

Policy Revised 2008

**Preamble:**

The American Library Association's policy on preservation is based on the Association's mission to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all. The Preservation policy has as its goal promoting the preservation of our cultural heritage and ensuring access to information in a useable and trustworthy form. ALA affirms that the preservation of library resources protects the public's right to the free flow of information as embodied in the First Amendment to the Constitution and the Library Bill of Rights.

The Association supports the preservation of information disseminated and published in all media and formats. The Association affirms that the preservation of information content and information resources are central to libraries and librarianship.

**National Information Services and Standards Responsibilities**

The Association and its Divisions will work closely with standards-setting organizations to identify and develop standards relevant to the preservation of library collections, participate in their periodic review and updating, identify and develop new standards when needed, and promote compliance with existing standards.

The Association will actively support its Divisions and other organizations in developing preservation guidelines and best practices that may serve as catalysts for official national and international standards.

**Usability, Longevity and Durability of Library Collections**

The preservation of library materials is a process dependent upon both the producers and curators of information resources. In keeping with the missions of their individual institutions, librarians must commit to preserving their collections through appropriate care. Preservation of materials in their original format should be practiced whenever possible, through proper storage and handling, supplemented by remedial treatment of damaged and fragile items. Replacement or reformatting of deteriorated materials must be actively pursued to enable users to have unimpeded access to the intellectual record, regardless of the condition of original documents. Preservation issues should be addressed while planning for new construction or the renovation of existing buildings to ensure that collections are preserved through appropriate and non-damaging storage and given proper security.

Librarians who create, maintain, and share bibliographic records and other metadata associated with their collections enhance security, access, and preservation. These activities facilitate collaborative efforts to protect the Nation's cultural heritage and are integral to effective life-cycle management of digital publications, whether born digital or digitized, to assure their usefulness for future generations.

Media manufacturers, information creators and disseminators, publishers, distributors and libraries must work together to improve the usability, durability, and longevity of their products (e.g., paper, film, magnetic tape, optical disk) that ensure the persistence of these products.

It is the Association's official position that publishers, information distributors and manufacturers have an obligation and responsibility to libraries and to the public to report appropriate information about the usability, durability and longevity of media. The Association strongly urges publishers to use paper and other media that meet standards promulgated by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the International Standards Organization (ISO) for all publications of enduring value. Publishers should include a statement of compliance on the verso of the title page of a book or the masthead or copyright area of a periodical, and in catalogs, advertising, and bibliographic references.

The Association will engage in active education and public relations efforts to develop, promote, and publicize standards for the usability, durability, and longevity of information media; to engage both librarians and information producers in the preservation process; and to produce educational materials devoted to promoting the longevity of information resources.

### **Digital Preservation**

The Association defines digital preservation as policies, strategies and actions that ensure access to digital content over time. Publishers and distributors of content in digital form must address the usability and longevity of their electronic works. The Association encourages publishers to provide metadata that will facilitate the life cycle management of works in digital formats and to deposit digital works in repositories that provide for the long-term persistence and usability of digital content. The Association will work with the publishers to develop guidelines on digital preservation to help ensure that such information will not be lost when publishers can no longer retain and disseminate it.

The Association encourages research on metadata, software, operating systems, and life cycle management techniques that may effect the preservation of digital works.

### **Advocacy**

Librarians must educate the public (including public officials and administrators) about the choices and the financial commitments necessary to preserve our society's cultural and social records.

The preservation of primary source documents is integral to our right to know about and understand ourselves and the communities in which we live. Libraries have an obligation (a) to inform donors, users, administrators, and local officials about the ephemeral nature of primary source materials, (b) to promote strategies for the proper care, handling, and

storage of these materials, and (c) to recommend the use of durable media and methods of documentation.

The Association will help libraries cultivate public interest in this issue and will make information available regarding how concerned individuals, organizations, and governments may act on behalf of preservation.

### **Legislative Policy**

The federal government must provide leadership in developing an expansive and inclusive national preservation policy. This policy should reinforce the mutual efforts of national, state, and local libraries to preserve materials that document our cultural heritage and make them widely available to all citizens. The federal government, by example, by policy, and by the efforts of its historical, cultural, and information institutions, should affirm the responsibility of all cultural institutions, including local and state libraries, to preserve and provide access to historical documents. The federal and state governments should provide incentives that encourage all institutions to participate in the national preservation effort.

The Association urges the federal and state government to take responsibility for the longevity of information that it publishes on paper, in microform, and in digital formats.

The Association, through its ALA Washington Office and its Legislation Agenda, will strongly support the efforts of librarians to increase Federal and state government funding for preservation programs.