

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a light blue short-sleeved shirt and white pants, sits on a white stool. She is holding a green book and looking towards a group of diverse children sitting on the floor. The children are looking at her with interest. In the background, there are bookshelves filled with books and a brick wall. The overall scene is a library or classroom setting.

american libraries

SPECIAL ISSUE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

2016

THE **STATE** OF

AMERICA'S LIBRARIES

A Report from the American Library Association

Top Ten Challenged Books ■ **Libraries Transform**

The State of America's Libraries

A REPORT FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

2016

Edited by Kathy Rosa, Director
Office for Research and Statistics
American Library Association



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 approximately 58,000 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.

50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611
americanlibrariesmagazine.org
email americanlibraries@ala.org
toll free 800-545-2433 plus extension
local 312-944-6780 • fax 312-440-0901
online career classified ads: JobLIST.ala.org

Editor and Publisher

Laurie D. Borman • lborman@ala.org • x4213

Managing Editor

Sanhita SinhaRoy • ssinharoy@ala.org • x4219

Senior Editor

Amy Carlton • acarlton@ala.org • x5105

Senior Editor

George M. Eberhart • geberhart@ala.org • x4212

Associate Editor

Terra Dankowski • tdankowski@ala.org • x5282

Associate Editor

Phil Morehart • pmorehart@ala.org • x4218

Editorial and Advertising Assistant

Patrick Burke • pburke@ala.org • x4216

design and production

Art Director

Rebecca Lomax

publishing department

Associate Executive Director

Donald Chatham

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Mary Jo Bolduc • x5416

membership development

Director

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Editorial policy: ALA Policy Manual, section A.8.2

advertising

Michael Stack • mstack@ala.org • 847-367-7120

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CONTENTS

THE STATE OF AMERICA'S LIBRARIES

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-
- 2 [EXECUTIVE SUMMARY](#)
 - 5 [INTRODUCTION](#)
 - 7 [ACADEMIC LIBRARIES](#)
 - 9 [SCHOOL LIBRARIES](#)
 - 12 [PUBLIC LIBRARIES](#)
 - 14 [ISSUES AND TRENDS](#)
 - 14 [Children's and Teen Services](#)
 - 15 [Literacy](#)
 - 16 [Libraries Transform](#)
 - 17 [Community Engagement](#)
 - 18 [Intellectual Freedom](#)
 - 19 [Accreditation Standards](#)
 - 22 [NATIONAL ISSUES AND TRENDS](#)
 - 22 [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#)
 - 22 [Privacy in the Digital Age](#)
 - 23 [Federal Library Funding](#)
 - 23 [Calls to Action in Support of Libraries](#)
 - 24 [RESOURCES](#)
 - 30 [CONTRIBUTORS](#)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Academic, school, and public libraries continue to face an uncertain economy as they shift resources and services to meet the needs of the 21st-century digital world. The American Library Association launched a new public awareness campaign, called "[Libraries Transform](#)," in 2015.

Libraries Transform seeks to shift the mindset that "libraries are obsolete or nice to have" to "libraries are essential," and change the perception that "libraries are just quiet places to do research, find a book, and read" to "libraries are centers of their communities: places to learn, create, and share, with the help of library staff and the resources they provide." The Libraries Transform campaign is designed to increase public awareness of the value, impact, and services provided by library professionals and libraries of all types.

About half of the [chief academic officers](#) at US colleges and universities believe their institutions have not yet recovered from the 2008 economic downturn. The pressure on higher education to demonstrate value remained the [top issue](#) facing academic libraries.

The Association of College and Research Libraries [Assessment in Action program](#), funded by an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant, lends support to the

growing body of evidence demonstrating the positive contributions of academic libraries to student learning and success in five key areas:

- improved information literacy competencies for first-year students
- increased student success in connection with library usage
- documented student retention with library instruction
- demonstrated library contributions to collaborative academic student support
- enhanced student learning with library research consultation services

The value of certified school librarians continues to grow as administrators and teachers seek education resources to better serve tech-savvy students. Among other things, administrators are looking to school librarians to help them incorporate digital educational resources and lead

blended-learning activities in schools, resulting in more equity, connectivity, and personalization to instruction.

In the last six years, school librarians have seen significant changes both in what they are providing to teachers and students, as well as the challenges they are confronting to support digital content. In 2010, for example, only 35% of school librarians indicated they were acquiring digital content. By 2015, that number had increased to 69%. This trend is reflected across a variety of formats, particularly databases, ebooks, periodicals, videos, and games.

The vital role public libraries play in communities has expanded to include services and programs for childhood literacy, computer training, and workforce development. Librarians know their programs and services have an impact, but many libraries do not have the measures and tools to demonstrate the difference they make in the lives of their patrons.

Public libraries are continually required to assess their value. To receive funding, they must provide more than just attendance and circulation counts. Traditional output data only captures quantitative data, or how much is done; libraries are increasingly seeking to measure quality, or the good that is done. As a result, more libraries are conducting outcome measurements to better demonstrate their impact on their community members.

Issues and trends

Libraries are responding to the ever-changing needs of children and teens. Summer reading, a longstanding campaign in public libraries, is evolving into summer learning. Summer programs have flourished in recent years; they now integrate traditional reading activities with others that explore such special interests as the arts, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), and digital learning.

Libraries are using design thinking to reimagine services and spaces for teen patrons, and they are also experimenting with ways to help teens apply design thinking to their own learning experiences. Opportunities for teen creativity include dedicated makerspaces, tinkerlabs, and other reconfigurations of the library's space.

Adults find libraries a place for lifelong learning with resources and programs useful in exploring new ideas, personal interests, and careers. Increasingly, libraries also offer patrons a neutral space to meet their neighbors and discuss and resolve important issues. In 2015, libraries continued to strengthen their role as leaders in community engagement, leading community forums, taking part in anti-violence activities, and providing a safe, neutral

place for an increasingly divided populace to come together.

Access and challenges

Library books and other materials continue to be challenged. In July 2015, a [Harris poll](#) on attitudes about book banning and school libraries revealed that out of the 2,244 US adults who participated, the percentage (28%) who felt that certain books should be banned increased by more than half since the previous survey (18%) conducted in 2011.

Out of 275 challenges recorded by the American Library Association's (ALA) Office for Intellectual Freedom, the "Top Ten Most Challenged Books in 2015" are:

1. ***Looking for Alaska*, by John Green**
Reasons: Offensive language, sexually explicit, and unsuited for age group.
2. ***Fifty Shades of Grey*, by E. L. James**
Reasons: Sexually explicit, unsuited to age group, and other ("poorly written," "concerns that a group of teenagers will want to try it").
3. ***I Am Jazz*, by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings**
Reasons: Inaccurate, homosexuality, sex education, religious viewpoint, and unsuited for age group.
4. ***Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out*, by Susan Kuklin**
Reasons: Anti-family, offensive language, homosexuality, sex education, political viewpoint, religious viewpoint, unsuited for age group, and other ("wants to remove from collection to ward off complaints").
5. ***The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, by Mark Haddon**
Reasons: Offensive language, religious viewpoint, unsuited for age group, and other ("profanity and atheism").
6. ***The Holy Bible***
Reasons: Religious viewpoint.
7. ***Fun Home*, by Alison Bechdel**
Reasons: Violence and other ("graphic images").
8. ***Habibi*, by Craig Thompson**
Reasons: Nudity, sexually explicit, and unsuited for age group.
9. ***Nasreen's Secret School: A True Story from Afghanistan*, by Jeanette Winter**
Reasons: Religious viewpoint, unsuited to age group, and violence.
10. ***Two Boys Kissing*, by David Levithan**
Reasons: Homosexuality and other ("condones public displays of affection").

Summer reading is evolving into summer learning.



National issues and trends

Among the many issues facing libraries, there is one—an amended education law—that calls for celebration. President Obama signed the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA) on December 10, 2015. It is the first law in more than 50 years to include language specific to school librarians and school libraries. This measure reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, legislation that provides funding to schools and extends equal opportunity to education for all students. The definition of “specialized instructional support personnel” in ESEA has now been updated to include “school librarians.” ESSA recognizes school librarians and school libraries as crucial to successful student outcomes.

Library professionals are empowered to turn challenges into opportunities through the high quality of their education. Enhancement of the professional library degree got a boost with the release of the 2015 [Standards for Accreditation of Master’s Programs in Library and Information Studies](#) and a fourth edition of its process manual, [Accreditation Process, Policies, and Procedures \(AP3\)](#).

Privacy in the digital age is an ongoing concern of libraries. Both the American Library Association (ALA) and the National Information Standards Organization (NISO)

released guidelines on developing effective privacy protection policies for digital data. The ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee and its Privacy Subcommittee released [Library Privacy Guidelines for E-book Lending and Digital Content Vendors](#), while NISO developed and released its [NISO Consensus Principles on Users’ Digital Privacy in Library, Publisher, and Software-Provider Systems](#). Both sets of guidelines highlight the fact that digital privacy cannot be maintained only by libraries and requires the coordinated support of many stakeholders.



Although most library funding originates at the local and state level, federal support is also an important segment of library revenue. The majority of federal library program funds are distributed to each state through the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), a major source of library funding, is part of the annual Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill. LSTA grants totaled \$180.9 million for FY2015. Additional federal funding for school libraries takes place through the Innovative Approaches to Literacy program, which received \$25 million in funds during FY2015. ■

INTRODUCTION



Libraries today are less about what they have for people and more about what they do for and with people. Library professionals promote opportunities for individuals and progress for communities. Libraries of all kinds add value in five key areas ([the E's of Libraries](#)): education, employment, entrepreneurship, empowerment, and engagement. They are advancing the legacy of reading and developing a digitally inclusive society.

The American Library Association launched a new public awareness campaign, called “Libraries Transform,” in 2015. Libraries Transform seeks to shift the mindset that “libraries are obsolete or nice to have” to “libraries are essential,” and change the perception that “libraries are just quiet places to do research, find a book, and read” to “libraries are centers of their communities: places to learn, create and share, with the help of library staff and the resources they provide.”

The Libraries Transform campaign is designed to increase public awareness of the value, impact, and services provided by library professionals and libraries of all types. The campaign showcases how libraries transform both communities and the lives of individuals, how libraries continue to transform to meet rapidly changing

21st-century needs, and how library professionals continue to transform to meet the evolving needs of the communities in which they serve. Central to the campaign is the use of provocative “Because” statements that challenge individuals to rethink what they know about libraries.

More than 1,500 libraries have registered to participate in the campaign and are using campaign materials in their communities. The campaign [website](#) has additional background about the campaign, links to the “Because” statements, videos, a map of participating libraries, and links to promotional materials.

Intuitively, we understand that libraries have value and are worthy of support by the community and government. At the same time, current economic challenges increasingly demand that the value of libraries be demonstrated

BECAUSE
EMPLOYERS
WANT CANDIDATES
WHO KNOW
THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN A WEB
SEARCH AND
RESEARCH.

LIBRARIES
TRANSFORM™

BECAUSE
STUDENTS CAN'T
AFFORD
SCHOLARLY
JOURNALS ON
A RAMEN
NOODLE BUDGET.

LIBRARIES
TRANSFORM™

BECAUSE THERE
ARE MORE
THAN
14,400,000
SEARCH RESULTS
FOR THE 2016
PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION.

LIBRARIES
TRANSFORM™

through performance measurement. Historically, libraries have measured performance by counts of circulation, visits, and program attendance. Today there is shift in expectation that libraries will measure not just counts, but outcomes. Outcomes are results, measured by changes in patron behavior. One of the biggest challenges for libraries today is to demonstrate how people's lives are changed through library resources, programs, and services.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) [defines outcomes](#) as “achievements or changes in skill, knowledge, attitude, behavior, condition, or life status for program participants.” There are many outcome-based

evaluation models and projects. In this document, the value of academic libraries as demonstrated by learning and success outcomes is demonstrated through the [ACRL Assessment in Action program](#), funded by an IMLS grant. In the section on public libraries, readers will find information about [Project Outcome](#), an initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. School libraries will benefit from the results of a grant project, [Causality: School Libraries and Student Success II](#) (CLASS II), funded by IMLS. This project brings school library researchers together to develop a plan for research that measures the effects of school libraries and librarians on student learning. ■

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES



Academic libraries provide resources and services to support the learning, teaching, and research needs of students, faculty, and staff. Surveys show that students and faculty value academic libraries for their success in demonstrating research techniques, increasing student information literacy, and managing course reserves. Academic libraries are finding creative ways to encourage student success through technology spaces and digital scholarship centers.

Asserting the value of academic libraries

In a year when nearly half of [chief academic officers](#) at US colleges and universities believe their institutions have not yet recovered from the 2008 economic downturn, pressure on higher education to demonstrate value remained the [top issue](#) facing academic libraries.

The Association of College and Research Libraries [Assessment in Action program](#), funded by an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant, lends support to the growing body of evidence demonstrating the positive contributions of academic libraries to student learning and success in five key areas:

- improved information literacy competencies for first-year students
- increased student success in connection with library usage
- documented student retention with library instruction
- demonstrated library contributions to collaborative academic student support
- enhanced student learning with library research consultation services

Fifty-seven percent of [chief academic officers](#) rated academic library resources and services “very effective”—more effective than on-campus teaching and instruction, online courses and programs, academic support services,

research and scholarship, administrative information systems and operations, and data analysis and organizational analytics. [Faculty](#) rated academic libraries most highly in educating students one-on-one in conducting research, instructing students in information literacy, and managing course reserves.

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 2015 National Survey of Student Engagement [summary](#). The survey shows that 34% of the first-year students who participated agreed that their experiences at their institution contributed “very much” to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in using information effectively. More impressively, 47% of seniors agreed with the same statement.

Enhancing space and support for creation-based learning

Learning commons are being designed to provide integrated approaches and programming that foster holistic student success. Providing space for student collaboration was a [high priority](#) for nearly 90% of academic institutions. Spaces are being designed to allow users to engage with a range of technologies. Many libraries offer multimedia production facilities and technology tools that support

media-enriched content creation. Digital scholarship centers that provide equipment, expertise, and services are increasingly found in all types of academic institutions.

The *Princeton Review*'s [top 10 best academic libraries](#) for 2016 are: Yale University, University of Chicago, US Military Academy (West Point), Vassar College, Columbia University, Middlebury College, Stanford University, Dartmouth College, Princeton University, and Colgate University.

Providing space for student collaboration is a high priority for academic institutions.

Staffing and salaries

Doctoral/research institutions [employed](#) an average of 49.58 professional library staff; comprehensive institutions employed an average of 10.8 professional staff; baccalaureate schools [employed](#) an average of 6 professional staff; and associate degree-granting institutions [employed](#) an average of 5.24 professional staff, according to a 2014 ACRL survey.

Academic libraries [provided](#) 26.7% of all jobs for new library school graduates in 2015, up from 26.3% in 2013. The average starting salary for academic librarians was \$42,000. New job responsibilities include data management and data analytics, digital archives, information security, and geospatial information.

Library expenditures for [salaries and wages](#) accounted for 57.3% of total library expenditures, on average constituting 77.9% of total library expenditures for associate degree-granting institutions, 52.7% for baccalaureate, 54.7% for comprehensive schools, and 44% for doctoral and research institutions. ■

SCHOOL LIBRARIES



Certified school librarians play an essential part in ensuring that students have 21st-century information literacy skills—by establishing meaningful partnerships with administrators, creating opportunities for digital learning, and making sure that professional standards and guidelines are followed.

Meaningful partnerships

School librarians and administrators across the country are taking meaningful steps to further their collaborative partnerships as school-wide, student-centered educators. In November 2015, more than 10% of the attendees at the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) 17th National Conference and Exhibition—“[Experience Education Evolution](#)”—were administrators who were learning and exploring emerging trends side-by-side with their school librarians.

In most cases, administrators learn what school librarians do from school librarians. More than 90% of principals receive [no formal training](#) related to school librarians during their principal preparation programs, and 65% percent of principals' primary source of knowledge of the instructional role of the school librarian is derived from interactions with school librarians during their careers.

The value of certified school librarians continues to grow as administrators and teachers seek education resources to better serve tech-savvy students. Among other things, administrators are [looking to school librarians](#) to help them digitize education and lead blended learning activities in schools, thus bringing equity, connectivity, and personalization to instruction.

Digital learning

More than 2,000 school library professionals participated in the [Speak Up National Research Project](#) surveys, conducted each fall by [Project Tomorrow](#), which help to shape the state and national dialogue concerning educational technology in schools. School librarians continue to be at the forefront of digital integration in schools, supporting students, teachers, and administrators every day with new resources, training, and strategies.

In the last six years, school librarians have seen significant changes both in what they are providing to teachers and students, as well as the challenges they are confronting to support digital content. In 2010, for example, only 35% of school librarians indicated they were acquiring digital content. By 2015, that number had increased to 69%. This trend is reflected across a variety of formats, particularly databases, ebooks, periodicals, videos, and games (Table 1).

When we look at the challenges of supporting digital content in schools, there were large increases in the percentage of school librarians who reported insufficient internet access, students lacking access to technology in school, difficulty locating appropriate digital content, and teachers uncomfortable using digital content (Table 2).



Setting the standard

This year AASL embarked on a [standards remodeling project](#) to ensure that school librarians are leading progressive, engaging, and dynamic learning opportunities for students. A multilayered survey, data, and research process began in September 2015 with an online survey to assess attitudes and perceptions about the current

Table 1: Types of Digital Content Acquired by School Libraries

| Type of digital content | 2010 | 2015 |
|--|------|------|
| Ebook subscriptions | 30% | NA |
| Online periodicals | 56% | NA |
| Online ebook or periodical subscriptions | NA | 64% |
| Online curriculum | 31% | 39% |
| Online databases | 58% | 65% |
| Digital content subscriptions | 35% | 69% |
| Online textbooks | 19% | 22% |
| Online videos | 38% | 59% |
| Game-based environments | 16% | 35% |

Table 2: Challenges of Supporting Digital Content in School Libraries, as Reported by School Librarians

| Challenge | 2010 | 2015 |
|--|------|------|
| Internet access is insufficient | 19% | 35% |
| Lack of student access to technology in school | 17% | 49% |
| Difficulty locating appropriate digital content | 10% | 29% |
| Teachers are not comfortable using digital content | 33% | 47% |

national [learning standards and program guidelines documents](#) developed by AASL, especially their content, usability, and implementation.

[Survey respondents](#) (91% were AASL members; 83% non-members) indicated that they are very familiar with the AASL standards and guidelines. Most describe them as relevant, well organized, practical, easy to use, and easy



to explain. However, despite their value, 41% of school librarians feel the AASL standards and guidelines need updating. The most common request was to develop both student and professional standards that are more closely aligned, increasing appeal and validity in standards components for administrators and teachers.

Demonstrating the value of school libraries and librarians continues to be a challenge. Research that demonstrates the impact of school libraries and librarians on student learning is one effective approach to demonstrating value. Many [school library impact studies](#) have been conducted over the past few decades. The results consistently demonstrate a strong relationship between student achievement and quality school library programs staffed by credentialed school librarians. The results show that:

- Access to books through school libraries develops life-long positive attitudes in students towards reading and helps them read more.
- Students consistently perform better on tests when there is a full-time, certified librarian and appropriate assistant on staff.
- Extended hours of operation and flexible scheduling have a direct impact on student achievement.

- Higher expenditures and larger, newer, and varied collections contribute to improved student test scores.

- Collaborative planning between school librarians and teachers enhance student learning.

- The higher the number of visits to the library, the higher the scores on student achievement tests.

- School libraries are essential to students by providing facilities and tools to prepare them for navigating the information age and entering the work place of the future.

A recent [study](#) shows a strong relationship between the presence of a credentialed librarian and a higher graduation rate. The study also reports that having a school library increases equity to technology and accessible library facilities.

Further research is being conducted by AASL through a 2015 Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program [grant](#) from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The purpose of the grant is to conduct research to discover what works at the intersection of formal and informal learning in the school library learning space, and to provide reliable information by which to assess the impact of specific actions in library programs and certified school library staffing. ■

PUBLIC LIBRARIES



As the need for such services as early childhood literacy, computer training, and workforce development has grown, the vital role public libraries play in their communities has also expanded.

Outcome measurement in public libraries

Librarians know their programs and services have an impact, but many libraries do not have the tools to demonstrate the difference they make in the lives of their patrons. Public libraries are continually required to assess their value. Increasingly, they must provide more than just attendance and circulation counts. Traditional output data only captures quantitative data, or how much is done; libraries also need to measure quality, or the good that is done. As a result, libraries are increasingly conducting outcome measurements to better demonstrate their impact on their communities.

The Public Library Association (PLA) responded to this field-wide trend towards standardized performance measures in 2013, when then-PLA President Carolyn Anthony, director of the Skokie (Ill.) Public Library, founded the PLA [Performance Measurement Task Force](#).

The task force is made up of library leaders, researchers, and data analysts dedicated to providing simple, easy-to-use tools for public libraries to start implementing outcome measurement. The group created a set of surveys that cover a broad range of core service areas that libraries can easily and directly link to improvements or changes in patrons' knowledge, behavior, skills, application, and awareness.

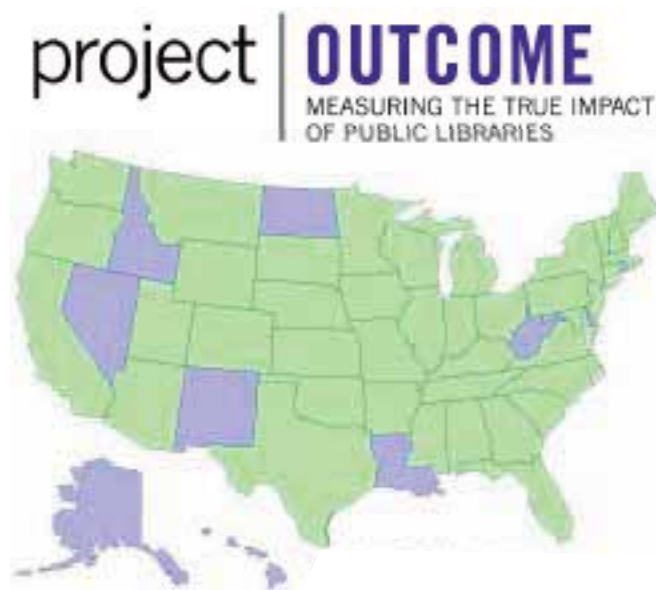
Libraries can easily measure patrons' knowledge and skills.

This effort led to a grant to PLA from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to build a project based on the work of its task force. This initiative, named [Project Outcome](#), launched at the ALA Annual Conference in June 2015. Project Outcome helps public libraries understand and share the true impact of essential library programs and services by providing free, easy-to-use online resources, surveys, and data analysis tools.

High enrollment and [participation numbers](#) in Project Outcome confirm the outcome measurement trend. By

the end of February 2016, only nine months into its launch, Project Outcome had more than 1,000 registered users from some 700 public libraries and had collected over 7,000 patron outcome surveys. Project Outcome participants have reported using their results to spark internal staff conversations, apply for grant funding, make easy programmatic changes based on open-ended feedback, advocate in city council and library board reports, and discuss with external community partners.

Project Outcome continues to expand in both registered users and measurement development. Its participants are indicating they want more complex measures and support to develop their own surveys. The task force is continuing to develop a new set of advanced measures for libraries to determine whether patrons followed through with their intended outcomes. These follow-up measures will allow libraries to strengthen their stories even more by providing data that demonstrates the immediate and long-term impact of their programs and services. By combining outcome measurement with traditional data collection, libraries will be better equipped for internal decision-making, advocacy, and strategic planning—proving that better data makes better libraries. ■



Blue States = Registered Users
Green States = Registered + Survey Portal Users

ISSUES AND TRENDS



Children's and teen services

Teen services in school and public libraries

In 2014, the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), supported by funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, published a report, *The Future of Library Services for and with Teens: A Call to Action*. This document explores the current state of teen services in libraries, as well as the environmental causes that are driving the need for change. Libraries are responding by revisiting their overall teen services programs. A few noteworthy trends were observed in programming and services.

An emerging trend in program administration for teen services in 2015 was “design thinking.” While this topic isn’t completely new to libraries, it definitely picked up steam in 2015, especially in relation to teen services. Design thinking is a formal, creative method to solve

problems and stimulate innovation. Critical components of design thinking are desirability, feasibility, and viability. Another fundamental element is that it always places people first. People’s experience, in this case with libraries, is the primary focus. Libraries are using design thinking to reimagine services and spaces for teen patrons, and they are also experimenting with ways to help teens apply design thinking to their own learning experiences.

Another issue taking on importance in 2015 was the matter of digital equity. Multiple studies increasingly point to the fact that individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds do not have equal access to high-speed internet, digital tools, or opportunities to learn how to use digital resources. As a result, they are less able to compete for 21st-century careers, participate fully in civic engagement, or even advance their own personal learning and interests.

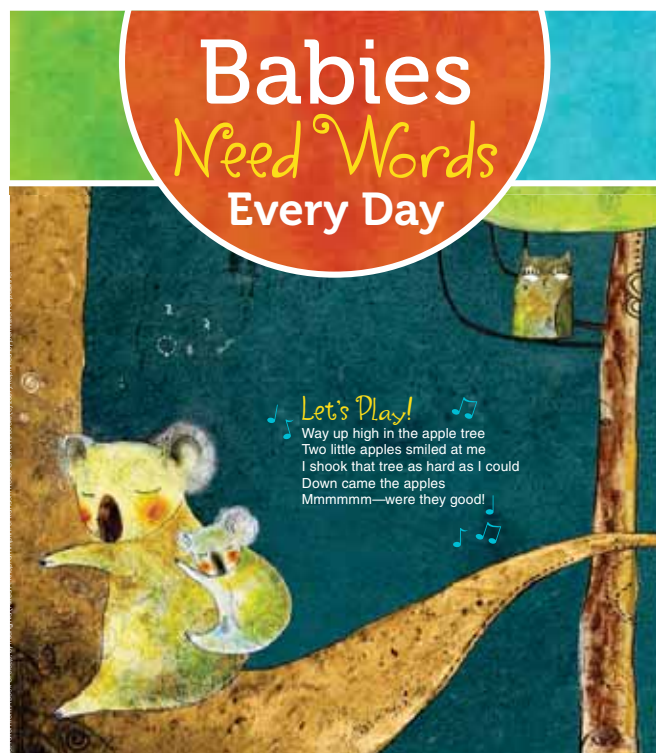
The digital equity issue is a very real one for teens. Those who live in high-poverty areas attend schools that have older or fewer digital tools available, and many students do not have any computer access at home. In 2015, libraries explored ways to address this issue by seeking out community partners to help ensure that all teens have access to tools and using trained experts to help teens build the digital literacy skills they need to succeed in school and prepare for college, careers, and life.



Early childhood development support in the library

Children’s librarians continue to provide critical resources to families whose children are at the earliest stages of development. For this reason, when the US Departments of Education and Health and Human Services sought input on a forthcoming [policy statement](#) to establish their vision for improved coordination across programs serving children from birth through age 8, ALA was able to provide [detailed examples](#) of how libraries engage with families to support the literacy development of their children through structured storytimes, as well as coordinate efforts with early childhood providers to expand access to resources.

Libraries often implement programs that actively teach parents and caregivers the components of early literacy through an organized curriculum like [Every Child Ready to Read](#). They also connect their communities to resources like the [Babies Need Words Every Day](#) materials that cue interaction between adults and children to support healthy brain development.



Made in the library

Libraries are adapting their spaces and resources to respond to a resurgence of patrons’ desire to create original content. While makerspaces are not a new concept—library programs have featured needle crafting, building, and upcycling for years—they have taken on a decidedly new technological twist. As *Wired* magazine [notes](#), people are seeking “access to new forms of literacy”

Children require guided experiences with digital media.

like “design, programming, video editing, book writing, and website building.” This has manifested itself in the creation of dedicated makerspaces, tinkerlabs, and other reconfigurations of the library’s space. There is variety in the way libraries encourage creativity, ranging from low-tech hands-on engineering opportunities for children and teens using toys and kits, to the incorporation of high-tech tools like laser cutters and 3D printers.

Media mentorship and youth services librarians

A [2014 survey](#) by the Joan Ganz Cooney Center found that nearly two-thirds (62%) of 2- to 10-year-olds have access to either an e-reader or a tablet device. It is safe to assume that this access will continue to grow. In response, youth services library staff around the country have taken on roles as “media mentors.” Children require mediated and guided experiences with digital media in order for those encounters to translate into positive and productive digital literacy skills.

Children’s librarians, who have long assisted families with their information and literacy needs, are in a prime position to act as media mentors who guide children through positive and efficient uses of technology, and model for caregivers methods that support children’s digital literacy development outside of the library. Digital media is also increasingly incorporated into creative and innovative children’s programming at the library.

Summer learning

Summer reading, a longstanding campaign in public libraries, is evolving into summer learning. The language shift helps emphasize the positive outcomes that summer programming in the library can generate. Summer programs have flourished in recent years; they now integrate traditional reading activities with others that explore such special interests as the arts, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), and digital learning.

A [2015 report](#) from the National Summer Learning Association recognizes the public library as “a bedrock institution that plays a critical role in keeping kids of all ages safe and productively engaged during the summer months. Formal and informal summer library programs provide reading materials, guided-learning activities in many subjects, summer meals, and access to many family resources.”

Literacy

The ALA [American Dream Starts @ your library](#) initiative is grounded in an adult education and literacy framework. More than 160 public libraries have received grants since



the program's inception in 2007. Each library received a onetime grant of \$5,000 to add or improve literacy services to adult English-language learners and their families. The project is supported by the Dollar General Literacy Foundation for the purchase of digital and print materials.

American Dream libraries help transform lives by offering literacy classes focused on language, technology, and job training. The Sioux Center (Iowa) Public Library has partnered with the Northwest Iowa Community College (NICC) in Sheldon to bring more classes to town, overcoming the transportation barriers many new immigrants face, as the college is nearly 30 miles away. The library also helps with recruitment and referrals to the classes. NICC's formal registration process was confusing to prospective students and impeded some from participating in the classes. Therefore, the library worked with teachers to allow prospective students to add their names to the list in person, with someone they knew and trusted, at the library instead of over the phone with a college representative. In response to the increased participation, the community partners have increased the number of hours for English as a Second Language (ESL) and High School Equivalency Test classes in the Sioux Center Public Library from 6 to 30 hours per week. Through the American Dream grant, the library is able to provide resources for ESL teachers and tutors and self-study materials for students, equipping them for life-long learning.

Libraries Transform

Libraries across the nation are embracing "[Libraries Transform](#)," the new ALA campaign designed to increase public awareness of the value, impact, and services provided by libraries and library professionals. A multiyear campaign, Libraries Transform creates one clear, energetic voice for the profession, while showcasing the transformative nature of today's libraries and the critical role they play in the digital age.

Since the campaign launched in October 2015, more than 1,500 libraries have registered to participate. Libraries Transform-related posts on the [ALA](#) and [I Love Libraries](#) Facebook pages have reached well over one million people.

LIBRARIES TRANSFORM™

by the Numbers



Libraries Transform-related videos have been viewed more than 23,500 times on YouTube and Facebook.



“We need to let policymakers, stakeholders, and funders know that libraries are neither obsolete nor nice to have,” said ALA President Sari Feldman. “Libraries are essential. By joining the campaign, libraries can help us communicate this important message.”

At the Libraries Transform campaign [website](#), users can access free tools and resources to develop their own public awareness campaigns. Among the most compelling tools available to librarians are the campaign’s “[Because](#)” statements. These incisive and powerful sentences use bright bold type and colorful backgrounds to draw attention to how and why libraries are transforming. For example, “Because more than a quarter of US households don’t have a computer with an internet connection.”

The Ohio Library Council (OLC), a statewide professional association that represents the interests of Ohio’s 251 public libraries, their trustees, Friends, and staffs, has adopted the theme “[Ohio Libraries Transform](#)” for its Legislative Day on April 13.

“There were three or four of the ‘Because’ statements that our Government Relations Committee really liked and wanted to utilize,” said Michelle Francis, OLC’s director of government and legal services.

The campaign website offers valuable information about how to get involved.

Community engagement

As champions of lifelong learning, libraries are a place to quench curiosity, access technology, and explore new ideas, hobbies, and careers. Increasingly, libraries also offer patrons a neutral space to meet their neighbors to discuss and resolve important issues. In 2015, libraries continued to strengthen their role as leaders in community engagement, leading community forums, taking part in anti-violence activities, and providing a safe and neutral place for an increasingly divided populace to come together.

“The public library is a hub of civic engagement, fostering new relationships and strengthening the human capital of the community,” states the Aspen Institute’s October 2014 report, [Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries](#). “Librarians are actively engaged in the community. They connect individuals to a vast array of local and national resources and serve as neutral conveners to foster civic health. They facilitate learning and creation for children and adults alike.”

In response to the growing call for community engagement resources, the American Library Association (ALA) created [Libraries Transforming Communities](#) (LTC), a 2014–2015 initiative that sought to reimagine the role libraries play in supporting communities. In partnership with the [Harwood Institute for Public Innovation](#), a nonprofit that helps communities work together to

solve problems, and with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, ALA created and distributed resources and training opportunities to help libraries learn to fully engage with their communities. Key to this style of community engagement was the notion that the library must start by talking with community members, tapping into their public knowledge to find what they really want for their community—not what the library thinks they should want.

A central part of the LTC initiative was its [Public Innovators Cohort](#), a group of 10 public libraries selected to undergo extensive community engagement training and try these new methods in their



cities and towns. The cohort libraries—ranging from tiny Red Hook (N.Y.) Public Library to the sprawling Los Angeles Public Library—brought residents together for community conversations, worked internally to create a culture that would fully embrace change, and forged new partnerships to help tackle challenges that plagued their communities. When the initiative ended in December 2015, the cohort had made significant progress:

- [Hartford \(Conn.\) Public Library](#) brought residents and police officers together to discuss ways to make the city’s underserved communities safer and more livable; the conversation led to a public antiviolence event, “Stomp the Violence,” in February 2016.

- [Columbus \(Wis.\) Public Library](#) started a campaign to break down the barriers between longtime residents and newcomers to its small midwestern community; today, the group is working to reinvigorate the town’s aging downtown, beautify a local park, and celebrate local history.

- Spokane County (Wash.) Library District created a library culture that put the community at the center of decision-making. Since becoming involved in LTC, the library has rewritten job descriptions to include community engagement activities; as a result, librarians now sit on local boards and are active in community events.

Other examples of creative outreach emerged from libraries around the country in 2015. Skokie (Ill.) Public Library and its partners hosted a [Voices of Race program series](#) that, through 70 events, highlighted ethnic and racial diversity in the community. Austin (Tex.) Public Library hosted a variety of [programming](#) for its homeless patrons, including a series of writing workshops in partnership with a street newspaper that highlights the voices of people in need. In addition, a new partnership between the Chicago Public Library and a local barbershop, “[Barbershop at the Library](#),” provides haircuts and a safe space for kids in Chicago’s underserved Englewood neighborhood.

Intellectual freedom

Book challenges in 2015

Out of 275 challenges recorded by the American Library Association's (ALA) Office for Intellectual Freedom, the "Top Ten Most Challenged Books in 2015" are:

1. ***Looking for Alaska*, by John Green**
Reasons: Offensive language, sexually explicit, and unsuited for age group.
2. ***Fifty Shades of Grey*, by E. L. James**
Reasons: Sexually explicit, unsuited to age group, and other ("poorly written," "concerns that a group of teenagers will want to try it").
3. ***I Am Jazz*, by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings**
Reasons: Inaccurate, homosexuality, sex education, religious viewpoint, and unsuited for age group.
4. ***Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out*, by Susan Kuklin**
Reasons: Anti-family, offensive language, homosexuality, sex education, political viewpoint, religious viewpoint, unsuited for age group, and other ("wants to remove from collection to ward off complaints").
5. ***The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, by Mark Haddon**
Reasons: Offensive language, religious viewpoint, unsuited for age group, and other ("profanity and atheism").
6. ***The Holy Bible***
Reasons: Religious viewpoint.
7. ***Fun Home*, by Alison Bechdel**
Reasons: Violence and other ("graphic images").
8. ***Habibi*, by Craig Thompson**
Reasons: Nudity, sexually explicit, and unsuited for age group.
9. ***Nasreen's Secret School: A True Story from Afghanistan*, by Jeanette Winter**
Reasons: Religious viewpoint, unsuited to age group, and violence.
10. ***Two Boys Kissing*, by David Levithan**
Reasons: Homosexuality and other ("condones public displays of affection").

60% of Americans believe children should not get books with explicit language from school libraries.

Censorship

In July 2015, a [Harris poll](#) on attitudes about book banning and school libraries revealed that out of the 2,244 US adults who participated, the percentage who felt that certain books should be banned increased by more than half since the previous survey in 2011. Twenty-eight percent believe certain books should be banned today, compared with 18% four years ago. One-fourth (24%) are unsure, which leaves less than half of Americans convinced that no book should be banned (48%). Republicans (42%) are nearly twice as likely as Democrats (23%) or Independents (22%)

to believe there are any books that should be banned. In addition, adults who have completed high school or less (33%) are more likely than those with higher levels of education (some college 25%, college graduates 24%, postgraduates 23%) to believe there are books that should be banned.

Three-fifths of Americans believe children should not be able to get books containing explicit language from school libraries (60%, down two points from 2011), while half say the same of books with references to violence (48%, the same as in 2011). Interestingly, similar numbers of adults would like to remove books that include witchcraft or sorcery (44%, up three points) and those with references to sex (43%, down two points) from school library shelves. A little less than four in 10 each would like to keep out books with references to drugs or alcohol (37%, down four points) and books that include vampires (36%, up two points).

In addition, a third of the respondents (33%) do not think children should be able to get the Koran from their school library and three in 10 say the same of the Torah or Talmud (29%). A fourth don't think children should be able to get books that question the existence of a divine being or beings from school libraries (26%), while two in 10 say the same of books that discuss creationism (19%) and 16% feel this way about books that discuss evolution.

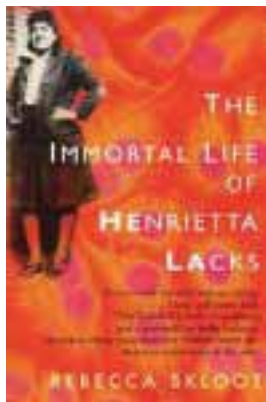
While the survey's results seem to show a rise in conservative attitudes toward censorship, especially in the context of school libraries, ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom warned against drawing any hard conclusions from the poll results, since they may reflect a unique and different set of attitudes about school libraries than those surrounding public or academic libraries. The broad nature of the questions may also have encouraged a less nuanced range of answers to the survey questions. In any case, the survey responses raise important concerns about the state of civic education in the United States regarding civil rights and the First Amendment, confirming the need for vigorous programs in support of intellectual freedom.

Diverse books and book challenges

Attention to the issue of challenges to library materials featuring characters who are neither white, straight, nor gender normative continued to grow in 2015. This focus on diversity highlights both an increasing social sensitivity to these issues and a growing awareness that such materials are still relatively rare in the publishing ecosystem. The partners who make up the Banned Books Week coalition have made the issue of diverse books a theme for [Banned Books Week 2016](#).

One representative [challenge](#) occurred in Hood County, Texas, where more than 50 residents signed challenge forms asking the public library to remove two books focused on LGBT issues in the children's section, *My Princess Boy* and *This Day in June*. Challengers questioned why the books were in the children's section, and several indicated that the books should be banned outright because they promote "perversion" and the "gay lifestyle." After a public hearing, Hood County commissioners voted to retain both books. Library Director [Courtney Kincaid](#) subsequently received ALA's "I Love My Librarian Award" after members of her community nominated her for inspiring the creation of a community coalition to fight for the freedom to read.

Another trend in book challenges—challenges to nonfiction materials—is reflected in the challenge filed by a parent in Knoxville, Tennessee. She [challenged](#) the selection of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by science writer Rebecca Skloot as a summer reading choice, stating that the book had too much graphic information for her 15-year-old son and should not have been assigned to any Knox County school student. The book details the true story of a poor black tobacco farmer whose cervical cancer cells were taken without her knowledge in 1951 and were used to develop a polio vaccine, in vitro fertilization, and other major scientific breakthroughs. This award-winning book on medical research and ethics was retained by the school board pursuant to its policy, which places an emphasis on teachers' professional judgment in selecting books, as long as they fit within the district's guidelines.



Filtering and labeling in schools and libraries

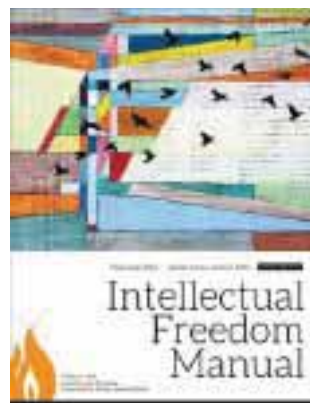
Another continuing issue, particularly prevalent among school libraries, has been the overfiltering of internet content. This is typically the result of the implementation

of software—not by librarians, who seek to configure it simply to fulfill the requirements of the [Children's Internet Protection Act](#), but by school IT staff, who enable content blocking on many constitutionally protected information resources simply because the software supports it.

A related topic is the labeling and rating of online content. Many school and public libraries have been pressured by their communities to adopt external content descriptions in their catalogs. In response to these issues, in 2015 the ALA Council adopted three new interpretations to the Library Bill of Rights at the urging of the Intellectual Freedom Committee: [Internet Filtering](#), [Labeling Systems](#), and [Rating Systems](#).

New intellectual freedom resources

ALA Editions released the ninth edition of the Office for Intellectual Freedom's [Intellectual Freedom Manual](#) on April 20, 2015. Edited by Trina Magi at the University of Vermont and Martin Garner at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, the manual is completely revised for use by working librarians. Its companion volume, [A History of ALA Policy on Intellectual Freedom](#), debuted in July 2015.



Accreditation standards

A high standard of professional library education helps libraries respond to many issues and emerging trends of importance to their communities. Enhancement of the professional library degree got a boost with the release of the Committee on Accreditation (COA) 2015

[Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies](#) and a fourth edition of its process manual, [Accreditation Process, Policies, and Procedures \(AP3\)](#). Improvements were made possible by thoughts shared both in person at conferences and virtually via email, weblog, and Adobe Connect town hall meetings. ■



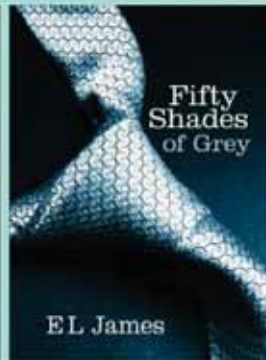
Of 275 challenges recorded by the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom, these are the

2015 TOP TEN

Most Challenged Books



Looking for Alaska
by John Green
Sexually Explicit
Offensive Language
Drugs/Alcohol/Smoking



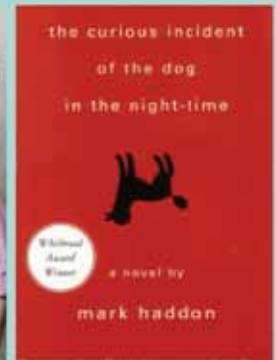
Fifty Shades of Grey
by E.L. James
Sexually Explicit



I Am Jazz
by Jessica Herthel
& Jazz Jennings
Unsuited for Age Group
Religious Viewpoint



Beyond Magenta
by Susan Kuklin
Religious Viewpoint
Sex Education
Homosexuality
Offensive
Anti-Family



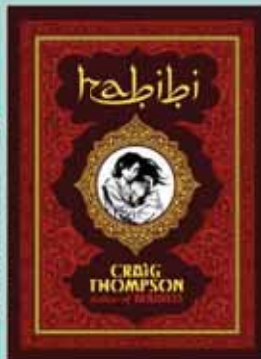
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time
by Mark Haddon
Offensive Language
Unsuited for Age Group
"Atheism"



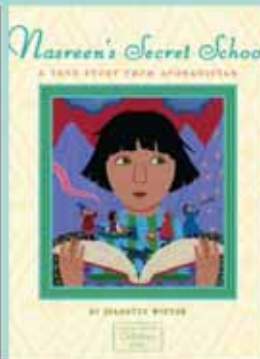
Holy Bible
Religious Viewpoint
Violence
"Illegal"



Fun Home
by Alison Bechdel
Homosexuality
Graphic Images
Nudity



Habibi
by Craig Thompson
Sexually Explicit
Nudity



Nasreen's Secret School
by Jeanette Winter
Religious Viewpoint
Violence
"References to Islam"



Two Boys Kissing
by David Levithan
Homosexuality
"Condone Public Displays of Affection"

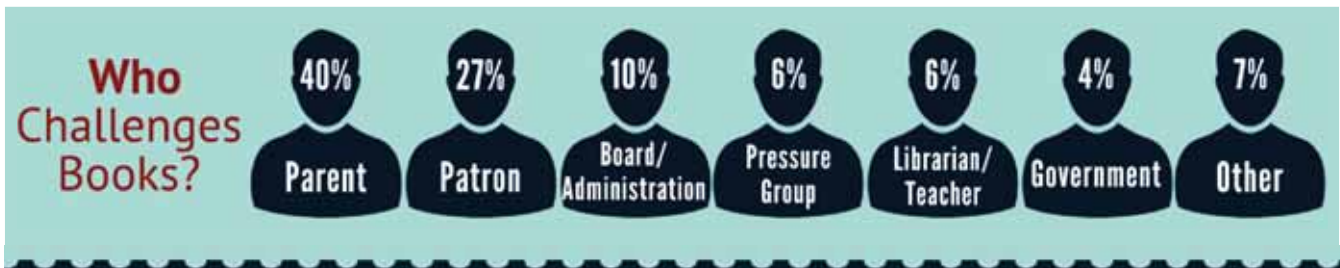
Understanding Book Challenges



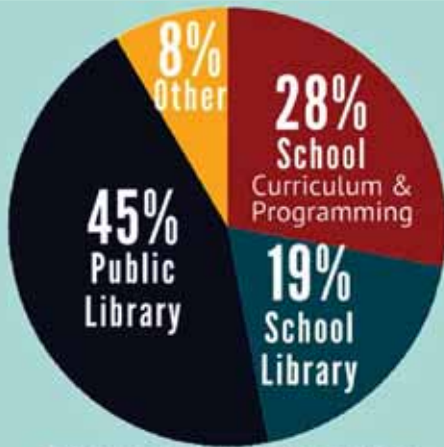
9

of the **TOP TEN** Challenged Books include **DIVERSE *** content

* Definition: www.ala.org/bbooks/diversity

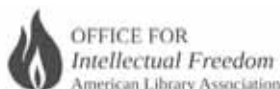


www.ala.org/bbooks



www.ala.org/bbooks

Statistics on challenged books are compiled by:



NATIONAL ISSUES AND TRENDS



Official White House Photo
by Amanda Lucidon

President Obama signs the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

A major reauthorization bill overhauling K–12 education policy—the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA)—was signed into law by President Obama on December 10, 2015. ESSA supports effective school library programs that will offer children new technology tools, help them develop critical thinking, and provide the reading and research skills essential to achievement in science, math, and all other STEM fields.

The act also authorizes the [Innovative Approaches to Literacy](#) program that allows the education secretary to “award grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements, on a competitive basis” to promote literacy programs in low-income areas, including “developing and enhancing effective school library programs.” This puts kids from less advantaged backgrounds in a position to benefit from all the tools, reading, and research services mentioned above, including digital literacy, which effective school library programs provide. ALA members around the country should know that their unified, collective, high-impact messages to their senators and representatives helped bring about favorable provisions for school libraries specifically included in the reauthorization legislation, while also putting school libraries and school librarians front and center as critical partners.

Privacy in the digital age

The ongoing concern of libraries over privacy issues prompted several efforts aimed at protecting and securing confidential library data, including any data capable of identifying library patrons and their use of library resources.

Both the ALA and the National Information Standards Organization (NISO) released guidelines on developing effective privacy protection policies for digital data. The Intellectual Freedom Committee and its Privacy Subcommittee released the [Library Privacy Guidelines for E-book Lending and Digital Content Vendors](#), while NISO developed and released its [NISO Consensus Principles on Users’ Digital Privacy in Library, Publisher, and Software Provider Systems](#). Both sets of guidelines highlight the fact that digital privacy cannot be maintained only by libraries; it requires the coordinated support of many.

In addition, the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom announced its [sponsorship](#) of “[Let’s Encrypt](#),” a free, automated, and open certificate authority that will allow anyone who owns a domain name—including libraries—to obtain a server certificate at zero cost, making it possible to encrypt data communications between servers and provide greater security for those using the internet for email, browsing, or other online tasks.

Federal library funding

The amount of funding that a library receives directly influences the quality of its services. While the majority of funding for libraries comes from state and local sources, [federal funding](#) provides critical assistance, giving libraries across the country the financial support they need to serve their communities.

The [Innovative Approaches to Literacy](#) (IAL) grant program from the US Department of Education supports school libraries and nonprofit literacy organizations working to improve reading skills at the most critical early years of a child's development. Funding for school libraries through IAL received an increase of \$2 million, raising the total program funding in FY2016 to \$27 million. At least half of such funding is dedicated to school libraries.

The majority of federal library program funds are distributed through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to each state. The [Library Services and Technology Act](#) (LSTA) is part of the annual Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill. Grants provided by LSTA are the primary source of federal funding for libraries. A majority of the funding is a population-based grant distributed to each state library agency through IMLS. States make their own determination on how to best utilize funding for their communities. Funding for LSTA will be increased in FY2016 to \$182.9 million, an increase over the FY2015 level of \$180.9 million.

- Grants to states will receive an FY2016 boost to \$155.8 million (\$154.8 million in FY2015).

- Funding for Native American Library Services has been raised slightly to \$4.1 million (\$3.9 million in FY2015).

- National Leadership Grants for Libraries grows to \$13.1 million (\$12.2 million in FY2015).

- Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian funding will stay level at \$10 million.

- Overall funding for IMLS will bump to \$230 million, up slightly from \$227.8 million in FY2015.

Calls to action in support of libraries

Changes in national policies impact libraries and library users. Calls to action in support of libraries—including

privacy, copyright, access to government information, and network neutrality—are described below.

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 amendments, and Electronic Communications Privacy Act. For decades, librarians have defended the public's Fourth Amendment privacy rights against government attempts to obtain patrons' borrowing (and later internet access) records without a warrant and

fought for the principle that freedom to read must not be sacrificed to security.

Copyright

Ratify the Marrakesh Treaty for the print disabled and reject unneeded changes to copyright law in any associated “implementing” legislation. The treaty will afford 4 million print-disabled Americans critical new access to copyrighted material worldwide vital to their education, work, and quality of life. US negotiators have assured that the final text is fully consistent with our law. The treaty thus can and should be ratified promptly, unencumbered by legislation to substantively amend US copyright law that will delay or derail its ratification.

Government information

Pass the bipartisan FOIA Improvement Act of 2015, S. 337, and statutorily ensure public access to unique collections held by the National Technical Information Service (NTIS). It is imperative that a single repository for the unique scientific and technical collections now held by the NTIS be funded so that this information can continue to be preserved and made available to the public.

Telecommunications

Support network neutrality. Preserving an open internet is essential to freedom of speech, educational achievement, and our nation's economic growth. Internet service providers should not be information gatekeepers. ■

For decades, librarians
have defended the
public's privacy rights.

RESOURCES



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CONTRIBUTORS

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 Intellectual Freedom
- Office for Research and Statistics
- Public Awareness Office
- Public Library Association
- Washington Office
- Young Adult Library Services Association

CONTACT INFORMATION

Kathy Rosa, Editor

Director, Office for Research and Statistics

American Library Association

312-280-4273

krosa@ala.org



Kathy Rosa is the director of the ALA Office for Research and Statistics. Rosa draws on many years of experience working in a variety of libraries. She has taught information and technology skills in school and public libraries, as well as library and information science courses for graduate students. One of her current projects is serving as project director for the Digital Inclusion Survey, funded by a National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Reporters should contact:

Macey Morales

Deputy Director, Public Awareness Office

American Library Association

312-280-4393

mmorales@ala.org

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