

American Library Association**The State of America's Libraries****Executive summary****Released on April 3, 2006**

Libraries just aren't what they used to be. They're more—and better.

In this first annual report on the State of America's Libraries, the American Library Association found that:

- Libraries and librarians are good citizens. Librarians nationwide were quick to implement a sustained program of help for librarians and residents along the hurricane-ravaged Gulf Coast last year, and the American Library Association was quick to reaffirm that it would indeed hold its Annual Conference in New Orleans in June. The ALA conference is expected to bring some 18,000 visitors and \$20 million in business to the beleaguered region.
- Americans appreciate libraries and librarians. Eighty-nine percent of Americans surveyed early this year reported being satisfied with their public libraries. Most agree that public libraries are under-funded and need more support.
- Libraries are keeping up with the times—and with the public's needs. In the past 10 years, libraries across the country have achieved a major success in connectivity; today, virtually all public libraries in the United States offer public access to the Internet.
- Despite uncertain funding at the state level, increased demand for the services provided by libraries and strong local support meant that almost 200 public-library building projects were completed in 2005. Many libraries redesigned spaces in order to create new environments for learning, information retrieval and community activities. However, many communities experienced cutbacks in library budgets, and two libraries briefly closed their doors—a troubling development for many Americans.
- Librarians are working to protect Americans' access to the information they need and their right to read freely. Librarians and other interested parties were actively involved in the continuation of the three-year effort to amend sections of the USA PATRIOT Act that infringe on library patron privacy and civil liberties. They fought hundreds of attempts to censor library materials. They also continued to play an active role negotiating copyright issues in the digital age in order to protect the public's right to fair use of copyrighted material.

This report on the State of America's Libraries is not meant to be exhaustive but simply to show the many ways in which America's libraries and librarians are not only adapting in the Age of Google but continuing to play a vital role as information providers, information advisers and community centers.

The State of America's Libraries

If your memory of “the library” is “that building down the street where we used to borrow books when we were kids,” it’s time for a new visit. Times have changed, and libraries have kept up every step of the way—in many cases leading the way.

While you can still borrow books, today’s libraries are resource and community centers, widely used and enthusiastically supported by a growing proportion of Americans. In a survey conducted early this year, 36 percent of Americans put the benefits of libraries at the top of the public services list, a six-percentage point increase from 2002.

The social conscience of libraries and librarians also has been in the spotlight in the past year as the American Library Association (ALA) defended citizens’ privacy rights and took a leadership role in responding to the worst natural disaster ever to strike the nation. The ALA’s early affirmation of its plans to hold its Annual Conference in New Orleans this June is an important vote of confidence in a city that is struggling to come back—and a significant and very public act of good citizenship.

Helping to rescue a ravaged region

Hurricane Katrina, which assaulted the Gulf Coast Aug. 29 with winds up to 140 miles per hour, took a terrible toll on people and libraries. Less than four weeks later, Hurricane Rita, the third most intense storm ever recorded in the North Atlantic, came ashore in Texas, its rains compounding the damage to areas already ravaged by Katrina. Then, in late October, came Wilma, which tore across central Florida.

The storms and subsequent flooding took almost 1,500 lives and made refugees of more than a million people. Thousands of libraries were also partially or completely destroyed. In Louisiana, 110 school libraries were lost, 29 public libraries were totally destroyed and 35 public libraries lost their collections. In Mississippi, 64 school libraries were lost and 11 public libraries were completely or partially destroyed. In Alabama, one school library was destroyed and two public libraries were lost.

In New Orleans, eight of 12 of the public library’s branches sustained moderate to severe damage. In St. Tammany Parish, the one-year-old Pontchartrain branch, in Slidell, was blown down. “The stacks fell like dominoes,” said Tanya DiMaggio, children’s services coordinator.

The cost of rebuilding Louisiana’s public libraries and their collections is estimated to be \$63 million, and no estimate is yet available for rebuilding school and higher-education libraries. In Mississippi, the public-libraries estimate is \$40 million — and another \$40 million to replace school library collections. The library of the University of Mississippi-Gulf Coast, built in 2002, may have to be totally rebuilt.

Through both storms, librarians and library workers throughout the region braved floodwaters to rescue collections, and the National Guard and other emergency responders often used libraries as rescue areas. Soon after, libraries and librarians

nationwide came to the aid of tens of thousands of people who had fled the storm and flocked to local libraries to find and fill out disaster-assistance applications, look for missing family and friends or send e-mails letting people know they were all right.

Loretta Gharst, a librarian at the Calcasieu Parish Public Library in Lake Charles, Louisiana, described the evacuees she saw: "They were like us: black, white, Asian, Hispanic; some well off, some not. They were concerned about their families, their homes and their futures. They came to the library to get information because they couldn't get it anywhere else. They wanted to know about finding employment, housing and registering children for school.

"But most of all they wanted to go home and start pulling their lives and businesses back together."

The ALA response also was immediate and dramatic. The association established the Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund, which has generated more than \$300,000 in donations to ALA chapters along the Gulf Coast. Hundreds of libraries nationwide signed up for the ALA's Adopt-a-Library Program and were matched with public, school and academic libraries in the afflicted region.

And barely three weeks after Rita, following intense deliberation, the ALA decided, on October 12, to proceed with its plans to hold its 2006 Annual Conference, scheduled for June 22-28, in New Orleans.

"The best thing that the association and its members can do is to go to New Orleans and lead the reconstruction by example," ALA President Michael Gorman said in announcing the decision. "Our conference will provide the jobs and tax revenues needed to help residents reestablish their lives and for the city to fully restore services, including library services.

"We speak often of how libraries build communities, and now we have a chance to show the country and the world that librarians build communities, too."

Early registration figures indicate that attendance at the conference should come close to pre-storm projections.

Strong support for public libraries

America's public libraries continued to win the approval of the American public in 2005. A national survey conducted this spring shows that 89 percent of Americans reported being satisfied with their public libraries and fully 70 percent said they were either extremely or very satisfied—a 10 percentage point increase since 2002.

In the survey, conducted for the ALA and The Campaign for America's Libraries by the independent KRC Research firm, Americans named the four most important characteristics or services of public libraries as being that the services are free (79 percent), that the library "is a place where I can learn for a lifetime" (71 percent),

“enhances my education” (65 percent) and “provides information for school and work” (65 percent). Moreover, three-quarters of respondents strongly agreed that because it provides free access to materials and resources, the public library plays an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed.

Nearly two-thirds of Americans reported owning a library card, and most continued to visit the library in person at least once a year. In fact, patrons' use of some key library services has increased significantly since 2002: 81 percent of library visitors say they take out books (up 14 percentage points from 2002), 54 percent say they consult the librarian (up 7 points), 38 percent say they take out CDs, videos, or computer software (up 13 points) and 22 percent say they go to the library to attend a special program (up 8 points). Libraries reported that total audio and video circulation increased nearly 18 percent in 2003, the most recent year for which statistics are available. In the same time period, use of electronic resources increased almost 23 percent over the previous year.

Americans strongly support funding for public libraries, and strong majorities would like to see that funding increased. More than eight in 10 Americans (85 percent) agree their

Public-library report card

Proportion of survey respondents in 2006 that said that their public library:

Is friendly _____	93%
Is convenient _____	93%
Provides opportunities for everyone _____	91%
Is comfortable _____	91%
Is modern _____	86%
Has highly skilled librarians _____	84%
Is up to date on technology _____	83%
Offers information from around the world ____	80%

All figures were up 2-6% from 2002.

public library deserves more funding, with 58 percent saying that they strongly agree. When asked what amount should be spent on public libraries, fully 60 percent say \$25 or more per person per year, an increase of nine percentage points since 2002. Per capita expenditures for public libraries in 2003, the most recent year for which there are statistics, were \$29.60, with a range among states of \$13.09 [Mississippi] to \$53.94 [Ohio].

The new American library

The concept of the library as just a place for books is long gone. Today's library is now more broadly defined as “a collection of resources in a variety of formats that is (1) organized by information professionals or other experts who (2) provide convenient physical, digital, bibliographic or intellectual access and (3) offer targeted services and programs (4) with the mission of educating, informing or entertaining a variety of audiences (5) and the goal of stimulating individual learning and advancing society as a whole.” (George M. Eberhart, *Whole Library Handbook 4* [ALA Editions, 2006])

In 2005, there were more than 117,000 libraries of various kinds in the United States. Their impact is multiplied because most participate in cooperative arrangements, sharing collections, technology and staff expertise or leveraging economies of scale with group purchases. Also, state libraries play an important role in providing or supporting library services in all 50 states.

In the past 10 years, libraries across the country have achieved a major success in that today, virtually all public libraries in the United States offer public access to the Internet. This success has brought increased demand, which many local public libraries struggle to meet, according to the study *Public Libraries and the Internet 2004: Survey Results and Findings*, funded by the ALA Office for Information Technology and Policy and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Eighty-five percent of public libraries report having insufficient hardware to meet peak demand, and only 48 percent are able to offer true high-speed connections, according to the study, which was released at the ALA's 2005 Annual Conference.

One effort underway to meet demand is to offer wireless Internet access and, in some cases, even provide laptops for in-library use. Nearly 18 percent of public libraries reported offering wireless in 2005, and another 21 percent plan to offer it within the next year. Libraries also are responding to patron demands for technology assistance and training. Unfortunately, half the nation's public libraries also reported that their technology budgets didn't increase from 2003 to 2004, while 13 percent reported a decline.

Another study, *A First Look at the Literacy of America's Adults in the 21st Century*, from the National Center for Education Statistics, found that 30 million adults in America have below basic literacy skills, including seven million who are considered to be nonliterate in English.

"These numbers remain too high," ALA President-Elect Leslie Burger said in December. "They represent just one of many reasons every community in America needs a public library." Ninety-four percent of public libraries serving more than 5,000 people provide literacy services, and 75 percent of public libraries partner with other agencies and organizations in their communities to provide adult literacy services.

Libraries remain on the move in other ways. Bookmobiles marked a century of service in public libraries nationwide with a birthday party at the ALA's 2005 Annual Conference. The event celebrated Washington County (Md.) librarian Mary Titcomb, who used a horse-drawn buggy in 1895 to deliver books to neighboring rural communities, thus beginning a service that continues today. In the aftermath of the Gulf Coast hurricanes, bookmobiles delivered books and magazines to hospitals and shelters, and not all the vehicles bore local license plates; the Anne Arundel County Public Library in Maryland, for example, donated the services of one of its bookmobiles to Hancock County, Mississippi, about 40 miles east of New Orleans.

Another modern vehicle burst on the scene for the first time in 2005. StoryCorps, a national oral history project, sent two MobileBooths on a cross-country trek from New York City to record the personal stories of Americans from every walk of life. Along the way, StoryCorps is continuing to lure more and more libraries and librarians into the creation of this unique record, which will rest in the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

Funding: A mixed bag

Funding problems continued to plague America's public libraries in 2005, and several cases gained notoriety in the news media. In the hometown of John Steinbeck, contributions enabled the three branches of the Salinas (Calif.) Public Library to remain open, albeit with reduced services, until voters came to the rescue in November 2005 by approving a half-cent tax to fund libraries and other essential city services. Libraries elsewhere had to impose drastic reductions in hours and staff, and one, in Bedford, Texas, shut down for about a month. In Pennsylvania, a judge issued an injunction blocking more cuts following an initial round of shortened hours and layoffs at the Free Library of Philadelphia, which opened in 1731. The 114-year old Hampden (Mass.) Free Public Library was not so lucky: It closed June 30 after a budget measure failed.

In 2005, Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell signed a state budget that included \$61.3 million in state aid to libraries, a 6 percent increase over the previous year. Although the budget fell short of the \$75.3 million that the state's libraries had received in 2002, the increase represents a national trend toward the restoration of some of the funding lost during the last recession. Many school library media centers, however, suffered budget cuts.

"School budgets are taking a hit, and, in turn, so are the school libraries," reported Carl Harvey, library media specialist for the North Elementary School in Noblesville, Indiana. Although he was referring to fiscal conditions in Indiana, where, he said, "some districts have cut budgets while others have eliminated positions," Harvey could have been describing the situation in scores of school districts across the country.

Continuing budget cuts mainly affected resources and materials but also had an impact on school library staffing levels. Meanwhile, studies in 16 different states found that students at schools with well-developed libraries consistently score from 10 to 18 percent higher on reading and other tests. This is true whether the schools and their communities are rich or poor, and whether the adults in them are well or poorly educated.

An Illinois study in 2005 found, for instance, that eleventh-grade ACT scores are highest when there is a high degree of true collaboration between library media specialists and classroom teachers in a wide spectrum of activities. Higher library staffing levels are linked to higher reading performance for all grade levels.

Many school librarians felt that the financial pressure on school libraries in 2005 grew out of the demands made on school systems by the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Public library funding, FY03-FY05

Public libraries' operating revenue changes, fiscal years 2003-05

	Increased revenue	Decreased revenue
FY03 _____	18.0%	17.2%
FY04 _____	23.7%	17.7%
FY05 _____	25.7%	15.7%

Based on a survey of 1,950 public libraries

Still, given the limited allocation and the number of competing interests in fiscal 2006, libraries fared reasonably well in Washington as Congress raced to finish its business at the end of 2005. The Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill for fiscal year 2006 provides \$210.6 million for the Library Services and Technology Act, a \$5 million increase from the previous year. As part of the LSTA funding, \$23.8 million went to the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Initiative, which supports efforts to recruit and educate the next generation of librarians and the faculty who will prepare them for careers in library science, as well as grants for research related to library education and library staffing needs, curriculum development and continuing education and training. While the LSTA fared well, the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program was level-funded at \$19.5 million. The issue of funding for school library media centers remains a top priority at the state and federal levels.

Federal E-rate funding continues to be an essential program for libraries, having provided more than \$350 million dollars in telecommunications discounts for libraries over the past eight years. Although libraries account for only a small part of the Universal Service Fund for Schools and Libraries Program, as it is formally known, those that receive the discounts count on them to provide the services—such as Internet access—that patrons have come to depend on. Critics of the E-rate program continue to attack it, and the ALA will play a key advocacy role in protecting the program, as the Telecommunications Act is re-opened. College and research libraries also felt budget pressures in 2005, with libraries at large public universities reporting a tighter squeeze than institutions with healthy endowments. Still, all experienced the following trends to varying degrees in 2005:

- Increased use of consortia and collaborations to maintain services while controlling costs. More and more college and research libraries negotiated joint licenses for the use of specialized materials.
- More extensive use of technology in areas such as access to information, reference, archiving, preservation and interlibrary loan. More institutions are creating institutional and discipline-specific repositories. Digital collections are expanding.
- More emphasis on advocacy issues, including the importance of physical libraries for community and collaboration and the importance of information literacy across the curriculum.
- Increased collaboration with faculty to ensure that students are adept at finding, critically evaluating and using information resources.

Technology itself was responsible for pressure of another kind. The University of Texas at Austin created a stir at mid-year when it announced that by fall, almost all of the undergraduate library's 90,000 volumes would be

Mean librarian salaries, 2005

Director _____	\$78,054
Deputy/associate/assistant director _____	\$60,729
Department head/coordinator/senior manager ____	\$55,833
Manager/supervisor of support staff _____	\$44,324
Librarian who does not supervise _____	\$47,246
Beginning librarian _____	\$36,486

Source: Denise M. Davis and Jenifer Grady, *ALA Survey of Librarian Salaries, 2005*. Comparison to previous-year librarian figures or to salaries in comparable professions would not be meaningful because of a change in survey methodology in 2005.

dispersed to other university collections to make room for a 24-hour electronic information commons. And in fact, many campus libraries followed a broader library trend of redesigning spaces in order to create new learning environments, facilitate group or team learning and increase opportunities to teach information literacy on the spot.

All of 2005 played out against the backdrop of the experimental Google Book Search, introduced as the year began, and the Open Content Alliance, which made its debut in October and set about “building a permanent archive of digitized text and multimedia content”—not new ideas for libraries, which have been engaged in digitizing text for years.

Library construction continues

Through it all, construction continued. The devastation of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma notwithstanding, 185 public library projects were completed in 2005—91 new buildings and 94 additions or renovations—and 31 academic library buildings, *Library Journal* reported in December.

Among the largest undertakings nationwide were the Fayetteville (Ark.) Public Library (\$60 million for construction and endowment), which includes an 88,000–square foot parking garage in addition to the 88,000–square foot building; the Cherry Hill (N.J.) Public Library (\$21.6 million); the Columbus (Ga.) Public Library (\$40 million); the Evansville (Ind.) Vanderburgh Public Library Central Library (\$33.6 million); and the \$57.6 million addition-renovation at the Akron-Summit County (Ohio) Public Library main branch, which now encompasses 270,000 square feet.

Total expenditures for public-library building projects in 2005 were more than \$830 million, according to *Library Journal* (Dec. 15, 2005), with local communities funding most of the costs.

The 31 college and university libraries include a new building at Middlebury (Vt.) College, costing \$40 million; the Hannon Library addition-renovation at Southern Oregon University in Ashland (\$23.2 million); and the Gottesman Libraries at Columbia University's Teachers College in New York, a renovation that cost \$18.8 million. The University of Chicago announced a \$42-million, 40,000-square-foot expansion of its Regenstein Library, a project that will allow the facility to house eight million volumes and make it the largest research library under a single roof in North America, university officials say. Completion is expected in 2009.

Library education

Education for librarianship became a more frequent topic of discussion during 2005, and ALA President Michael Gorman's selection of library education as his theme for the year added fuel to the decades-old controversy over whether graduate schools should be educating for library science or information science, and whether library education adequately prepares students for the challenges of working in libraries.

Meanwhile, some educators worried about LIS education's lack of emphasis on library

users, and others believe the real crisis is the dearth of doctoral candidates to teach in those programs. Charles A. Seavey of the University of Missouri, Columbia, writing in *American Libraries* in October 2005, expressed concern about “the graying of the profession”—not only librarians, but those who teach people to become librarians.

Through it all, LIS programs continue to grow nationwide, with 56 ALA-accredited programs currently in operation. Many LIS deans reported record enrollment in the master's-level programs in 2004, largely because of distance education, but it is not entirely clear whether the graduates are finding employment in libraries. A two-year research study of the future of librarians in the workforce was begun in fall 2004; it is funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and is being conducted under the direction of José-Marie Griffiths, dean of the School of Information and Library Science, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

A gloomy note was struck with the closure of Clark-Atlanta University's School of Library and Information Studies in May, which drew national attention and protests from the ALA and other groups. Founded in 1941, Clark-Atlanta's SLIS was one of only two at historically black colleges and universities (the other is North Carolina Central University, Durham). The Clark-Atlanta board said the SLIS was shut down for budget reasons.

Coincidentally, the next month the Institute of Museum and Library Services announced the awarding of 38 grants totaling nearly \$21.1 million as part of its Librarians for the 21st Century program. The grants fund recruitment programs by libraries, universities and library organizations around the country. More than 1,400 preprofessional, master's, doctoral and continuing-education students will benefit from the grants.

The USA PATRIOT Act and libraries

Librarians and other interested parties were actively involved throughout 2005 in the fight to amend sections of the USA PATRIOT Act that infringe on library patron privacy and civil liberties. The Campaign for Reader Privacy—including the American Booksellers Association, the Association of American Publishers, PEN American Center and the ALA—worked with House and Senate lawmakers in an attempt to guarantee that re-authorization legislation would contain language strengthening reader privacy.

Library supporters' grassroots efforts in protest of portions of the USA PATRIOT Act resonated on Capitol Hill in 2005. Librarians stayed in close contact with their elected representatives as debate over renewal of the act dragged on through the summer and into winter 2005. Library supporters saw the results of their many phone calls and e-mails to elected officials when, on the final day before its summer recess, the Senate passed a reauthorization bill that would have added to the PATRIOT Act many of the safeguards for library and reader privacy that have been sought by the library community since the original passage of the law, including tougher requirements for searching library records under Section 215.

In December, the House passed a bill that contained a number of provisions from the

Senate bill—but not the ones most important to the library community. These are the requirement of “individualized suspicion,” which would limit the FBI’s ability under Section 215 to search the reading records of people who are not suspected of any crime and who have no link to suspected terrorists; and a provision allowing recipients of Section 215 subpoenas and of National Security Letters to meaningfully challenge in court the gag attached to those orders.

The library community made a concerted effort to stop the flawed bill from proceeding, and a bipartisan group of senators successfully filibustered the bill, forcing the Congress to extend sunset provisions of the act until March 10. In February, four Republican Senators introduced a compromise bill that was intended to advance protections for library users and others—but left in place the controversial aspects of Section 215. The House subsequently passed the compromise Senate bill, and reauthorization of the PATRIOT Act was complete.

Section 215 is reauthorized until December 31, 2009. Some improvements have been made in reporting requirements and also in the specificity of any order issued under Section 215. The legislation introduced by the four Republican Senators, and passed by both chambers, prohibits the FBI from using National Security Letters in the vast majority of libraries.

The efforts of librarians across the country were fundamental in helping to effect changes to the USA PATRIOT Act. While the changes to the PATRIOT Act were not as comprehensive as the library community had hoped, its advocacy efforts helped secure significant changes in the act, leading Illinois Senator Dick Durbin to thank the ALA on the floor of the Senate.

Librarians in a crossfire

In the midst of the debate in Washington, a study commissioned by the ALA Office for Information Technology Policy in 2005 found that public and academic libraries had received more than 130 legally executed requests by federal, state or local law enforcement officers since October 2001. The study made clear that librarians feel they must walk a fine line to balance the needs of law enforcement and protecting the rights of their patrons to read freely without fear of government interference.

Not surprisingly, the balancing act wound up in court. In September 2005, a federal judge ruled that the FBI must lift a gag order that prevents a Connecticut “organization with library records” from discussing its receipt of a National Security Letter (NSL) subpoena for information. The decision marked the second time a federal court had dealt a blow to the NSL expansion in the USA PATRIOT Act; the first ruling found that the entire NSL provision was unconstitutional.

In the Connecticut decision, which has been stayed until the government’s appeal is heard and decided, U.S. District Court Judge Janet Hall wrote that “the statute has the practical effect of silencing those who have the most intimate knowledge of the statute’s effect and a strong interest in advocating against the federal government’s broad investigative

powers” under the USA PATRIOT Act.

The two cases have been combined in the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in New York.

Copyright issues in the digital age

Libraries and library groups also continued to play an active role in copyright issues in the digital age, which present new challenges to fundamental copyright doctrines such as fair use, first sale and the public domain.

Commercial content companies that produce books, journals, films, music, software, etc. fear that the ease of copying digital works increases opportunities for infringement and loss of markets. In turn, libraries and educational institutions—which, incidentally, are a major market for such works—are concerned that overemphasis on enforcement of rights and technological control of these works will make it more difficult for their patrons to make full use of those digital materials and will compromise the fundamental balance in copyright law that recognizes fair use. Technological locks can trump copyright law, overriding the sound policy reasons that allow some uses without asking for permission.

In 2005, as in previous years, America's libraries closely followed both legislation and litigation to make their voices heard at appropriate moments. For example, the ALA, the American Association of Law Libraries, the Medical Library Association and the Special Libraries Association filed a brief in November in a U.S. Supreme Court case that concerned whether publishers of collective works may republish those works in a digital format without seeking permission of authors or other contributors. A ruling requiring permission could inhibit the dissemination of collective works via digital and electronic media that involve combining digital facsimiles of complete collective works with software that enables a user to perceive them. (The case involved the re-issue of past issues of *National Geographic* magazine on CDs and DVDs.) This would stymie the adoption and evolution of technologies of great use to libraries and archives.

In pursuing their goal of giving the public access to as much information as possible, the Library Copyright Alliance, composed of the ALA, the American Association of Law Libraries, the Association of Research Libraries, the Special Libraries Association and the Medical Library Association, praised the introduction of legislation to establish the American Center for Cures within the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The bill includes a provision that would require that federally funded research appearing in peer-reviewed journals be made freely available to the public within six months of publication—an important goal for the library groups.

The continuing battle against censorship

Censorship, frequently portrayed as the removal of “inappropriate” materials from libraries, also remained a live—and often lively—issue in 2005.

In Fayetteville, Arkansas, a mother overwhelmed the city schools’ materials-review procedures by requesting the removal of 70 titles she considered sexually explicit. A veterans group in Montgomery County, Texas, mulched several privately owned tomes to demonstrate how it would like to handle an unrelated 70 library books. In Hillsborough County, Florida, a display featuring materials dealing with gay people triggered a ban on county agencies holding any such event. Some state legislators chimed in, and Alabama, Florida and Oklahoma lawmakers considered resolutions urging libraries to restrict “homosexually themed books and other age-inappropriate material.” The Oklahoma House passed the nonbinding measure, 81-3.

The ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom has recorded more than 8,500 book challenges since 1990, including 404 in 2005. Each challenge is an effort to remove books from public or school library shelves or from school curricula.

Banned Books Week, an annual event designed to highlight the importance of this issue, was held September 24-October 1, 2005, and for the 24th year featured readings, exhibits and programs in libraries nationwide celebrating the freedom to read. Banned Books Week is sponsored by the ALA and other groups.

Responding to the ‘65 percent solution’

Librarians and library advocates also mounted campaigns in several states against what came to be known as “the 65 percent solution.” Under this proposal, promoted by the Washington, D.C.-based advocacy group First Class Education, school districts in states that pass resolutions or ballot initiatives must spend at least 65 cents of every school dollar on classroom instruction as defined by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Educational Statistics. This 30-year-old definition includes classroom teachers, activities such as field trips, sports, music, and arts . . . but not libraries or librarians, who were grouped with food, transportation and other non-instructional staff and services.

Louisiana, Kansas, and Georgia have accepted “the 65 percent solution,” and in Texas it was enacted by executive order of Gov. Rick Perry. Several other states are considering it. At the ALA Midwinter Meeting in January 2006, the ALA Council called for a coordinated national effort to classify school librarians as instructional staff and to recognize the impact of state-certified school librarians on student achievement. The ALA supported its main argument—that school libraries are classrooms and school librarians are teachers—with a reminder that “more than 60 research studies have found there is a clear link between well-staffed school libraries and increased student achievement.”

School library media specialists, along with parents and community members, took up the cause in letters to the editor and op-ed pieces in papers that included the *Dallas Morning News*, *The New York Times* and the *Orlando Sentinel*, as well as in news reports. As the battle raged on, First Class Education—which is active in about 20 states—said its goal is to have the 65 percent rule in place in all 50 states by the end of 2008.

Libraries in the vanguard

Finally, America's libraries in 2005 were put in the position of having to examine their role in yet another context after Google, the Internet search-engine giant, announced in December 2004 that it would embark on an ambitious project to digitally scan books from the collections of five major research libraries—Harvard, Stanford and Oxford Universities; the University of Michigan; and the New York Public Library—and make them searchable online.

And how will that affect libraries?

“Far from being obsolete in a Google world,” wrote Irving E. Rockwood, editor and publisher of the Association of College & Research Libraries' *Choice magazine*, “libraries [will] continue to play a vital social role as community centers, information providers and information advisers.”

The American Library Association's Public Information Office coordinated the preparation of this report with contributions from the following ALA units:

- American Association of School Librarians
- *American Libraries* magazine
- Association of College and Research Libraries
- Chapter Relations Office
- Office for Information Technology Policy
- Office for Intellectual Freedom
- Office for Literacy and Outreach Services
- Office of Research and Statistics
- Public Library Association
- Public Programs Office
- Washington Office

Please direct any comments regarding this report to Mark Gould, Director, Public Information Office, mgould@ala.org.

— Keith Michael Fiels, ALA Executive Director