

Celebrating 75 Years of Public Policy & Advocacy

Washington, D.C.



Throughout 2020 and 2021, as America’s libraries continued to provide essential services amid the public health crisis, economic decline, social unrest and political turmoil, the American Library Association (ALA) and its nationwide network of advocates demonstrated the value of libraries to policymakers at every level of government, advocating for COVID-19 emergency relief, annual federal funding for libraries, support for library broadband and more – especially in communities hit hardest by the pandemic.

Federal Funding for Libraries



Rapidly mobilizing advocates to press Congress for federal relief for libraries, ALA led advocates to secure **a total of more than \$250 million in supplemental funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)**. In March 2021, Congress provided **\$200 million in [the American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\)](#)**, the largest single increase in the agency’s 25-year history. The \$178 million allocated for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) will go to state library administrative

agencies on a population-based formula, with a \$2 million state minimum. ARPA also included **billions of dollars in [library-eligible funding to state and local governments](#)** as well as billions in funding for connectivity (see “The Year of Broadband” below).

In March 2020, **the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act ([CARES Act](#)) provided \$50 million to IMLS** for digital inclusion projects, distributed by state library agencies.

In 2020, the **[Library Stabilization Fund Act](#)** was introduced in both chambers of Congress by Sen. Jack Reed (RI) and Rep. Andy Levin (MI-9), respectively. The legislation aimed to establish a \$2 billion fund administered through IMLS to address financial losses and bolster library services, with priority to the hardest-hit communities. The Senate bill had secured 17 cosponsors, the House bill 68 cosponsors, by the close of the 116th Congress.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, approved by Congress and signed by the president on December 27, 2020, both funded the government through the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 and provided a COVID relief package. **The [FY21 spending bill](#) included big wins for libraries on several fronts**, such as an additional \$5 million for IMLS, with \$2 million for LSTA.



The federal [FY22 #FundLibraries campaign](#) kicked off in March 2021 with the release of Dear Appropriator letters. Drawn up annually by library champions in the House and Senate, respectively, the letters support funding for school libraries, and state library agencies' grants to public, academic, school, and special libraries. More than 100 Representatives signed letters in support of the Library Services and Technology Act and the Innovative Approaches to Literacy program, continuing five-straight years of 100+ signatures. The Senate letters surpassed the number of signatures from FY 2021. Learn more about the campaign and track your Representative's and Senators' support for library funding on the [#FundLibraries web page](#).

The Year of Broadband

With learning, work, and much of daily life having moved online, the pandemic exacerbated the digital divide. As a result, the imperative to pass broadband legislation in Congress became greater than ever. **ARPA provided \$7.17 billion for libraries** and schools to purchase and distribute technology necessary for remote learning, working from home, virtual healthcare visits and more.

The bill called for an Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) through the FCC's E-rate program. With 100 percent reimbursement of costs for eligible equipment and services and the ability to receive upfront reimbursement, now is the moment to think big about libraries can leverage new funding to boost current technology lending efforts to reach more people or launch new services to connect your community. The ECF presents an unprecedented funding opportunity for libraries to expand broadband equity to those who need it most beyond the confines of library walls. Libraries may also take advantage of other ARPA funds to support related digital inclusion needs, such as programming, staffing, and staff training. Visit [ALA's ECF web page](#) for resources to get started on the application process.

Another program funded through ARPA aimed at addressing the digital divide, the [Emergency Broadband Benefit Program](#), provides subsidies directly to low-income households for internet connectivity and devices.

In October 2020, FCC Commissioner Geoffrey Starks recognized "the tireless efforts of all of the nation's libraries in addressing the digital divide" when he awarded one of the inaugural [Digital Opportunity Equity Recognition \(DOER\) Awards](#) to "America's libraries." **ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office nominated libraries for the award**, and ALA President Julius C. Jefferson, Jr., attended a virtual reception to receive the award on behalf of libraries.



The Build America's Libraries Act

The Build America's Libraries Act was [introduced in the 117th Congress](#) (S. 127) by Sen. Reed in January 2021 and [introduced in the House](#) (H.R. 1581) by Reps. Andy Levin (D-MI-9), Don Young (R-AK-at large) and 52 original cosponsors in March 2021. The bill calls for \$5 billion to repair and construct modern library facilities in underserved and disadvantaged communities. For more information on the Build America's Libraries Act and to urge your member of Congress to support the bill, visit ala.org/advocacy/buildlibraries.



Libraries Build Business

In early 2020, ALA selected a cohort of 13 libraries to participate in [Libraries Build Business](#), a national initiative supported by Google.org to build capacity in libraries offering programming or services to local entrepreneurs and the small business community. The purpose of the initiative is to answer the question, *What library-led entrepreneurship models will best help low-income and/or underrepresented entrepreneurs start and grow small businesses?*

In November, ALA and Libraries Build Business [released a new Policy Perspectives paper, *Open to Change: Libraries Catalyze Small Business Adaption to COVID-19*](#). The paper provides some practical and insightful

perspective on the COVID-19 challenge for small businesses, highlights innovative ways that small businesses and entrepreneurs are pivoting, and contains ideas for libraries to support small business communities.

Each month Libraries Build Business holds an [Instagram Live Q&A series](#), where cohort members participate in a Q&A with Megan Janicki, the project manager, and audience members can also ask questions.



Libraries Ready to Code

As part of its ongoing partnership with Google, PPA was awarded \$300,000, and over the past year has opened up to enhance their patrons' and staffs' digital skills. At the end of the year, 91 libraries were selected to receive \$1,000 [Virtual Learning and Enhancement mini-grants](#) to provide digital skills programs for library patrons and students. [Digital Learning Day mini-grants](#) to enhance their patrons' and staffs' digital skills. At the end of the year, 91 libraries were selected to receive \$1,000 [Virtual Learning and Enhancement mini-grants](#) to provide digital skills programs for library patrons and students.



2020 Elections

Throughout the last half of 2020, [PPA staff supported libraries' efforts to register, inform, and engage voters](#) before the November election. ALA was a premier partner of National Voter Registration Day and partnered with the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission, distributing nearly 6,000 sets of women's suffrage books to libraries across the country.

Encouraging advocates to take advantage of the transition between the 2020 elections and the start of the new Congress, PPA hosted experts such as internet pioneer Larry Irving (credited with coining the 'digital divide') for a pre-election webinar, [Advancing Your Library Agenda After Elections](#). After November 3, PPA provided a [preliminary analysis of election results](#)

and began to engage the White House Transition Team, submitting formal comments to several Agency Review Teams and meeting with the FCC team to reinforce the case of libraries.



2020 U.S. Census

ALA continued a [two-year campaign](#) to enable libraries to help their communities achieve a fair, accurate and complete count in the 2020 Census. When all in-person census-taking and field activities were paused in the spring as a public health precaution, ALA provided resources to help libraries adapt Census activities in response to COVID-19. PPA secured \$380,000 in financial support to advance libraries' complete count efforts, awarding nearly 200 Library Census Equity Fund mini-grants to libraries across the country.



#COUNTONLIBRARIES
U.S. Census 2020

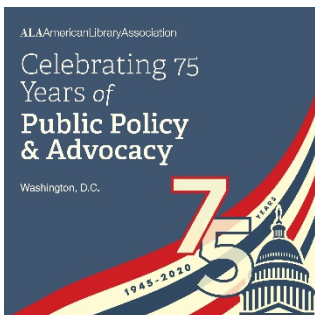
The Census Bureau ended 2020 Census data collection on October 15, 2020. A related grant-funded project has been initiated in collaboration with the Public Library Association to advance Census data literacy skills in the profession and the communities that libraries serve.

Holding Space: A 12-stop virtual tour of libraries across America

Working with other ALA units, PPA coordinated ALA President Julius C. Jefferson, Jr.'s virtual cross-country tour, [Holding Space: a national conversation series with libraries](#). Jefferson convened conversations with more than 100 librarians, library workers, volunteers, community partners and officials representing all levels of government, including four members of Congress. The tour drew more than 2,300 virtual attendees to events across 12 locations and continues to accrue asynchronous views on [ALA's YouTube Channel](#).



ALA Celebrates 75 years in Washington, D.C.



Since the founding of our Washington office on October 1, 1945, ALA has been the voice for America's libraries in the highest levels of government. The Public Policy and Advocacy Office invites the library field to join us in commemorating ALA's 75 years in the nation's Capital. From now until October 1, 2021, we will recognize this milestone by reflecting on our history, commemorating our achievements, honoring the people who have contributed to our success and preparing for another 75 years of advocacy for America's libraries. Visit ala.org/advocacy/ALAwash75