, private philanthropy, and information services and

technology firms. Additional library capacity would support national policy priorities ranging from the Campaign for Grade-Level Learning to increasing college readiness and retention. National partners for libraries vis-à-vis achieving educational goals may include agencies and organizations such as the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Honda Foundation, Coursera, National Center for Families Learning and many others. Enabling full participation by people with disabilities (e.g., serving students with autism or enabling assistive technologies) and English-language learners, for instance, also is an important priority embedded here.

### *Employment & Entrepreneurship*

In addition to educational and learning opportunities that equip students to begin a career, libraries also directly contribute to workforce and economic development. Libraries provide programming and services for job search and the improvement of job skills. Many libraries serve as centers to establish, sustain, and promote small businesses. With longer hours than other community organizations, better technology access and training, and the ability for parents to engage in employment-related activities while children participate in other activities, libraries are particularly attractive workforce partners.<sup>5</sup>

New technologies, changing business models, and evolving cultural norms are enabling more decentralized work opportunities. Libraries with their rich information resources, skilled staff, and distributed physical locations are prime venues to advance entrepreneurship and sustain a more mobile workforce. A number of libraries already are engaged in promoting entrepreneurship in their communities, but much more should be done.

#### *Community Focus: Veterans/Military Families*

*Roughly 22 million Americans are veterans of military service, constituting about 7% of the U.S. population. Another 2.2 million people currently serve on military active duty or in reserve units. This community uses several library services, including workforce development, formal and informal education, access to government services, and cultural and civic activities. For the men and women who face challenges returning home from military service, libraries offer information access to behavioral health services, high-quality financial resources, and rehabilitation and other health resources. Military families face further challenges arising from their frequent relocations. Libraries offer a sense of home and normalcy in the midst of change.*

*Libraries can close information gaps and collaborate to offer community space and trained staff assistance to address these needs. Collaboration with veterans' organizations like the Veterans Administration, American Legion, ReserveAid, USA Cares, Operation Homefront, U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program and the Center for Veterans Issues can build capacity for libraries and connections for this community.*

Under the bipartisan Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), libraries are eligible for the first time to be considered One-Stop partners and eligible for federal funding to support job training and job search programs. The Department of Labor should develop rules and

---

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.ims.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/Workforce.pdf>.

regulations for WIOA that encourage libraries to apply for funding so that their services can best meet evolving workforce needs.

Another goal is to establish stronger or new collaborations with groups that enhance the ability of libraries to advance entrepreneurship. These groups include federal agencies such as the Small Business Administration and the Department of Commerce; non-profit organizations such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the U.S. Conference of Mayors; as well as commercial entities and start-ups.

### *Health & Wellness*

As health care is a major sector of the U.S. economy and society, it is a significant focus for libraries. People use library resources to learn about and discuss every aspect of their health, both reactively (e.g., “I have a disease and need to learn more”) and proactively (e.g., “I want to move to a healthier lifestyle for the future; how do I achieve this?”). Librarians play an important role in helping people engage with and evaluate health information so they can make smarter decisions and lead healthier lives.

Libraries and librarians also help people navigate health service organizations. As an individual’s health care now involves engagement with multiple large bureaucracies in both the public and private sectors, the information requirements for obtaining services can be daunting for many people (and especially for those who are newly insured), which creates the need for libraries to help their communities in this arena.

#### *Community Focus: Older Americans*

*In 2050, about one in five persons in the United States will be over the age of 65. Challenges associated with this trend include whether this older population will have adequate retirement income and health care options. Increased time in retirement also will result in demand for relevant learning and leisure activities, deeper pools of experienced volunteer talent, and a need for dedicated community and gathering spaces. Libraries already are creating stronger outreach connections with senior centers, and many technology training opportunities are specifically geared to older Americans.*

*As this population grows, specific attention should be devoted to building capacity for libraries to offer accessible services and outreach to support lifelong learning and engagement. Libraries also should continue to support volunteer opportunities with organizations like SCORE (which fosters small business through mentoring and education) to leverage this valuable expertise to support program goals listed above like entrepreneurship. Relationships should be explored with the Administration on Aging (within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) to develop and fund model projects that might then be replicated among other groups.*

More and closer collaboration between libraries and health care organizations will enable libraries to fully contribute at national scale. Libraries already address a varied range of activities from helping people complete web-based forms to creating information systems for medical research and providing access to these systems. With additional focused investment, considerable social benefit will be realized. Useful library collaborations may take place with the Department of Health and Human Services and multiple other federal entities with health

components in their missions, as well as a wide range of private sector organizations, such as foundations, health management organizations, and other entities in the health care arena.

### *Government Information & Services*

Libraries play an essential and multi-faceted role in connecting Americans with government information and services at the local, regional, state, and federal levels. This role includes informing and advancing community problem-solving; public internet access to support increasingly digital government transactions; partnerships with government agencies to navigate complex websites and systems; enabling public awareness, access and use of federal agency research and resources; and collaborating to improve access and use of public data to streamline and improve public services. Within school and higher education settings, librarians work with teachers and professors to increase knowledge of how government systems and laws work, be it in their neighborhoods or virtual communities.

Except for a narrow class of information (e.g., classified information), the data and information collected, produced, managed, or funded by the federal government should be widely available to the public. Federal agencies are the largest gatherers, creators and disseminators of information in the world. The library community strives for stronger provisions for simple and direct access to federal government information, with a focus on e-government services and digital (“big”) data.

Furthermore, libraries are uniquely well-positioned to facilitate the digital shift underway in government. When it comes to public interaction with government programs and services, too often “cost-savings” effected by a shift from paper forms and government staff support for government functions to an online-only interaction instead become “cost-shifting” from one public agency to another as too many people still lack internet access and digital skills to use complex websites and forms. Proactive outreach and planning with librarians to formalize and expand support for libraries as a point of delivery for government services and point of access for public information can improve government interactions and public engagement.

#### *Community Focus: New Immigrants*

*Libraries have long been a part of the new American experience, and today more than 55% of immigrants use the public library at least once a week. By 2050, it is estimated that one in five Americans will be an immigrant. Libraries of all types provide a trusted environment, resources and community connections that can ease the way to full participation in American society. Libraries serve as a gateway to citizenship, English language learning, civic engagement, and educational and employment possibilities.*

*One possibility for development is to strengthen or expand work already begun by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Family literacy programs like “The American Dream @ your library” also should be considered for additional funding and capacity with funders like the Dollar General Literacy Foundation. But many other opportunities are may be realized in the federal government, not-for-profit sector, and philanthropic initiatives.*

## Protecting the Nation's Cultural Heritage & History

A central role of libraries is serving as stewards of the nation's cultural heritage. This encompasses diverse collections of physical and digital materials, but also locally relevant and unique special collections of community history. From oral histories to historical maps to family photos and letters, people contribute and share their stories and preserve community history through libraries. Libraries protect and connect a diverse and vibrant patchwork of materials that tell the collective stories of our nation.

For physical materials, this library role and the associated operations are well established, and facilitated by copyright law and policy. By contrast, preservation of digital materials is a huge and complex challenge because materials are typically provided through licensing regimes and so the rights to preserve digital content are distributed, and responsibility and commitment uncertain at best.

While there are multiple disparate efforts towards digital preservation, their scope is limited and under-resourced. To remedy this national decision makers and influencers must first be convinced that digital

preservation merits priority on the policy agenda. Thereafter, a process to establish a coordinated national strategy and implementation plan for digital preservation needs to be supported, and subsequently launched. Related policy goals for libraries include gaining recognition of libraries as principal stewards of the massive and complex collection of digital resources that comprise our nation's collective memory, expanding this responsibility from the physical world. An additional goal includes positioning libraries to lead the development and implementation of a national strategy for digital preservation.

### *Community Focus: Rural Communities*

*Fundamentally, libraries in rural areas, which constitute 17% of the U.S. population, serve the same roles as libraries in urban and suburban areas. However, rural libraries often are even more critical to their communities because alternate educational, cultural, and civic institutions may be much more limited. For example, a rural library may well serve as a (or THE) local area museum, jobs center, health information center, community center, and theater by necessity. At the same time, rural libraries tend to face more profound challenges than other libraries because they often are geographically isolated, lack easy or affordable access to infrastructure such as high-speed broadband, and may struggle to recruit librarians or information technology staff.*

*The overriding goal is to overcome geographical boundaries and provide rural communities with comparable infrastructure, access, and resources to urban and suburban counterparts. But some aspects— for example robust video conferencing capabilities—are foundational as they enable numerous other community services. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (particularly the Rural Utilities Service) serves as a partner with libraries, as well as foundations and non-profits like the Foundation for Rural Service. However, many other entities may be well-positioned to advance this work, as well.*

## ENABLING POLICIES

### Advancing the Public Interest

The history of libraries is rich with value to American communities as enablers of opportunity and progress. Libraries have the potential to make even more significant contributions in the future. But the digital revolution has brought with it great challenges. In order for libraries to continue to provide maximum benefits to society, several positive policy changes are needed to address evolving technological, economic, social, and political environments. The effects of such changes will have broad public benefits that stretch beyond libraries—helping schools, museums, archives, social services, religious organizations, and many companies in the information and technology sectors. We outline seven areas where policy change is needed: Library Funding; Balanced Copyright and Licensing Frameworks; Systems for Managing Digital Content; Privacy and Transparency; Equal Access to Robust Broadband; Strengthening Library-related Functions in the Federal Government; and A New Generation of Library Professionals.

#### *Library Funding*

Significant funding targeted to libraries is provided through the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and the Telecommunications Act.<sup>6</sup> LSTA funds also help underwrite 40 Libraries for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Multiple other federal agencies—ranging from the National Science Foundation and the Department of Education to the National Endowment for the Humanities and Department of Health and Human Services—direct a small portion of their budgets to library-related activities. Additionally, the federal government directly funds the Library of Congress (including the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped), National Library of Medicine, and other federal libraries, as well as related organizations such as the National Archives and Records Administration, Government Publishing Office, Defense Technical Information Center, and the Smithsonian Institution.

For at least the next five years, this library-specific funding needs to be increased faster than the rate of inflation to take advantage of the opportunities enabled and demands created by the digital revolution. Private-sector funding should be similarly increased for the same reasons.

There are a number of national-level programs—both in the federal government and private sector—that provide funding for allied functions and institutions such as schools, community centers, or various other social service organizations—but not libraries. Oftentimes, the exclusion of libraries is unintentional. Whether intentional or not, one goal is to modify existing programs and ensure that newly established programs designate libraries as eligible entities for funding if libraries can meaningfully contribute to program goals (e.g., workforce development).

---

<sup>6</sup> Administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Federal Communications Commission, respectively.

## *Balanced Copyright and Licensing Frameworks*

Copyright in the physical world provides for limitations and exceptions—such as the first sale and fair use doctrines—that promote and enable public interest functions. By contrast, the digital world increasingly bypasses copyright law through licensing regimes. Thus, the public interest is increasingly subject to the discretion of how private sector organizations write their contracts for digital content access and use.

The library community must continue to advocate for the public interest in the management of digital content, whether through copyright or licensing frameworks. Society's institutions such as libraries—as well as the public at large—need to be able to use digital content in a reasonable, fair, and common-sense manner, with intellectual property protection “to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts,” as stated in the U.S. Constitution. An important goal of this advocacy is to broaden the national copyright conversation from its focus on piracy, locking down content, and protection of old business models, to foster creativity, innovation, and the needs of the entire country. To be successful in their advocacy, libraries must work in concert with allied organizations through coalitions, such as the Re:Create coalition.<sup>7</sup>

Digital inclusion for people with disabilities also is an important aspect of this policy area, including development and diffusion of accessible digital formats and reasonable accommodations for people with print disabilities. This work necessarily implicates both national policy and international treaties and other statements.

## *Systems for Managing Digital Content*

Libraries are the model when it comes to organizing and managing physical materials. But when it comes to ensuring access to digital materials, libraries are frequently stymied. The current system for managing and preserving digital materials is fragmented and in the early stages of its life cycle at the national level. Accordingly, the digital infrastructure needs investment to boost discovery and leverage the opportunities enabled by digital information and network technology. This investment includes systems architecture, hardware, software, networking, information management, and human capital dimensions, as well as mechanisms to foster inter-organizational communication and collaboration (also see earlier discussion Protecting the Nation's Cultural Heritage & History).

A strengthened national digital infrastructure also enables sharing across libraries of all types, as well as other community and cultural institutions, which increases economic and operational efficiencies over standalone systems. Technological advances enable a broad range of data and information production and distribution possibilities (e.g., open access-based models) for libraries and our communities that extend beyond the confines of traditional models or silos. Librarians, educators, scholars and instructional designers are developing open education

---

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.recreatecoalition.org/>.

resources (OER) and scholarly communications that have the power to more affordably and robustly support learning and research across institutions but currently lack the needed digital “connective tissue” to scale and benefit communities of all sizes.

The proposed National Digital Platform grant program by IMLS, included in President Obama’s FY2016 budget request, represents significant progress and should be supported. It provides not only an organizing construct, but also a tangible means for bringing together the infrastructure, services, tools and people that together deliver digital content to people everywhere.

The federal Digital Libraries Initiative (DLI) led by the National Science Foundation also could represent a model for moving forward, or at least provide insight into possibilities for a future broadly based proposal,<sup>8</sup> leveraging and coordinating efforts by federal agencies that would optimally also include private philanthropy. Stronger support from decision makers for managing and preserving digital materials, in terms of financial resources, and inclusion in related programmatic initiatives, as well as public policy making, are needed. Specific areas of work include strengthening existing digital infrastructure, filling gaps in the infrastructure, exploring new techniques and technologies to scale promising practices, skills development among information professionals and archivists, and ongoing testing of archives and backups to ensure reliability and sustainability.

### *Privacy*

A major challenge of the digital revolution for libraries is the ease with which personal information can be collected, transmitted, and analyzed—through the actions of the federal government and commercial entities. New information services and technology often capture such information as part of their normal operation. This data collection and storage, however, can jeopardize individual privacy, absent robust safeguards.

A central tenet of librarianship historically is that user information must be kept private unless disclosure is explicitly permitted—thus the privacy bar is even higher for libraries. By contrast, many of the digital information services used by libraries and the public fail to adequately safeguard privacy. The library community must work proactively to combat intrusions in the privacy of library users and the general public and advocate for appropriate changes in legislative, regulatory, and judicial arenas, as well as with the information and technology industries—working independently and with coalitions and other allies.

At the same time, the digital revolution has fundamentally changed the technical and operational context for privacy. Data and information associated with individuals are simply ***much*** more available than in decades past—including indisputably public data and information

---

<sup>8</sup> The DLI operated in the 1990s and early 2000s and sponsors included the Library of Congress and National Library of Medicine as well as other federal agencies; see <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dli2/>.

for which “connecting the dots” is greatly facilitated by the internet. The library community, along with society in general, must continue to explore and debate what privacy in the digital age means, especially as personal data sharing has become a de facto “currency” for accessing many online services that are nominally free. Another consideration is public perception, especially among the young, of digital privacy—both how this perception is evolving and the causes for the change—and the implications for libraries and all of society’s institutions.

### *Equal Access to and Effective Use of Robust Broadband*

All libraries should have affordable access to high-speed broadband infrastructure. Telecommunications services should be available to libraries on a non-discriminatory basis to support equitable public access, enable content creation and dissemination, and distribute digitized and digital collections. As new technologies and technological opportunities arise (e.g., expanded and more efficient use of unlicensed spectrum), libraries need to be included among the potential user groups during policy decision making. Libraries will continue to advocate for robust broadband access, adoption and use and will collaborate with others toward this end. Efforts to take advantage of and expand opportunities provided by modernized E-rate and other federal programs supporting access to and use of fast, fair and neutral wired and wireless networks demand ongoing attention.

### *Strengthening Library-related Functions in the Federal Government*

The visibility and champions for libraries and related institutions within the federal government are dispersed and loosely connected, which means that our sector is less powerful and visible than it could be. Many of the organizations<sup>9</sup> are standalone units (e.g., Library of Congress [which includes the U.S. Copyright Office], IMLS, Federal Communications Commission, National Archives and Records Administration, Smithsonian Institution, National Endowment for the Humanities, and National Science Foundation) whereas others are within the bureaucracies of various cabinet departments (e.g., National Telecommunications and Information Administration, National Library of Medicine, Defense Technical Information Center, and National Agricultural Library). Taken together, federal libraries constitute the largest, most complex, and greatest funded library enterprise in the history of the world. The goal then is to increase productive ties among relevant units in formal and informal ways to leverage aggregate resources and political influence towards more coordinated planning and action. Conducting research into countries that have consolidated organization forms (e.g., the Ministry of Culture and Communications in France) for possible lessons to apply in the United States is an important area of focus.

---

<sup>9</sup> As indicated, the organizations listed here are examples. There are numerous federal entities with interests in libraries or library issues.

## *A New Generation of Library Professionals*

Given the revolution in libraries—and the information sector generally—the roles and responsibilities of library staff also are changing in fundamental ways. New models for library organizations and staff positions are emerging. Many of the traditional skills of librarianship remain applicable in the digital age, but additional skills also become necessary. Federal agencies and private foundations should increase their investments in preparing the staff for libraries in the digital age.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Let's Meet the Challenge**

Libraries enjoy considerable goodwill among national decision makers and influencers. Thus, we are in a good starting position but must expand understanding of libraries' significant modern capabilities and potential to those in power. This basic communications challenge is in addition to advocating specific policy proposals. We can do it, but it will take concerted efforts from a broad swath of the library community to be successful.

## **APPENDIX: Policy Revolution! Advisors and Staff**

### **Library Advisory Committee**

Andrea Berstler, Wicomico (Md.) Public Library  
John Carlo Bertot, University of Maryland  
RaShauna Brannon, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign  
Melinda Cervantes, Pima County (Ariz.) Public Library (until April 2015)  
Rose T. Dawson, Alexandria (Va.) Library  
Sandra Enimil, Ohio State University  
Marc Gartler, Madison (Wisc.) Public Library  
Christopher Harris, Genesee Valley (N.Y.) BOCES  
Ann Joslin, Idaho Commission on Libraries  
Dan Lee, University of Arizona  
Susan McVey, Oklahoma Department of Libraries  
James Neal, Columbia University  
Vailey Oehlke, Multnomah County (Ore.) Library  
Pat Smith, Texas Library Association  
Tracy Strobel, Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Public Library  
Ken Wiggin, Connecticut State Library  
Connie Williams, Petaluma (Calif.) City Schools  
Vivian Wynn, Wynn Library Consulting (Tenn.)

### **Principal Investigators and Special Advisors**

Tim Cherubini, Chief Officers of State Library Agencies  
Larra Clark, American Library Association Office for Information Technology Policy  
Alan Fishel, Arent Fox (D.C.)  
Sari Feldman, American Library Association and Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Public Library  
Anne Green, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation  
Alan S. Inouye, American Library Association Office for Information Technology Policy  
Chris Jowaisas, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

### **Affiliated ALA Staff**

Adam Eisgrau, Office of Government Relations  
Keith Michael Fiels, Executive Director  
Barbara Jones, Office for Intellectual Freedom  
Jessica McGilvray, Office of Government Relations  
Marci Merola, Office of Library Advocacy  
Carrie Russell, Office for Information Technology Policy  
Emily Sheketoff, Washington Office  
Marijke Visser, Office for Information Technology Policy  
Charlie Wapner, Office for Information Technology Policy  
Jazzy Wright, Washington Office, Communications

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

**An executive brief of this National Policy Agenda for Libraries is available online at**  
<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/pdfs/NPAforLibrariesBrief2.pdf>

If you have questions about the Agenda, contact the Co-principal Investigators Alan S. Inouye (ainouye@alawash.org) and Larra Clark (lclark@alawash.org) at the American Library Association, Office for Information Technology Policy, Washington, D.C.

© 2015 American Library Association. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>. 

June 2015