



FOR OUR LIBRARIES.
FOR 150 YEARS MORE.

*What if we could seize the moment...
and solve the most pressing information and
literacy challenges facing our nation... finding
solutions that simultaneously build community,
foster growth, support creativity, combat
loneliness, and build resilience?*

With support from the American Library Association, libraries in the United States have expanded opportunities by promoting economic and social mobility, full participation in society, and democracy for 150 years. As we celebrate the founding of ALA, we endeavor to open new pathways for members and to ensure that libraries and library workers continue our vital community-building work for the “next” 150 years.

ALA PAST & PRESENT

Over its 150-year history, **ALA has profoundly impacted the development of libraries and the library profession** in the United States and beyond, helping to build our nation’s network of more than 120,000 libraries.

From its early days, ALA has championed the idea of libraries as free public institutions for all. Together with philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, ALA helped establish the public library movement in the United States. Over time, ALA has continued to work to establish and maintain public library services, driving the development of modern librarianship, and helping Americans navigate significant changes in how we access and use information. Similarly, ALA has earned their reputation as a socially responsive organization that can mobilize quickly to provide creative and critical solutions to the most pressing issues of the moment.

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ADVANCING THE LIBRARY PROFESSION

Built by and for libraries, ALA today serves as a vital connector and advocate for the library profession, unifying academic, public, school, government, and special libraries under a powerful network to address national issues and support local communities.

With close to 50,000 individual committed members, ALA is the place where library workers – representing many different types of library locations and walks of life — come together. Through ALA, librarians share their diverse points of view: defining the profession, refining it, and creating its future. ALA is the catalyst for the profession, advancing library practices and learning, continuously examining methods, tools, and processes, and asking: how do we do this better?

ADVOCACY FOR LIBRARIES

ALA's advocacy, on behalf of libraries and the communities they serve, **has a profound impact on social advancement** via library services, information access, and digital inclusion nationally.

ALA and library advocacy helps to:

- Defend the First Amendment
- Ensure that we can read what we want freely
- Equalize internet access
- Ensure that e-books and audiobooks are available for all
- Ensure local library branches to stay open
- Ensure college libraries purchase content on reasonable terms
- Ensure school libraries provide books to students without politicized censorship
- Ensure that government documents are openly accessible, and more

ALA is a persistent and tenacious presence serving as the voice of libraries in Washington, DC, and advocating for libraries – large and small – at the national level. ALA's presence is foundational to landmark pieces of federal legislation for libraries – providing critical funding for innovation and technology access.

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EQUITABLE ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Libraries empower communities by providing access to knowledge.

ALA supports libraries in their core mission to 1) ensure equitable access to information, 2) protect intellectual freedom, and 3) to give people the tools and skills to make effective use of that information.

Despite the vast amount of information available today the digital divide, economic hardship, and systemic as well as geographic barriers leave millions in the United States without the information they need. The consequences are urgent. A lack of access to information means students fall behind, economic and health disparities widen, and voter's voices go unheard.

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

Libraries in the United States have a long history of **protecting the freedom to read**, challenging censorship, and guarding privacy.

Since 2021 domestic censorship attempts have risen to previously undocumented levels, with groups attacking not only library materials and services, but also library workers and public trust in U.S. libraries and schools.

For more than 50 years ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) has been on the forefront of protecting the American right to read freely and widely, without anyone looking over our shoulders.

LITERACY OF ALL KINDS

Libraries unlock literacy. Library workers inspire millions to read and teach essential digital skills. They also teach people – from students to seniors – to navigate health, financial, and other information critically. As work and school become ever more digitalized, with AI more prominent, we will need both foundational and advanced literacy skills. Libraries in the United States have been a pillar of literacy for the past 150 years. Now, as we face a future of deepening divides between those who can navigate a complex information space and those who may fall behind, libraries stand ready to bolster literacy.

We encourage you to support ALA with a gift
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The American Library Association is a 501(c)(3) charitable and educational organization. Contributions to ALA are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.