

# american libraries

SPECIAL REPORT | APRIL 2017

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Top Ten  
Challenged  
Books **p.16**

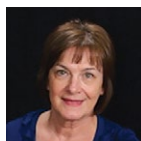
Combating  
Fake News **p.11**

## THE STATE OF AMERICA'S LIBRARIES 2017

A Report from the  
American Library Association

LIBRARIES  
TRANSFORM

## ABOUT THE REPORT



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The following ALA divisions and offices also contributed to this report:

- American Association of School Librarians
- *American Libraries* magazine
- Association for Library Service to Children
- Association of College and Research Libraries
- Office for Accreditation
- Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services
- Office for Information Technology Policy
- Office for Intellectual Freedom
- Office for Research and Statistics
- Office of Government Relations
- Public Awareness Office
- Public Library Association
- Young Adult Library Services Association

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### ABOUT ALA

The American Library Association (ALA), the voice of America's libraries, is the oldest, largest, and most influential library association in the world. Its more than 57,000 members are primarily librarians but also trustees, publishers, and other library supporters. The Association represents all types of libraries; its mission is to promote the highest-quality library and information services and public access to information.

# american libraries

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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Photo: Pima County Communications

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A Report from the American Library Association

# THE STATE OF AMERICA'S LIBRARIES 2017

EDITED BY Kathy S. Rosa

In the 21st century, libraries of all types are responding to the changing social, economic, and political impacts of living in a digital society. Academic, school, and public libraries provide services that empower people for change. Library workers' expertise, combined with dynamic collections and digital resources, help individuals develop new skills, communicate with others through new technologies, and help make their communities better places to live.

Since 2015, the American Library Association (ALA) Libraries Transform campaign has promoted public awareness of the importance of libraries and library workers. More than 6,100 libraries and library advocates have joined the campaign to date, and ALA continues to promote awareness of the value, impact, and services provided by libraries and the expertise provided by library workers.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Photo: Bay Shore Middle School

The student “techspert” team at Bay Shore (N.Y.) Middle School with their Libraries Transform “I’m an expert in” badges.

A recent study shows that the 3,793 academic libraries in the United States contribute to student learning and success in four ways:

1. Students benefit from library instruction in their initial coursework.
2. Library use increases student success.
3. Collaborative academic programs and services involving the library enhance student learning.
4. Information literacy instruction strengthens general education outcomes.

Academic librarians are embracing new responsibilities in such areas as scholarly communication, digital archives, data curation, digital humanities, visualization, and born-digital objects. Other emerging areas include bibliometrics and altmetrics, e-learning, custom information solutions, and research data management.

School libraries serve 98,460 of our nation’s public and private schools. More than 90% of traditional public schools report having a library, while 49% of private charter schools report having one. These libraries have always supported the curriculum,

encouraged student creativity, and promoted lifelong learning. Today’s challenges—such as information literacy, intolerance, and funding cuts—highlight the need for well-funded school libraries and credentialed school librarians.

School librarians use standards-based learning experiences that promote critical evaluation of print and digital resources and the creation of valid student work. There is some evidence that school library budgets may be increasing, after five years of reductions, and there is hope that the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will be used in support of school libraries. The law includes language that allows schools to budget funds for school libraries and acknowledges school librarians as specialized instructional support personnel.

Our 9,082 public libraries play a vital role in such community services as early childhood literacy, computer training, and workforce development. In addition, they provide a safe place for everyone, reflecting and serving the diversity of their communities in their collections, programs, and services. The thousands of public libraries in towns and neighborhoods across

the United States invite community conversations and actions that further understanding and address local needs.

Public libraries nationwide are taking action, using signs and social media to proclaim “everyone is welcome”; creating reading lists on demographics, voting, social justice, and other hot topics; partnering with community organizations to combat Islamophobia and racism and to connect with disenfranchised populations; and developing programs to help community members spot “fake news” (such as false or misleading statements, video or images shown out of proper context, dubious statistics, manipulated content, partisan propaganda, or satire) and evaluate information online.

The ALA supports the efforts of libraries to combat disinformation. The following resources can assist library workers in training community members to evaluate information.

#### Webinars

- “Fake News Workshop”
- “Post-Truth: Fake News and a New Era of Information Literacy”

#### LibGuides and Resources

- Center for News Literacy website
- “Evaluating Information”
- “Fake News”
- “‘Fake’ News”
- “Fake News: How to Spot It”
- “How Do We Become Better Citizens of Information?”
- “Is It True? Try These Fact-Checking Websites and Resources”
- “Real News/Fake News: About Fake News”
- “Savvy Info Consumers: Fake News”
- “Truth, Lies and Quibblers: Media Literacy for a New Era”
- “Understanding and Identifying Fake News”

#### Media

- “Don’t Get Faked by the News”
- “Evaluating Sources in a ‘Post-Truth’ World: Ideas for Teaching and Learning about Fake News”

- “5 Ways Teachers Are Fighting Fake News”
- “Librarians Take up Arms against Fake News”
- “U-M Library Battles Fake News with New Class”

#### Further Reading

- *Blur: How to Know What’s True in the Age of Information Overload*
- *A Field Guide to Lies: Critical Thinking in the Information Age*
- *unSpun: Finding Facts in a World of Disinformation*
- *Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers*

#### Children and teens

The term “fake news” is recent, but the need to evaluate information is not. Librarians have provided resources and expertise to evaluate the quality of information for many years. With the massive increase in the amount of digital content, libraries are ramping up efforts to make sure that children and teens are well-equipped to evaluate the sources, content, and intended message of all types of media. Cyberbullying, digital footprints, and digital literacy are issues that affect young digital natives as well as their digital-immigrant parents. Libraries continue to step up programming to prepare all family members to become safe, responsible, and effective stewards of the online world.

#### Access and challenges

Libraries continue to face challenges of censorship to books and resources. Out of 323 challenges reported to the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom, the “Top Ten Most Challenged Books in 2016” are:

1. ***This One Summer***, by Mariko Tamaki, illustrated by Jillian Tamaki  
This young adult graphic novel, winner of both a Printz and a Caldecott Honor Award, was restricted, relocated, and banned because it includes LGBT characters, drug use, and profanity, and it was considered sexually explicit with mature themes.
2. ***Drama***, written and illustrated by Raina Telgemeier  
Parents, librarians, and administrators banned this Stonewall Honor Award–winning graphic novel for young adults because it includes LGBT characters, was deemed sexually explicit, and was considered to have an offensive political viewpoint.

3. **George**, by Alex Gino

Despite winning a Stonewall Award and a Lambda Literary Award, administrators removed this children's novel because it includes a transgender child, and the "sexuality" was not appropriate at elementary levels.

4. **I Am Jazz**, by Jazz Jennings and Jessica Herthel, illustrated by Shelagh McNicholas

This children's picture book memoir was challenged and removed because it portrays a transgender child and because of language, sex education, and offensive viewpoints.

5. **Two Boys Kissing**, by David Levithan

Included on the National Book Award longlist and designated a Stonewall Honor Book, this young adult novel was challenged because its cover has an image of two boys kissing, and it was considered to include sexually explicit LGBT content.

6. **Looking for Alaska**, by John Green

This 2006 Printz Award winner is a young adult novel that was challenged and restricted for a sexually explicit scene that may lead a student to "sexual experimentation."

7. **Big Hard Sex Criminals**, by Matt Fraction, illustrated by Chip Zdarsky

Considered to be sexually explicit by library staff and administrators, this compilation of adult comic books by two prolific award-winning artists was banned and challenged.

8. **Make Something Up: Stories You Can't Unread**, by Chuck Palahniuk

This collection of adult short stories, which received positive reviews from *Newsweek* and the *New York Times*, was challenged for profanity, sexual explicitness, and being "disgusting and all around offensive."

9. **Little Bill Books series**, by Bill Cosby, illustrated by Varnette P. Honeywood

This children's book series was challenged because of criminal sexual allegations against the author.

10. **Eleanor & Park**, by Rainbow Rowell

One of seven *New York Times* Notable Children's Books and a Printz Honor recipient, this young adult novel was challenged for offensive language.

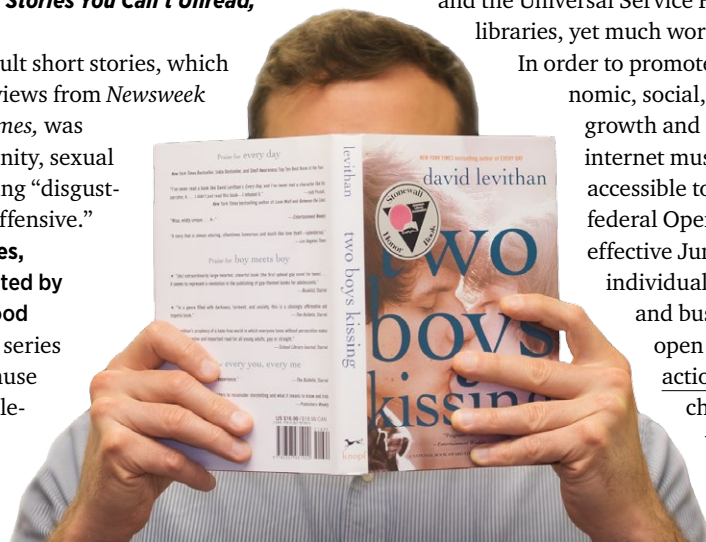
### Equity, diversity, and inclusion

The library community proactively supports equity, diversity, and inclusion in our society, but some actions of the new administration threaten to undermine the nation's progress toward equity, diversity, and inclusion. In February, ALA President Julie Todaro released the following [statement](#) strongly protesting the rollback of protections for transgender students in our nation's public schools: "We stand with our transgender members, colleagues, families, and friends, and we fully support the work of our Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table (GLBTRT), whose members continue to lead the fight to abolish intolerance for all of society. ALA will work closely with all of its partners for reinstatement of these protections as soon as possible."

### Telecommunications

All types of libraries serve the telecommunications needs of their users. Libraries depend on high-speed, affordable, broadband services to provide equitable internet access to community members. Libraries have benefited from the broadband grant programs of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), and the Universal Service Fund's E-rate for libraries, yet much work remains.

In order to promote continued economic, social, and political growth and innovation, the internet must be open and accessible to all people. The federal Open Internet rules, effective June 12, 2015, protect individual, organizational, and business access to an open internet. [Recent actions](#) by the FCC may challenge open access to the internet.



# Academic Libraries

Building on past initiatives to demonstrate library contributions to student learning and success, ALA's Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) is developing an action-oriented research agenda to address two important questions: "What are the ways that libraries align with and have impact on institutional effectiveness?" and "How can libraries communicate their alignment with and impact on institutional effectiveness in a way that resonates with higher education stakeholders?"

## Asserting the value of academic libraries

A recent ACRL report summarized four compelling findings about library contributions to student learning and success:

1. Students benefit from library instruction in their initial coursework.
2. Library use increases student success.
3. Collaborative academic programs and services involving the library enhance student learning.
4. Information literacy instruction strengthens general education outcomes.

The results of third-year ACRL assessment projects strengthen these findings with new evidence that library research consultations also boost student learning.

Although only 44.8% of entering first-year students have had experience evaluating the quality or reliability of information, and even fewer (29.3%) have looked up scientific research articles and resources, academic librarians can see their impact on student learning reflected in the results of the 2016 National Survey of Student Engagement (see the summary). The survey shows that 77% of first-year students participating in the survey agreed that their research experiences at their institution contributed "very much" or "quite a bit" to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in using information effectively. More impressively, 83% of seniors agreed with the same statement. Seventy-three percent of first-year students and 67% of seniors reported that their

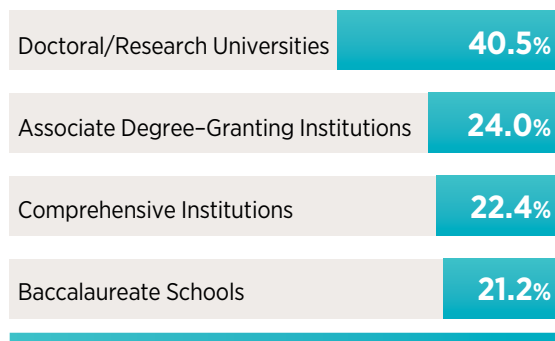
instructors emphasized "questioning the quality of information sources."

Academic libraries continue to allocate new and renovated space to support at least one of the following types of learning activity—collaborative study, individual study, tutoring by campus learning partners, or occasional classes taught by campus instructors.

## Changing collections and practices

According to statistics gathered by ACRL, increasing numbers of academic libraries are shifting from traditional collection development to patron-driven acquisitions (PDA) or demand-driven acquisitions (DDA), including 51.2% of doctoral/research universities, 37.7% of comprehensive institutions, 27.6% of

## Participation in Open Education Initiatives



Source: 2015 ACRL Trends and Statistics





Photo: Robert Benson Photography

The David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, was recognized in the 2016 American Library Association/International Interior Design Association Library Interior Design Awards.

baccalaureate schools, and 18.4% of associate degree-granting institutions. Library participation in open education initiatives (Open Access textbooks, textbook publishing, or learning resources) is spreading with 40.5% of doctoral/research universities, 22.4% of comprehensive institutions, 21.2% of baccalaureate schools, and 24% of associate degree-granting institutions reporting participation. Institutional repositories are now a part of 73.9% of doctoral/research universities, 47.2% of comprehensive schools, 21.2% of baccalaureate schools, and 24% of associate degree-granting institutions providing access to doctoral dissertations, faculty and student scholarship, and graduate theses.

### New roles, staffing, and salaries

Academic libraries provided 23.7% of all jobs for new library school graduates in 2015, down from 26.7% in 2013. The average starting salary for academic librarians was \$46,850, up 9.4% over 2014.

New graduates are working with digital platforms in such areas as scholarly communication, digital archives, data curation, digital humanities, visualization, and born-digital objects. Other emerging areas include bibliometrics and altmetrics, e-learning, custom information solutions, and research data management.

Doctoral and research institutions employed an average of 126 professional staff; comprehensive institutions employed an average of 65.8 professional staff; baccalaureate schools employed an average of 10.7 professional staff; and associate degree-granting institutions employed an average of 5.2 professional staff, according to a 2015 ACRL survey.

Library expenditures for salaries and wages accounted for 62% of the total library expenditures on average, with 89.8% of total library expenditures for associate degree-granting institutions, 70.5% for baccalaureate, 74.7% for comprehensive schools, and 60.7% for doctoral/research institutions.

# School Libraries

In today's political climate, school libraries face the challenges of fake news, rising intolerance, and funding. School libraries support the curriculum, encourage creativity, and promote lifelong learning. School librarians know what resources are needed and how to use them. They partner with other teachers to develop meaningful learning experiences that prepare students for advancement to college.

Despite an apparent increase in intolerance of people who are perceived to be different from the mainstream, school libraries are a welcoming, safe space for all students and teachers. School librarians help students explore, select, and evaluate information for accuracy and objectivity.

A 2016 study by the Stanford History Education Group found that students, from 8th grade through college, lacked the ability to interpret the validity of information they see on the internet. They had difficulty telling the difference between an advertisement and a news article and could not always identify the source of information.

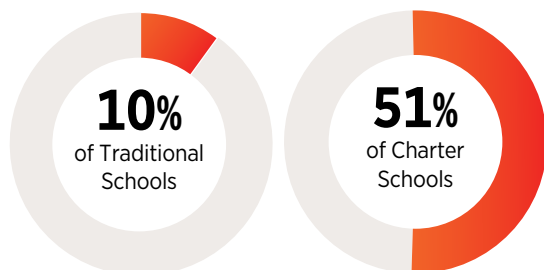
School librarians provide instruction, situated in the curriculum, that helps students learn how to evaluate information. ALA's American Association of School Librarians' (AASL) Standards for the 21st-Century Learner call for students to learn to:



Photo: Tori Gammeri

The library circulation desk at Oliver McCracken Middle School in Skokie, Illinois, offers "No Room For Hate" pins assembled by the Social Justice Club that demonstrate a wearer's pledge to stand up against injustice.

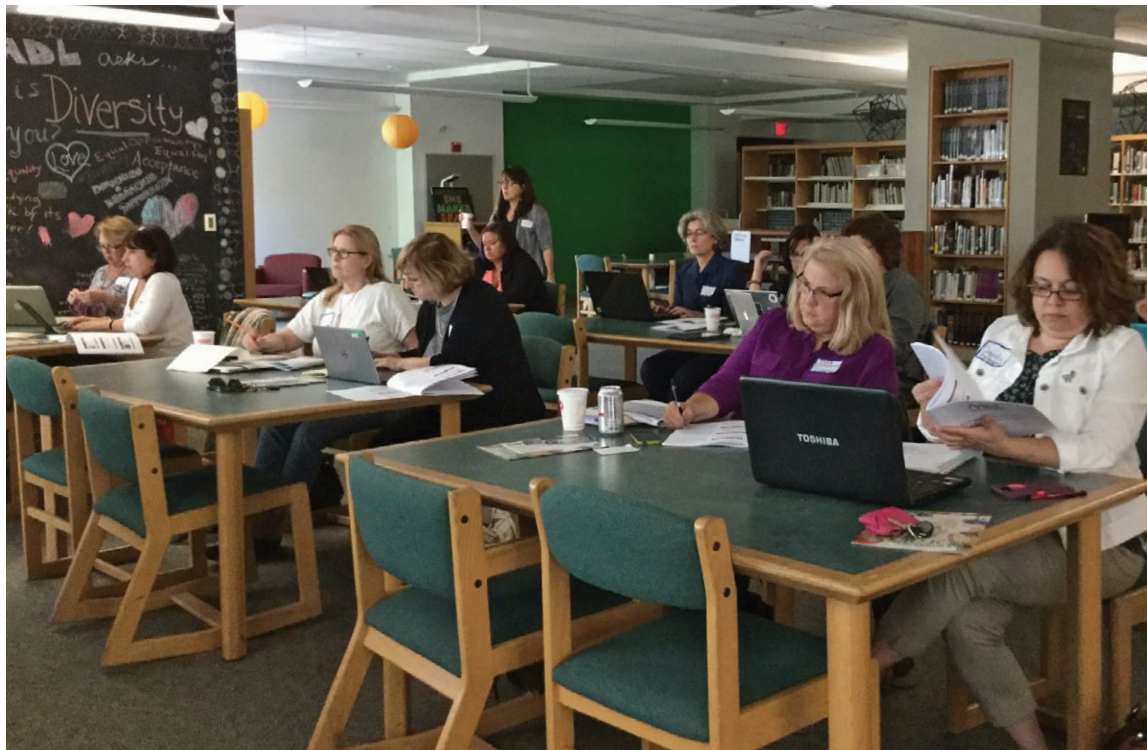
## Public Schools Without a Library



Source: National Center for Education Statistics

- Inquire, think critically, and gain knowledge.
- Draw conclusions, make informed decisions, apply knowledge to new situations, and create new knowledge.
- Share knowledge and participate ethically and productively as members of our democratic society.
- Pursue personal and aesthetic growth.

Financial support for school libraries and librarians has declined in recent years. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that 90% of traditional public schools have a library, while only 49% of public charter schools have a library. School librarians hold 51,516 of the nation's 143,100 librarian jobs. Some optimism may be called for, as one study shows school library bud-



An ESSA workshop conducted by the Massachusetts School Library Association on September 17 at Sharon (Mass.) High School.

gets are up to \$8,315 in 2015–2016 from \$6,970 in 2013–2014.

Hope for school libraries rose when President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law in December 2015. The law includes language that allows schools to budget funds for school libraries and acknowledges school librarians as specialized instructional support personnel. The AASL is examining ESSA, unpacking the provisions for school libraries within the legislation, and communicating how they will impact the school library community.

AASL offers the following resources:

- **ESSA state workshops.** AASL, in collaboration with ALA's Office for Library Advocacy (OLA) and the ALA Washington Office, is offering a comprehensive workshop on ESSA to AASL affiliate organizations.
- **The AASL Vision for Implementing ESSA was approved by AASL at the 2016 ALA Annual**

**Conference.** A task force is in the process of operationalizing its goals and implementing its recommendations.

- **ESSA Opportunities for School Librarians.** This document highlights library-related provisions in ESSA, and provides an overview of next steps to maximize opportunities for effective school library programming under the new law.
- **Ask Me How School Librarians Ensure Student Success.** This message card is an example of language that can be tailored to a school's state or district.

**School librarians hold more than one-third of the nation's librarian jobs.**

# Public Libraries

As the need for such services as early childhood literacy, computer training, and workforce development grows, the vital role public libraries play in their communities has also expanded. The 50 US states, the District of Columbia, and outlying territories have 8,895 public library administrative units (as well as 7,641 branches and bookmobiles). Public librarians comprise 41,499, or 29% of the 143,100 librarian jobs.

The most recent data show that public library per capita expenditures were \$36.96 in 2014, a slight increase over \$36.50 of the previous fiscal year.

## Supporting and advancing their communities

The current political atmosphere will significantly affect public libraries in 2017, presenting both major challenges and opportunities to do what public libraries uniquely do—provide equal access to information, support intellectual freedom, and offer neutral spaces to bring disparate voices together in change-making conversations.

Many public library staff began 2017 deeply concerned that the new administration in the White House would issue orders and pursue policy that contradicts libraries' core values of diversity and inclusion. Libraries across the nation began to work on preserving those values and reinforcing them with action. ALA's Public Library Association (PLA) has pledged to respond and make use of these challenges to demonstrate the importance of public libraries to all Americans.

"Inclusiveness is a core value of the Public Library Association. The public library has an unparalleled ability to bring people and knowledge together, especially in times of uncertainty and division," said PLA President Felton Thomas Jr. in a November 2016 statement. "We are places of learning, free inquiry, and free speech for people of all ages and backgrounds."

Public libraries are committed to ensuring a safe place for all that reflects and serves the diversity of the nation in their collections, programs, and services. The thousands of public libraries in towns and neigh-

borhoods across this country invite community conversations and actions that further understanding and address local needs.

Public libraries nationwide are taking action in 2017. They are using signs and social media to proclaim "everyone is welcome"; creating reading lists on demographics, voting, social justice, and other hot topics; developing programs to help community members spot "fake news" and evaluate information online; and partnering with community organizations to combat Islamophobia and racism and to connect with disenfranchised populations. And they will continue to provide core services that seem more critical now than ever, such as supporting literacy and information access, helping learners of all ages achieve educational success, and assisting immigrants to become citizens and engage with their communities.

Through PLA, public library leaders are spotlighting the critical value of public libraries to communities in all of these key areas. PLA has established a Task Force on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion to guide its efforts and support its members' work, and will continue to build leaders through its conferences, publications, and volunteer opportunities. Through its collaborative work with key library support organization partners, PLA is making sure public librarians have the knowledge, expertise, and tools to develop innovative programs, measure and communicate their effectiveness, and drive their communities forward.

As libraries invite their communities to take part in critical conversations, they must be committed to ensuring a safe place for all that reflects and serves the diversity of the United States. PLA encourages libraries



Youth services librarian Michelle Angell created this display last summer for the Lakewood branch of the Pierce County (Wash.) Library.

across the country to share their success stories and programming ideas with ALA and each other.

The ALA supports the efforts of libraries to combat disinformation. The following resources assist library workers in educating community members about the evaluation of information.

#### Webinars

- [“Fake News Workshop”](#)
- [“Post-Truth: Fake News and a New Era of Information Literacy”](#)

#### LibGuides and Resources

- [Center for News Literacy website](#)
- [“Evaluating Information”](#)
- [“Fake News”](#)
- [“Fake’ News”](#)
- [“Fake News: How to Spot It”](#)
- [“How Do We Become Better Citizens of Information?”](#)
- [“Is It True? Try These Fact-Checking Websites and Resources”](#)

- [“Real News/Fake News: About Fake News”](#)
- [“Savvy Info Consumers: Fake News”](#)
- [“Truth, Lies and Quibblers: Media Literacy for a New Era”](#)
- [“Understanding and Identifying Fake News”](#)

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- [“5 Ways Teachers Are Fighting Fake News”](#)
- [“Librarians Take up Arms against Fake News”](#)
- [“U-M Library Battles Fake News with New Class”](#)

#### Further Reading

- *Blur: How to Know What’s True in the Age of Information Overload*
- *A Field Guide to Lies: Critical Thinking in the Information Age*
- *unSpun: Finding Facts in a World of Disinformation*
- *Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers*

# Issues and Trends

## CHILDREN'S AND TEEN SERVICES

Whether it goes by the name of propaganda or “fake news,” disinformation is not new. The speed of the news cycle and access provided by social media have made identifying false and misleading statements more challenging. Libraries are ramping up efforts to make sure that children and teens are well equipped to evaluate the sources, content, and intended message of all types of media. Some libraries are collaborating with organizations like the [National Association for Media Literacy Education](#) and [The Lamp](#), which focus specifically on this issue. In addition, several ALA units have hosted webinars and provided additional resources to support libraries in their efforts.

Libraries welcome diversity and provide a safe community space in uncertain times. They are displaying prominent signage stating that “Libraries are for everyone” and “You’re welcome here” to reassure all community members, especially the most vulnerable. Contributing their expertise, children’s librarians are creating positive, unifying resources for children and families. Some notable examples include a [Storytime for Social Justice Kit](#); a [booklist](#) for a “hope and inspiration” storytime; a [Talking to Kids about Racism and Justice](#) resource list for parents, caregivers, and educators; and a [curated media list](#) on the topic of immigration. ALA’s Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) has established a living document, [ALSC Supporting Libraries in the Post-Election Environment](#), comprised of resources like these, and has invited its members to add to the list. ALSC also created [two new booklists](#) after the November elections, “Unity. Kindness. Peace.” and “Working Together for Justice.”

In October 2016, the American Academy of Pediatrics announced new [recommendations for children’s media use](#), calling on parents to act as “media mentors” for

their children. In addition, a [study](#) by the Pew Research Center, also released in the fall of 2016, indicates that 47% of US adults are either “reluctant” or “unprepared” in terms of digital readiness. Considering this disparity between responsibility and readiness, the role of youth services librarians as media mentors for parents and caregivers has become even more crucial and prevalent.

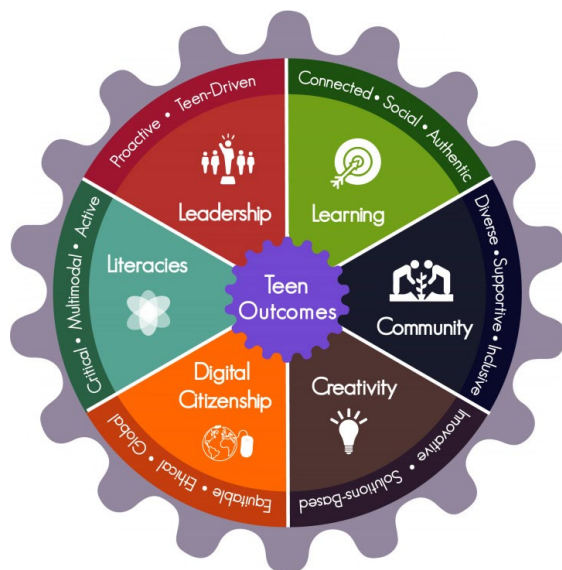
Librarians recognize that each child and each family is unique and thus make their digital media recommendations based on specific needs and circumstances. They model positive media behaviors, share relevant research, find the best materials, and give parents and caregivers resources to evaluate all forms of media for themselves. This behavior is nothing new for librarians, who have always recommended books and offered storytimes. Librarians have just expanded their focus and practice to consider new digital media formats in response to a rapidly evolving technological world.

Digital citizenship, another concept born out of today’s high-tech society, continues to be an area where youth services staff work with children and their families. Cyberbullying, digital footprints, and digital literacy are issues that affect young digital natives as well as their digital-immigrant parents. Libraries continue to step up programming to prepare all family members to become safe, responsible, and effective stewards of the online world.

In December 2016, ALA’s Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) adopted a new [National Research Agenda](#) on libraries, learning, and teens. The agenda identified five priority areas that reflect the current needs, trends, and landscape of teen services that are a top priority in transforming and improving the [future of teen services](#). They are:

- The impact of libraries as teen formal and informal learning environments
- Library staff training, skills, and knowledge
- Equity of access
- Cultural competence, social justice, and equity
- Community engagement

## Reimagined Library Services For and With Teens



Source: Young Adult Library Services Association, [ala.org/teens-first](http://ala.org/teens-first)

Learning environments continue to evolve to keep up with emerging technologies and trends in teaching and learning. A growing movement towards hands-on, experiential learning has led to the need for libraries to rethink how they use their spaces to support informal, connected learning. In response, libraries have moved toward designing spaces that are flexible and adaptable. Many have also created makerspaces to promote science and technology learning, while libraries with limited physical space have taken a creative problem-solving approach by hosting pop-up makerspaces, designing mobile maker carts, and providing maker backpacks for loan.

Because of the changing demographics of the US population and the evolving ways in which information is created, accessed, and used, library staff must gain new knowledge, skills, and behaviors. These include such areas as cultural competence, community engagement, and adolescent development. YALSA's Future Ready Project, funded by the Institute of

Museum and Library Services and launched in May 2016, brings together library staff from small, rural, and tribal libraries to build their knowledge of middle school-aged teens, their unique needs, and how those impact college and career readiness. Resources created through the grant will be made widely available to all libraries as the project progresses over the next three years.

For years, libraries have been on the front lines of addressing the digital divide, but recently a related issue has emerged: the knowledge gap. Because many low-income families do not have access to the latest technologies or to experts who can help them use these digital tools, youth from low-income families are leaving school unprepared for living and working in the 21st century. Libraries can play a key role in providing equitable access to technology for all, as well as in safeguarding teens' rights to privacy in an increasingly online environment.

Today's teen generation is diverse and coming of age in a difficult political and social climate, so cultural competence, social justice, and equity are issues that loom large. Libraries are addressing them by striving to create equitable, bias-free learning opportunities and spaces. They are also taking a community-engagement approach to planning, delivering, and evaluating programs and services. By connecting with other community groups to identify and address pressing needs of local teens, libraries can affect significant and positive change, and ultimately increase their value in the community.

Libraries can learn more about how to take steps towards transforming their teen services in YALSA's case studies, as well as its new Reimagined Library Services for and with Teens infographic.

## PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Whether creating a budget, talking about climate change, or just downloading apps on a smartphone, understanding basic concepts of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) makes us more

informed citizens and better workers. Yet the United States continues to fall short on STEM education, particularly when it comes to underserved and rural communities.

As champions of lifelong learning, libraries in 2017 are offering a wide variety of programs to engage patrons of all ages in STEM learning. These in-person experiences spark curiosity, break down barriers between community members and science experts, and encourage skill-building that can apply to all aspects of patrons' lives.

Science Cafés combine STEM education with libraries' natural strength for fostering conversation. Created by the *Nova* television series, the format is straightforward enough: Bring people together with scientists in a casual setting, such as a coffeehouse or

neighborhood bar, for engaging conversation. By keeping the conversation brief and lively and preventing any one person—including the scientist—from dominating the talk, Science Cafés encourage all attendees to participate, empowering them to learn.

Oceanside (N.Y.) Library hosts a monthly Science Café, tapping the expertise of faculty at local colleges and universities; topics have included “Can Long Island Survive Climate Change?” and “Dinosaurs: Beyond Jurassic Park.” Open-ended questions help participants explore new avenues of thought. “When we had a computer ethicist talking about internet privacy, I asked the room if they would be willing to give the government complete access to their emails, etc., in exchange for a higher degree of security,” said Tony Iovino, the library's director of community services. “The conversation got enthusiastic to say the least!”

Money affects all Americans, but many of us lack the knowledge we need to make smart financial choices that will prepare us for whatever the future brings. Thinking Money, a traveling exhibition created by ALA's Public Programs Office in partnership with the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) Investor Education Foundation, strives to teach tweens and teens, and their parents, caregivers, and educators about financial literacy topics—such as saving, spending, and avoiding fraud—in a way that is not only understandable, but fun. Through an adventure-themed storyline, interactive iPad content, and other activities, the exhibition explores themes like wants versus needs, preparing for a rainy or sunny day, and imagining your future self.

By 2018, the exhibition will travel to 50 US public libraries, where communities will benefit from a suite of related programming such as expert guest speakers, programs on saving for college, and much more. “Patrons who interacted with the exhibit or participated in a program definitely learned new things about money,” said Ann Schepcke, adult services librarian at the Salem (Oreg.) Public Library, which hosted Thinking Money in 2016. “However, the greatest value of the exhibit was to demonstrate that financial literacy topics don't need to be boring or scary, and that information about finances can be gained without fear of being subjected to a high-pressure salesman.”



Photo: Ean Perkins

Children at the Salem (Oreg.) Public Library interact with Thinking Money, a traveling exhibition created by the ALA Public Programs Office in partnership with the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority Investor Education Foundation.





Photo: Jason Brown

Fifth-grader Evan Sass asks NASA astronaut Jeff Williams a question via video chat at Gail Borden Public Library. The Elgin, Illinois, library was one of eight nationwide selected for the traveling exhibit, *Discover Space: A Cosmic Journey*.

As a host of ALA's *Discover Space: A Cosmic Journey* traveling exhibition, Gail Borden Public Library District in Elgin, Illinois, was eager to present out-of-this-world programming for local youth. So staff worked with NASA to host a once-in-a-lifetime experience: a live video chat with an astronaut aboard the International Space Station. Area school districts and homeschools brought in dozens of eager children, who asked the astronaut such questions as, "Do you ever see a shooting star fly past the space station?" (The answer: Yes, but they are below, not above, the spacecraft). The live video chats, broadcast online, garnered over 7,000 live viewers, inspiring future astronauts in Elgin and beyond.

Many people of all ages are fascinated by what lies beyond our planet, but opportunities to learn about

space and planetary science can be rare in many parts of the country. In 2017, the ALA Public Programs Office announced *NASA@ My Library*, a STEM programming initiative offered in partnership with the National Center for Interactive Learning at the Space Science Institute, the Pacific Science Center, Cornerstones of Science, and the Education Development Center. The initiative will increase and enhance STEM learning opportunities for library patrons throughout the nation, including geographic areas and populations currently underserved in STEM education. Seventy-five US public libraries will be selected through a competitive application process to receive materials and training that will assist them in leading educational and fun STEM programming for all ages. The project will continue through December 2020.

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

**Book challenges.** Out of 323 challenges reported to the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF), the “Top Ten Most Challenged Books in 2016” are:

**1 | This One Summer**

by Mariko Tamaki, illustrated by Jillian Tamaki  
This young adult graphic novel, winner of both a Printz and a Caldecott Honor Award, was restricted, relocated, and banned because it includes LGBT characters, drug use, and profanity, and it was considered sexually explicit with mature themes.

**2 | Drama**

written and illustrated by Raina Telgemeier  
Parents, librarians, and administrators banned this Stonewall Honor Award-winning graphic novel for young adults because it includes LGBT characters, was deemed sexually explicit, and was considered to have an offensive political viewpoint.

**3 | George**

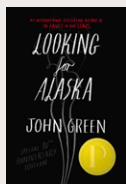
by Alex Gino  
Despite winning a Stonewall Award and a Lambda Literary Award, administrators removed this children's novel because it includes a transgender child and the “sexuality” was not appropriate at elementary levels.

**4 | I Am Jazz**

by Jazz Jennings and Jessica Herthel, illustrated by Shelagh McNicholas  
This children's picture book memoir was challenged and removed because it portrays a transgender child, and because of language, sex education, and offensive viewpoints.

**5 | Two Boys Kissing**

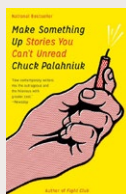
by David Levithan  
Included on the National Book Award longlist and designated a Stonewall Honor Book, this young adult novel was challenged because its cover has an image of two boys kissing, and it was considered to include sexually explicit LGBT content.

**6 | Looking for Alaska**

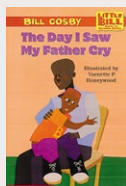
by John Green  
This 2006 Printz Award winner is a young adult novel that was challenged and restricted for a sexually explicit scene that may lead a student to “sexual experimentation.”

**7 | Big Hard Sex Criminals**

by Matt Fraction, illustrated by Chip Zdarsky  
Considered to be sexually explicit by library staff and administrators, this compilation of adult comic books by two prolific award-winning artists was banned and challenged.

**8 | Make Something Up: Stories You Can't Unread**

by Chuck Palahniuk  
This collection of adult short stories, which received positive reviews from *Newsweek* and the *New York Times*, was challenged for profanity, sexual explicitness, and being “disgusting and all around offensive.”

**9 | Little Bill Books series**

by Bill Cosby, illustrated by Varnette P. Honeywood  
This children's book series was challenged because of criminal sexual allegations against the author.

**10 | Eleanor & Park**

by Rainbow Rowell  
One of seven *New York Times* Notable Children's books and a Printz Honor recipient, this young adult novel was challenged for offensive language.

“Challenged” books were formally requested to be removed or to have access to them restricted. “Banned” books were actually removed. Of the 10 most challenged titles in 2016, five were withdrawn from their institution’s collections or curricula last year.

In 2015, nine of the 10 most challenged titles were by or about diverse populations. In 2016, five of the 10 continued the trend, but “sexually explicit” seemed to be the overarching theme. Most of the challenges, as usual, continued to focus on youth, either the picture book audience (children’s books), or young adults. As in previous years, parents made up the largest single category of persons initiating the challenge (42%).

At the end of 2016, the OIF rolled out a new, simpler [challenge reporting form](#), and provided a [webinar](#) on its use. This may have something to do with a 17% increase in reported challenges from 2015 to 2016—although previous research demonstrated that as many as 80%–90% of challenges go unreported.

Banned Books Week 2016 was a banner year. The Public Awareness Office tracked over 1,176 articles or mentions, as well as coverage by *Time*, *The Guardian* (UK), National Geographic, CNN, Quartz, Bloomberg News, *Washington Post*, Houston Public Radio, Atlanta Public Radio, Voice of America Radio, and the *New York Times*. OIF featured guest blogs by challenged authors (including Alex Gino, Kate Messner, and Phil Bildner), used [Thunderclap](#) to reach more than 1.6 million people online, and saw, for the first time, [interest across the pond](#). According to Google Analytics, the Banned Books pages are the second most-visited area of the ALA website.



**Intellectual freedom and the academy.** Amid growing concerns about “trigger warnings,” high-profile speaker cancellations, and campus protests, in October 2017 PEN America published a [report](#), *And Campus for All: Diversity, Inclusion, and Freedom of Speech at U.S. Universities*. Two findings from that report were:

- While free speech is alive and well on campus, it is not free from threats, and must be vigilantly guarded if its continued strength is to be assured.

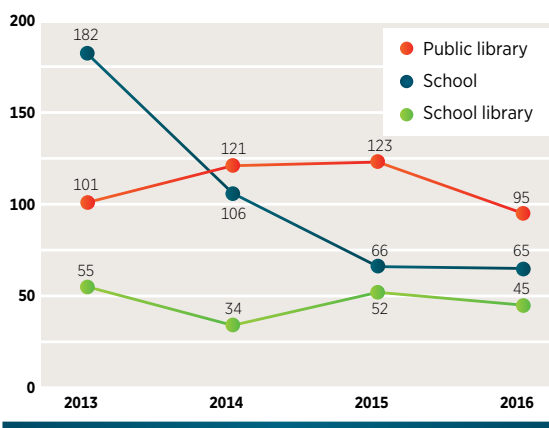
- Generally speaking, there is declining support for intellectual freedom among college students, but rising support for social justice.

**Censorship in K–12 schools.** In September 2016, *School Library Journal* published its [Controversial Books Survey](#), updating its landmark 2008 “self-censorship” survey with input from the National Coalition Against Censorship. It was based on the responses of 574 US school librarians. Among the many findings:

- More than nine in 10 school librarians serving elementary and middle school students have passed on purchasing a book because of potentially controversial topics. The number drops to 73% among high school librarians.
- Sexual content and profanity/vulgar language were the most frequently cited offensive topics.
- A third of elementary and middle school librarians and a quarter of high school librarians feel they need to make decisions about controversial subject matter more often now than they did even one or two years ago. Many think this is because books have become more graphic, while others blame the close-mindedness of society.

Challenges reported from public libraries, schools generally (curricular), and school libraries in 2013–2016 are summarized in this chart:

Challenges Reported, 2013–2016



Source: ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom, 2017

**Representative challenges.** *Drama*, by Raina Telgemeier, is second on the OIF's most frequently challenged list. The alarming pattern is that all of the challenges occurred in schools, and in every case the title was in fact withdrawn. Only one of the cases is public; the rest of them requested confidentiality, and one indicated that despite the popularity of the author for her middle school library readers, she was now "afraid" to buy books from Telgemeier.

Virginia House Bill 516 required schools to identify materials as "sexually explicit" and notify parents if teachers planned to provide instructional material containing such content. The legislation also required teachers to provide alternative instructional materials if requested by a parent. HB 516 was passed by the Virginia Senate and House in March 2016, but was vetoed by Gov. Terry McAuliffe on April 4. The governor stated that "Open communication between parents and teachers is important, and school systems have an obligation to provide age-appropriate material for students. However, this legislation lacks flexibility and would require the label of 'sexually explicit' to apply to an artistic work based on a single scene, without further context. Numerous educators, librarians, students, and others involved in the teaching process have expressed their concerns about the real-life consequences of this legislation's requirements."

**Public libraries and public programming.** The Darby (Mont.) Community Public Library held a controversial public program that, in the end, was unusually well received.



**Wendy Campbell**  
Director, Darby  
(Mont.) Community  
Public Library

As part of a series of talks highlighting people from various backgrounds and experiences, this rural community library brought in a language professor (University of Montana's Samir Bitar) to discuss "Perspectives on Islam." Library Director Wendy Campbell provided a successful framework for civic and civil discourse about the topic. Attendees, and follow-up press, were very positive. In January 2017, Campbell was honored with the Robert B. Downs Intellectual Freedom Award, which is given

# Library BILL of RIGHTS

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

**I** Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and **enlightenment of all people** of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

**II** Libraries should provide materials and information **presenting all points of view** on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

**III** Libraries should **challenge censorship** in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

**IV** Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with **resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas**.

**V** A person's **right to use a library should not be denied or** abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

**VI** Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should **make such facilities available on an equitable basis**, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council, amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; resolution of "age" redrafted January 23, 1996.

ALA American Library Association OFFICE FOR Intellectual Freedom American Library Association

annually to acknowledge individuals or groups who have furthered the cause of intellectual freedom, particularly as it affects libraries, information centers, and the dissemination of ideas.

**Resources.** Those interested in intellectual freedom and privacy issues in US libraries can track ongoing news reports through the Intellectual Freedom News. The Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, an online journal (subscription \$50 a year), provides scholarly articles, reports from the field, and public challenge reports.

A poster of the Library Bill of Rights is available, as well as a free downloadable version that includes the Freedom to Read Statement.

Finally, a list of practical guidelines to protect patron privacy in various library settings is available.

# BOOK CHALLENGES

## BY THE NUMBERS



Your words have the power to challenge censorship. Out of the hundreds of challenges ALA records every year, only about **10%** of books are removed from communal shelves, thanks to local literary champions such as librarians, students, and patrons.

## #WordsHavePower

### WHERE ARE BOOKS CHALLENGED?



**49%**  
Public Library

**30%**  
School

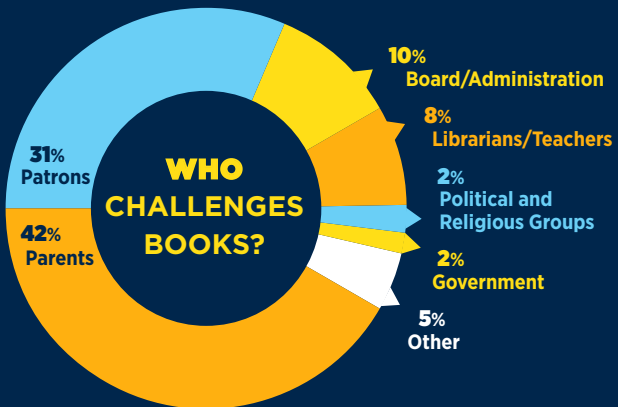


**20%**  
School Library

**1%**  
Special Library



**82-97%**  
of challenges remain unreported



### WHY ARE BOOKS CHALLENGED?



Statistics on challenged books are compiled by:



OFFICE FOR  
Intellectual Freedom  
American Library Association

# National Issues and Trends

## EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

The library community has always supported equity, diversity, and inclusion in our society, and is closely monitoring the actions of the new administration that threaten to undermine the nation's progress in these areas. In a [February 24 statement](#), ALA President Julie Todaro strongly protested the rollback of protections for transgender students in our nation's public schools:

"The Trump administration's decision to revoke important protections for transgender students couldn't conflict more with the library community's fundamental values and the principles upon which libraries are founded. Transgender students deserve the right to use restroom facilities that are aligned with their gender identity. On average students spend 6–7 hours per day at school, and every student deserves to learn in an environment free from discrimination. ... ALA, its members, all librarians, and library professionals are committed to diversity, inclusiveness, and mutual respect for all human beings, and we will work tirelessly to ensure full representation of any and all members of society."

Information to help libraries respond to equity, diversity, and inclusion challenges can be found at [Libraries Respond](#). Created by ALA's Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services, the online resource is designed to support libraries' commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.



Artist Micah Bazant (micahbazant.com) created this poster for the Oakland (Calif.) Public Library.

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS

All types of libraries serve the telecommunications needs of their users. Libraries need high-speed, affordable, broadband services to provide equitable internet access. Libraries have benefited from broadband grant programs, the [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act](#), and the [Universal Service Fund](#) for libraries, yet much work remains.

In order to promote continued economic, social, and political growth and innovation, the internet must be open and accessible to all people. The federal [Open Internet](#) rules, effective June 12, 2015, protect individual, organizational, and business access to an open internet. Recent actions by the Federal Communications Commission, such as stopping companies from providing discounted internet service to low-income people, threaten equitable access.

In a March 7 [letter](#) to the FCC, supporters of net neutrality urged the government to keep the internet open and accessible to all people, thereby protecting and supporting the values of competition, innovation, free speech, and equality of access. The letter endorsed the following:

**Competition.** Net neutrality helps to ensure that all companies, from small startups to larger companies, have equal access to consumers online. It allows companies to fairly compete for customers within their market and incentivizes the development of new services and tools for consumers. This competition is the engine of the US economy and should be promoted.

**Innovation.** Net neutrality makes it possible for new companies and new technologies to emerge and ensures that broadband providers do not create undue burdens and cost barriers that can harm small businesses and undermine job growth.

**Free speech.** Net neutrality ensures that everyone with access to the internet can organize and share their opinions online equally, a key safeguard for our democracy. It ensures that ISPs are not arbiters of speech and expression online by favoring particular forums or providing enhanced access to specific content and audiences.

**Equality of access.** Net neutrality ensures that access to websites and content is based on individual preferences. This means content creators are not forced to pay ISPs for content distribution to reach consumers. It also means that end users can access all the content they desire without restrictions from ISPs. This allows all people in the US to access essential healthcare services, educational resources, and employment opportunities and the freedom to choose from the full spectrum of online content.

## CALLS TO ACTION IN SUPPORT OF LIBRARIES

Changes in national policies impact libraries and library users. Calls to action in support of libraries—including appropriations, copyright, access to government information, and privacy and surveillance—are described below.

**Appropriations.** Support funding at \$186.6 million for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) in the FY 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill and maintain level funding of \$27 million for the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) program. LSTA helps target library services to people of many geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, to disabled individuals, veterans, businesses, and to people with limited literacy skills. Half of all IAL funds provide school library materials to low-income communities.

**Copyright.** Immediately move to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty for persons with visual disabilities and, in parallel, consider and pass its associated implementing

legislation with proposed “report” text without change. The treaty will afford 4 million Americans critical new access to copyrighted material worldwide vital to their education, work, and quality of life. The ALA does not believe that full implementation of the agreement requires any changes to US law, but does not oppose those proposed by the administration, as written. ALA vigorously opposes all changes to the proposed legislation and associated committee report text that could delay or derail the treaty’s ratification. ALA also is equally committed to respecting the rights of authors and to assuring that overly restrictive copyright laws do not thwart the framers’ intent that copyright is meant “To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts.”

**Government information.** Pass the Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act (FASTR, S.779 / H.R. 1477). Rapidly conference the FOIA Improvement and FOIA Oversight and Implementation Acts (S.337 / H.R.653), and send the approved Report to the President for signature. Take up and pass the Equal Access to Congressional Research Service Reports Act (S.2639 / H.R.4702), and assure continued public access to the unique information collections held by the National Technical Information Service (NTIS). ALA is strongly committed to no-fee access to all government-funded information and reports, robust support for all federal libraries and archives, maximum public access to all nonclassified government information, and funding a single repository for NTIS’ unique scientific and technical collections.

**Privacy and surveillance.** Restore the constitutional privacy rights of library users and all Americans lost to overbroad, invasive, and insufficiently “checked and balanced” provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act, Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), and Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA). ALA urges immediate passage of the ECPA Amendments and Email Privacy Acts of 2015 (S.356 / H.R.699) and reform of Section 702 of FISA. Librarians have long defended against government attempts to obtain patrons’ borrowing and internet use records without a warrant, believing that liberty need and must not be sacrificed to security.

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