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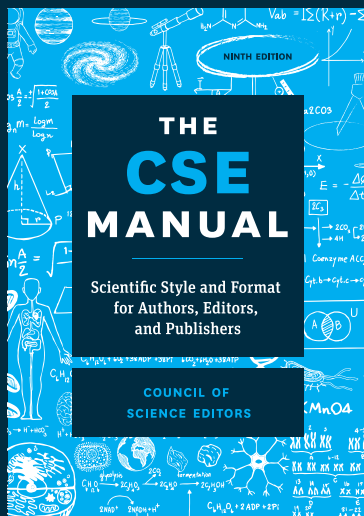
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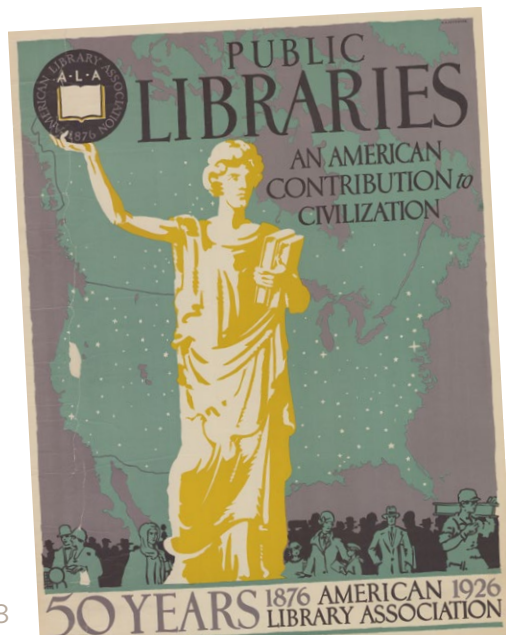
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from the  
**EDITOR**

## A Long Legacy



**Sanhita SinhaRoy**

**H**appy (almost) birthday, ALA! While the Association's founding is technically in October, our team was eager to put on our party hats to celebrate ALA's 150th year. On the cover, illustrator Gaby FeBland reconceptualizes a card from the 1876 library conference in Philadelphia and beautifully blends the profession's past and present.

Inside the issue, you'll find a timeline of key historical events ("55 Moments That Redefined Librarianship," p. 10), as well as an exhibit of library poster art through the decades ("Posters of Progress," p. 18). We extend a special hat tip to Cara Bertram, who oversees the ALA Archives at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, for assisting with our photo research on these two features. Both articles showcase how libraries continue to "reimagine their place in public life" and serve as a mirror of society's aspirations and ideals.

Also finding their place in public life were the trailblazers of ALA. In "A Seat at the Table" (p. 24), Anne Ford and Emily Udell interviewed eight "barrier-busting Association leaders about their struggles, triumphs, breakdowns, and breakthroughs" while serving as president or executive director of ALA.

In our Bookend ("A Library for Librarians," p. 32), we profile the ALA Library and the work of ALA Librarian Colleen Barbus. Read about the queries she gets most often from the public.

Colleen and many of our other colleagues across the Association have been working for months to plan events and activities for this sesquicentennial year. We hope you've had a chance to check out the ALA anniversary website (ala150.org) and the oral history-style podcast episodes on *How I Library*.

And of course, there will be plenty of ALA150 programs and events at the Annual Conference in Chicago this June (including a powerful video narrated by former Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden, which will debut at the Opening General Session). Stay tuned. We hope to see you this summer, where we can all don our party hats to celebrate.

*Sanhita*

Libraries  
continue to  
reimagine their  
place in public  
life and serve  
as a mirror  
of society's  
aspirations  
and ideals.

# ALA at 150

A celebration of knowledge, courage, and community



**Sam Helmick**

Through wars and unrest, through the whirlwind of change, ALA has held fast to a simple truth: Knowledge belongs to all, and all who seek it deserve to find it.

In 1876, the year of our nation's centennial, 103 dreamers gathered in Philadelphia. These librarians and library advocates did not come merely to talk. They came to weave a vision of libraries as lanterns in the night, as havens of thought, as places where minds and hearts could be set free. From that gathering, the American Library Association was born.

Today, we stand at 150 years, a century and a half of voices lifted, stories shared, and doors opened. We celebrate not just survival but triumph. For libraries are not just buildings; they are the pulse of democracy, the heart of community, and the echo of our collective soul. Through wars and unrest, through the whirlwind of change, ALA has held fast to a simple truth: Knowledge belongs to all, and all who seek it deserve to find it.

This year, the celebration belongs to every library, every library worker, and every community we serve. From the smallest town to the grandest urban center, from facilities serving kindergartners to the most advanced researchers, libraries are places of learning, of gathering, of imagination. They are where neighbors meet and students find guidance, where readers of all ages discover worlds both familiar and new. Across the country, through efforts like Libraries Build Business, the Sustainable Libraries Initiative, and Reader. Voter. Ready., libraries continue to grow, adapt, and lift up those who enter their doors. Each library, in its own way, tells the story of our shared values and our collective commitment to knowledge, access, and community.

Yet anniversaries are not only for reflection. They are invitations. The story of libraries has never been written by institutions alone but also by the people who believed enough to act. Librarians who defended the freedom to read. Trustees who spoke up when it mattered. Volunteers who welcomed strangers as neighbors.

So let this moment be more than celebration. Support the colleagues who keep these spaces open to all. Attend a program. Ask a question. Share a story. Register folks for a library card. Mentor someone new to the profession. Lend your voice when libraries need champions.

Across this sesquicentennial year, through gatherings, conversations, and the many ALA150 initiatives, we have the chance to reaffirm what libraries mean to the world. When we show up for libraries, we show up for one another. We show up for the enduring promise that knowledge, curiosity, and community belong to everyone. And in doing so, we help write the next chapter of a 150-year story that is still unfolding.

This anniversary is not just a mirror reflecting the past—it is a window to the future. I imagine the president of ALA in 2076 looking back at us today. Perhaps they will speak of our bravery, our devotion to freedom of thought, and our unwavering belief that every seeker deserves a place at the table of knowledge. Perhaps they will say we met our moment with grace, fire, and the steady hands of professionals who understood that libraries are sacred spaces.

History is not something that happens to us. History is something we write with our choices, our hearts, and our dreams. In this sesquicentennial year, we recommit to the principles that have guided us for 150 years: courage, collaboration, access, and an unyielding faith in the power of stories to change lives.

May those who come after us look back on this moment and know we were keepers of light, nurturers of community, guardians of knowledge. May they see that we, in our time, understood that libraries are the instruments of freedom, the song of democracy, and the heartbeat of humanity itself. **AL**

---

**SAM HELMICK** is community and access services coordinator at Iowa City Public Library.

# Rebirth and Reaffirmation

Shaping the next 150 years of the Association



**Dan Montgomery**

Members have been driving ALA's progress since our founding in Philadelphia in 1876.

While the commemoration of the American Library Association's (ALA) 150th anniversary kicked off in January, ALA staff and member leaders have been building momentum toward its largest in-person celebration, the 2026 Annual Conference and Exhibition in our hometown of Chicago. I feel honored and privileged to be here in this moment as we celebrate this *Magnificent Milestone!* (Did you catch my Chicago pun?)

I invite you to join your colleagues at Annual to observe our past, reflect on our present, and envision our future. Attendees will have the opportunity to gather for the "ALA150: A Celebration for Our Libraries" reception ([bit.ly/ALA150-Celebrate](https://bit.ly/ALA150-Celebrate)) on Saturday evening and immerse themselves in a variety of sessions highlighting key library moments under the ALA150 program track.

Throughout the conference and the remainder of our sesquicentennial year, I hope you will see the milestone as an opportunity for a rebirth and a reaffirmation of the work that you do to connect your community to the world. As I continue my journey at ALA, I am constantly inspired by library workers I have encountered, whether at the Public Library Association 2026 Conference in April or reading about the most recent group of I Love My Librarian Award recipients (whom I look forward to meeting at the award ceremony and reception at Annual!).

Since joining ALA last fall, I have been diving into the Association's history and learning about the people and pivotal moments that shaped ALA and the profession. I hope you take time to read and enjoy the historical timeline in this issue (p. 10), the article featuring some of the ALA trailblazers who have paved the way (p. 24), and the anniversary blog at [ala150.org](http://ala150.org). A special thanks to our staff and members for

their contributions and work in telling so many facets of the Association's story.

Members have been driving ALA's progress since our founding in Philadelphia in 1876. Whether you're a student, longtime member, or a dedicated library advocate who values our mission, I hope you'll consider supporting the Association through the ALA 150th Life Membership ([bit.ly/ALA150-Life](https://bit.ly/ALA150-Life)), which will show your commitment to the steadfast work being done for libraries now and in the years to come. This once-in-a-century opportunity is your chance to support libraries and help write our next chapter.

For 150 years, the American Library Association has supported and advanced the interests of America's libraries and the careers of those who work in them. Whether you renew your membership, step into a leadership position, or participate in ALA events and professional development, your engagement will help shape the next 150 years for our libraries.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address called on America to resolve toward "a new birth of freedom." Thirteen years later, ALA's founders resolved to create this institution we all love, in part to more fully enable the rebirth that Lincoln called for.

Interestingly, in 1876, Walt Whitman, that great singer-poet of the American spirit, revised and republished his monumental collection, *Leaves of Grass*. As Whitman heard "America singing," our ALA was taking shape. Like Whitman and our librarian forebears, let us now, in 2026, "project the history of the future."

In Chicago this summer, in the year of America's 250th birthday, I hope you'll join us as we gather to create a new birth for the Association and its future. **AL**

---

**DAN MONTGOMERY** is executive director of the American Library Association. Reach him at [dmontgomery@ala.org](mailto:dmontgomery@ala.org).

noted & quoted



“THANK YOU. SAY TO THE ASSOCIATION, ‘NOW IS THE TIME FOR ALL GOOD MEN AND TRUE TO COME TO THE AID OF THE PARTY.’”

**Theresa West Elmendorf**, first female president of ALA, in a telegram to Annual Conference upon being elected in 1911. The 19th Amendment to the Constitution, granting women the right to vote in the US, did not become law until 1920.



Highlights

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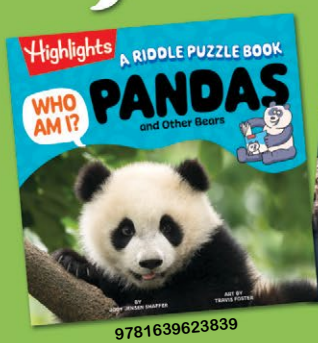
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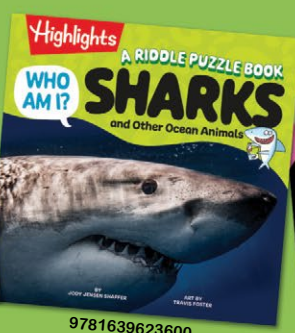
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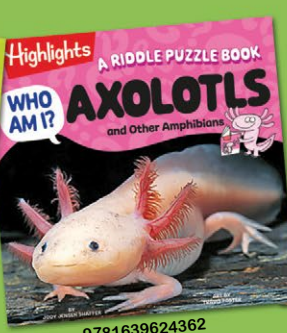
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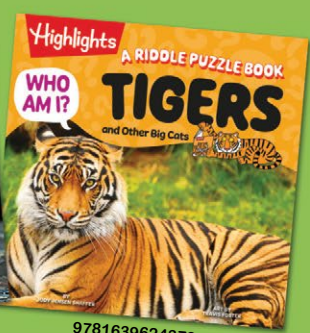
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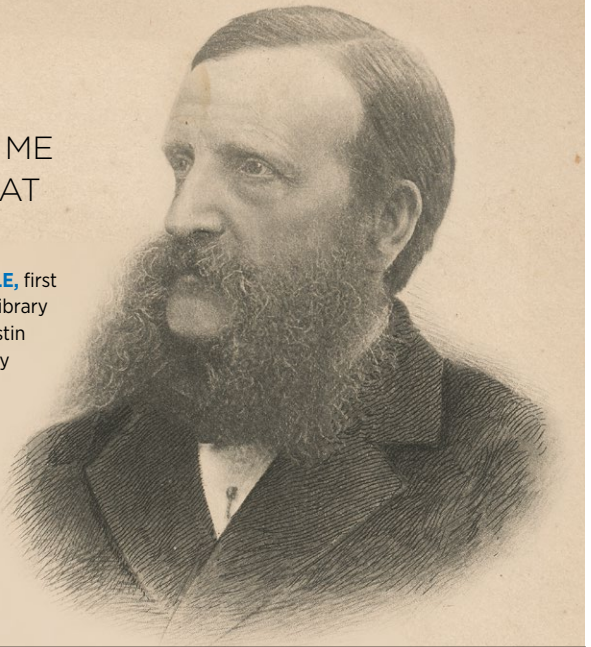
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“Many people couldn’t imagine what gay people looked like, and they couldn’t imagine they would kiss openly in public. One woman said, ‘Why on earth would they get all this publicity when we have all these famous authors here?’ Barbara said, ‘I think she needs a new pair of glasses if she can’t see why we had publicity.’”

**KAY LAHUSEN**, photojournalist and partner of Barbara Gittings (opposite page, left), coordinator of ALA’s Task Force on Gay Liberation, now the Rainbow Round Table (1972–1986), in “The Rainbow’s Arc,” *American Libraries*, June 2020. Gittings kissed author Isabel Miller at the task force’s Hug-a-Homosexual booth at ALA’s 1971 Annual Conference in Dallas.

“IT WON’T PAY FOR YOU AND ME TO ATTEND THAT BARBECUE.”

**WILLIAM FREDERICK POOLE**, first librarian of Chicago Public Library (1873–1887), in a letter to Justin Winsor, Boston Public Library superintendent (1868–1877), about his reluctance to attend Melvil Dewey’s 1876 Convention of Librarians. Poole relented, and both men would later serve as presidents of ALA—Winsor as the first, Poole as the second.



“I went to the desk very confidently and asked for a specific book. I let her know that I had already done the research and I could not get the book at the Black library. We had heard that [we didn’t belong] all our lives. But we felt that we belonged wherever we wanted to be.”

**GERALDINE EDWARDS HOLLIS**, in “The Tougaloo Nine Remembered,” *The Scoop*, June 26, 2017. Hollis was one of the Tougaloo Nine, a group of Black students from Tougaloo (Miss.) College arrested at the all-white Jackson (Miss.) Public Library on March 27, 1961 (see p. 14). She appeared at ALA’s 2017 Annual Conference in Chicago to reflect on this event.

“The stories of our patron saints [like Pura Belpré and the Connecticut Four] are stories of vocational awe. Sacrificing, struggling, and martyrdom are not goals of librarianship. We can be good librarians without doing any of these things.”

**FOBAZI M. ETTARH**, academic librarian and PhD student, in “Why Being Bad Is Good,” *The Scoop*, April 13, 2019. In 2018, Ettarh coined the term vocational awe, often associated with the mission creep librarians face in their careers. She died in 2026.

“Don’t join the book burners. Don’t think you are going to conceal faults by concealing evidence that they ever existed. Don’t be afraid to go in your library and read every book, as long as that document does not offend our own ideas of decency. That should be the only censorship.”

**US PRESIDENT DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER**, in his “Remarks at the Dartmouth College Commencement Exercises” in Hanover, New Hampshire, June 14, 1953. Eisenhower’s words were a rebuke of McCarthy-era censorship.

“MORE AND MORE I REALIZE MY RESPONSIBILITY TO GUARD OUR LIBRARY. IT STANDS AS A SYMBOL OF FREEDOM AND UNDERSTANDING, OF SERVICE TO ALL, A FINE PIECE OF DEMOCRACY.”

**DOROTHY REEDER**, director of the American Library in Paris, in May 1940, just before France fell to Nazi forces in World War II. Americans had been advised to return to the US, but Reeder and her colleagues held their posts, even after German authorities banned books and prohibited Jewish subscribers from entering the building.

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# **THE CAMPAIGN FOR ALA.**

As we celebrate ALA's founding in 1876, we strive to open new pathways for members and ensure libraries and library workers continue our vital community building work for 150 years more.

**For Our Libraries. For 150 Years More, the Campaign for ALA**, is an investment in the long-term value proposition that libraries and library work make a positive difference in the world. Support for the comprehensive campaign will ensure that libraries and the profession receive the resources necessary to flourish and move us from the present to the possible.

We invite our members to contribute. Gifts of any size will be honored and appreciated. You may direct gifts to the programs and initiatives of your choosing or select one of these action areas, aligned with ALA's mission-driven work:

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FREEDOM**

**LITERACY OF  
ALL KINDS**

To learn more about these options and make a gift online, visit [ala150.org/ways-to-give](http://ala150.org/ways-to-give). You are welcome to use the envelope attached as well.

Through the generosity of Steve and Loree Potash, for a limited time your gift, up to \$10,000, will be matched 1:1. The Steve and Loree Potash Family Foundation has committed \$500,000 in matching funds to honor ALA's 150th Anniversary.

Thank you for your consideration!

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# 55

**MOMENTS  
- THAT -**

# Redefined Librarianship

Charting events and movements that changed  
the course of US library history

BY  
Sallyann  
Price

**A** **S THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (ALA)** celebrates 150 years, we're drawing inspiration from key events since its 1876 founding: from the first conventions and library schools, through wartime and the fight for civil rights, to seismic technological advancements and the existential threats of the current moment.

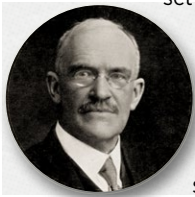
Though not a comprehensive timeline of library history, the milestones collected here demonstrate lasting impact and how libraries and the profession are intertwined with the American story itself—as repositories of memory, arenas of debate, and enduring instruments of democratic life.

---

**SALLYANN PRICE** is a writer and editor in Seattle and a former associate editor of *American Libraries*.

# 1876–1889

On October 4, 1876, a group of **103 librarians and advocates assembled** at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania for a national library conference that would **establish the American Library Association**. The new Association would set up its headquarters in Boston before settling in Chicago in 1909. That initial conference was largely organized by former librarian and entrepreneur Melvil Dewey (left), who used the opportunity to present his **Dewey Decimal Classification**, a system for cataloging library materials. Though Dewey was hailed for his innovations, he was known for—and by 1906, largely shut out from ALA because of—his sexual misconduct, racism, and antisemitism.



In 1889, industrialist, philanthropist, and Scottish immigrant **Andrew Carnegie (right)** opened his first **free public library** in the United States in Braddock, Pennsylvania, intended to serve the workers at his nearby steel mill. Carnegie would go on to use his personal fortune to establish more than 2,500 free public libraries around the world.



As books became more affordable and library collections expanded in the 19th century, printed book catalogs proved increasingly impractical. The card catalog system, credited to Harvard University assistant librarian Ezra Abbot in 1861, allowed individual entries to be added and rearranged. ALA's **standardization of catalog card sizes in 1877** helped the concept to spread; the system would endure for more than a century before library catalogs went digital. OCLC printed its last catalog card in 2015.

When Dewey established the **School of Library Economy at Columbia College** in New York City in 1887, he had to clear a library storeroom to use as an instructional space, as he wasn't permitted to use classrooms for co-ed instruction. The first-of-its-kind program (which relocated to Albany, New York, in 1889 before moving back to Columbia University in 1926) helped formalize librarianship as a trained profession, laying the groundwork for ALA's role in accrediting library education programs. By the 1950s, the MLS/MLIS had emerged as the field's standard credential.

*School of Library Economy, class of 1888*



# 1890–1909

The **Printing Act of 1895** centralized the printing of federal documents under the Government Printing Office and formalized a nationwide system for distributing them to designated libraries via the Federal Depository Library Program.



In 1900, when Mary Kingsbury was appointed to manage the library at Erasmus High School in Brooklyn, New York, she became the **first professionally trained school librarian** to run a school library. Three years later, Mary E. Hall became the second, at Brooklyn's Girls' High School. In 1915, Hall would become the first chairperson of ALA's School Libraries Section, the precursor to the American Association of School Librarians (AASL).

*Storytime at John H. Vohr Elementary School Library in Gary, Indiana (1955)*



The **first US bookmobile** is attributed to Mary Lemist Titcomb, who in 1905 established a horse-drawn book collection in Washington County, Maryland. Bookmobiles gained popularity in the US in the 1930s, peaking at more than 1,100 in the early 1990s, and remain a vital part of library outreach.

*Works Progress Administration bookmobile in North Carolina (1935)*



In the segregated South, Black patrons were limited to the use of separate libraries. The Western branch of Louisville (Ky.) Free Public Library (above), formed in 1908, was the **first public library branch exclusively for Black Americans** and staffed entirely by Black librarians.

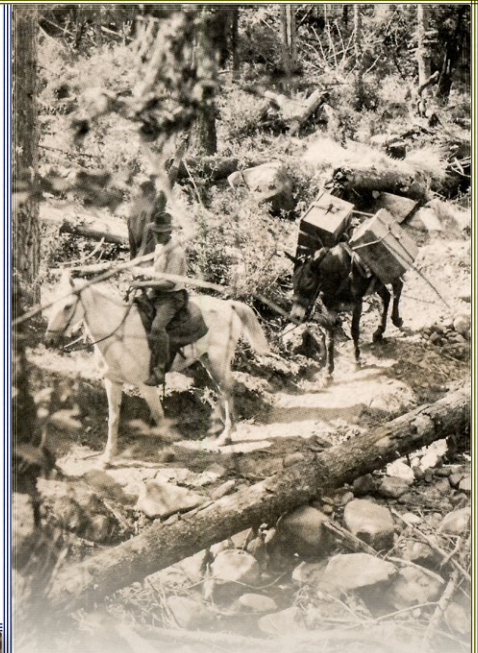
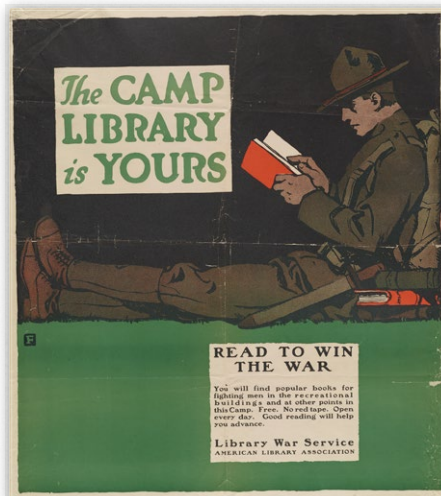


More than **15 million immigrants arrived in the US** between 1900 and 1915, many fleeing social, political, and economic upheaval in Europe. New York Public Library was among the libraries that responded to the moment by stocking extensive foreign-language collections and hiring multilingual staff. But most library services for immigrants at this time were shaped by the era's Americanization movement, which at times coerced English-language acquisition and assimilation in an environment of intense nativism. Library services for new Americans today have evolved to include preparation for citizenship tests, programs on financial and digital literacy, job training, and celebrations honoring multicultural customs.



# 1910–1939

Shortly after the United States entered World War I in 1917, ALA established its **Library War Service**, providing millions of books to US soldiers and sailors at home and abroad and setting up 36 volunteer-staffed libraries at training camps. The program inspired the 1920 founding of the **American Library in Paris**, which remains the largest English-language lending library in continental Europe, even surviving Nazi occupation during World War II to ship books to service-members abroad.



In 1922, ALA awarded the **world's first prize honoring children's books**, the Newbery Medal, to *The Story of Mankind* by Dutch American author Hendrik Willem van Loon. Proposed by publisher Frederic G. Melcher and now administered by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), the annual award has helped legitimize children's books as literature and a field worthy of academic study. Melcher later proposed the **Caldecott Medal** for distinguished picture books, first awarded in 1938.

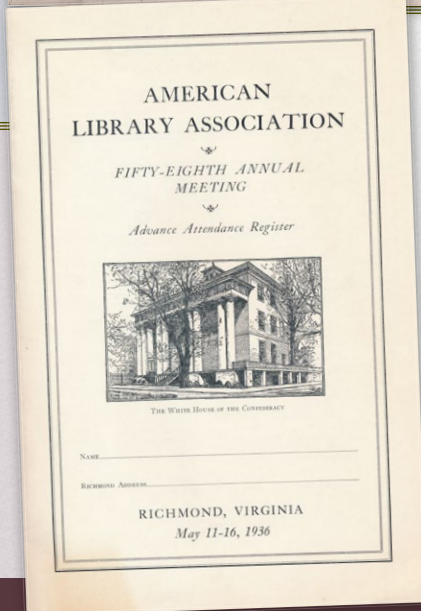


Arthur Bowie Chrisman receives the Newbery Medal for *Shen of the Sea: A Book for Children* (1926).



In 1935, as part of the effort to revive the economy during the Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration partnered with ALA's Library Extension Board, established a decade prior, to **expand service to rural communities** by funding book-mobiles, small community libraries, and the Pack Horse Library Project, which delivered books to remote Appalachian communities via horseback.

The Pratt-Smoot Act of 1931 established what is now the **National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled**, a program administered by the Library of Congress to provide books to vision-impaired readers. It created a system for embossing, distributing, and later recording books for nationwide circulation.

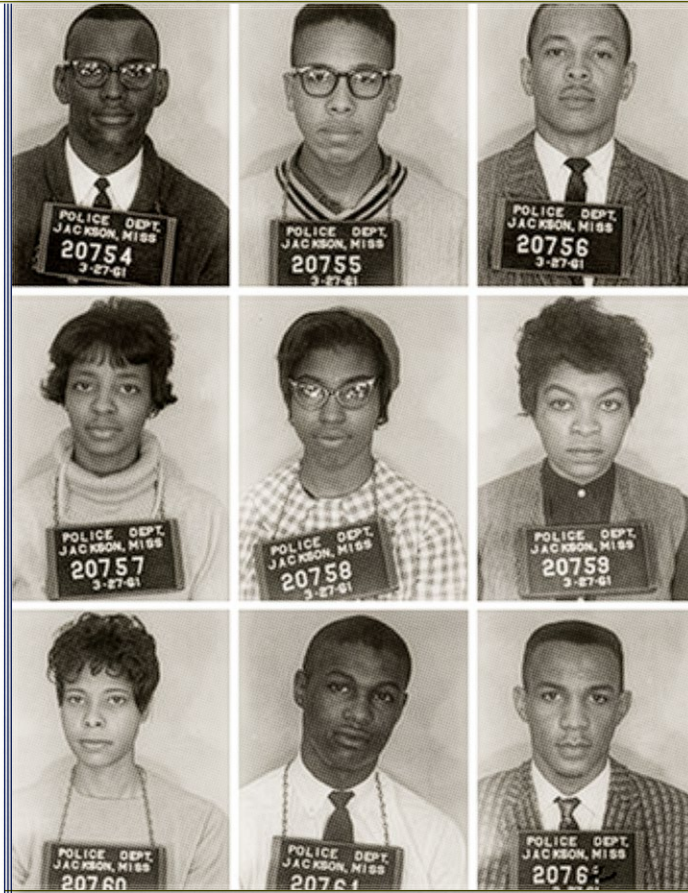


When ALA's 1936 Annual Conference came to Richmond, Virginia, the Association agreed to the state's Jim Crow laws mandating unequal treatment of Black attendees, including exclusion from conference meals, separate seating at meetings, and a requirement that they stay in segregated hotels. Facing mounting criticism, including letters published by librarians in non-ALA publications condemning the segregation, the ALA Executive Board **adopted a nondiscrimination policy at its conferences** later that year. Annual Conference would not return to the South until 1956, at a nonsegregated space in Miami Beach, Florida.

# 1940-1959

In 1940, shortly after ALA Council began allowing for self-governing divisions, the Association of College and Research Libraries was recognized as **ALA's first official division**. Others that followed included the Division of Libraries for Children and Young People (1941), a precursor to ALSC, and the Public Library Association (1944). ALA currently has eight divisions focused on specific areas of librarianship.

Mabel L. Conat, 1942-1943 president of the Association of College and Research Libraries



Amid rising political tensions and censorship pressures in the years leading up to World War II, ALA in 1939 adopted the **Library Bill of Rights**, a statement written by Des Moines (Iowa) Public Library director Forrest Spaulding affirming the principles of intellectual freedom and equitable access in libraries. **A major revision in 1948** strengthened its commitment to intellectual freedom during the Red Scare; later updates have addressed privacy and technology.

## Library Bill of Rights

THE COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION BELIEVES TO BELIEVE IN THE FOLLOWING BASIC PRINCIPLES WHICH SHOULD GOVERN THE SERVICES OF ALL LIBRARIES:

- I. As a responsibility of library service books and other library materials should be chosen for the widest possible diversity of viewpoints, including those of the social, political, or religious views of the authors, and should be made available to all people of the community without regard to race, religion, or national origin.
- II. Librarians should provide books and other materials governing all points of view concerning the problems and issues of our times, and library materials should be preserved and retained from libraries because of their historical importance.
- III. Librarians should be challenged by libraries in the manner and extent of their responsibility to provide public information and enlightenment.
- IV. Librarians should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with the promotion of free expression and free access to ideas.
- V. The right of an individual to the use of a library should not be denied or abridged because of his age, race, religion, national origin or social or political views.
- VI. In the operation of libraries the librarians, by their selection of materials and by their services, should provide the widest possible diversity of viewpoints, including those of the social, political, or religious views of the authors, and should be made available to all people of the community without regard to race, religion, or national origin.

Approved by the Council of the American Library Association, May 2 and 3, 1939

## THE FREEDOM TO READ



A document prepared by the Washington Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council  
May 2 and 3, 1953

“The freedom to read is essential to our democracy.” So opens the **Freedom to Read Statement** composed by ALA and the American Book Publishers Council in 1953 at the height of anti-communist fervor. It held that publishers and librarians have a responsibility to make available the widest possible diversity of viewpoints, including ideas considered unorthodox or unpopular.

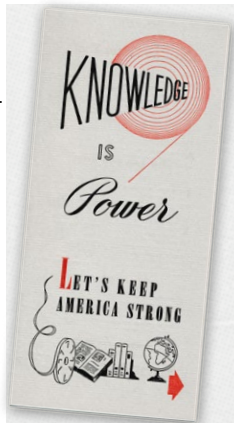
Paul Bixler, secretary of ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee (1952)



ALA Washington Office Director Julia Bennett (inset, right) worked to get the Library Services Act enacted.

The 1956 **Library Services Act** marked the first sustained federal investment in public libraries, providing funds through state agencies. It lives on today as the Library Services and Technology Act and now includes investments in buildings, digital access, technology infrastructure, and information networks.

The theme of the **first National Library Week (NLW) campaign**, in 1958, was “Wake Up and Read,” a response to abysmal reading rates. (A 1955 Gallup poll found that nearly two-thirds of adults had not read a single book in the previous year apart from the Bible.) More than 5,000 communities participated in the first NLW, created in partnership with the American Book Publishers Council. Today, NLW is a robust celebration with days dedicated to advocacy, honoring library workers, and defending the right to read.



Photos: Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Tougaloo Nine)

# 1960–1979

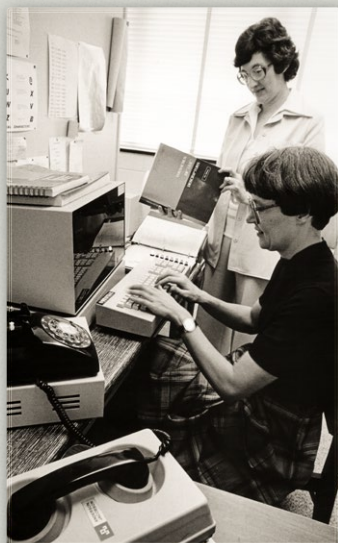
A 1939 protest in the whites-only Alexandria (Va.) Library has been described as one of the first sit-ins in the US and resulted in the arrest of five Black men for disorderly conduct. (The case never went to trial.) As the civil rights movement gained momentum in the 1960s, so too did **nonviolent demonstrations at public libraries** across the Jim Crow South. The arrests of the Greenville Eight (including a young Jesse Jackson) at Greenville County (S.C.) Public Library in July 1960, for example, prompted a federal lawsuit that led the library to integrate two months later. Other significant protests, including the Tougaloo Nine (opposite) sit-in at Jackson (Miss.) Public Library and the St. Helena Four read-in at a branch of Audubon Regional Library in Greensburg, Louisiana, paved the way for desegregation at libraries across the South. These events also

inspired ALA policy shifts: In 1964, Black librarian and future ALA president **E. J. Josey (left) advanced a resolution** to bar Southern state library chapters from the Association if they didn't admit Black librarians.



In 1968, Library of Congress analyst Henriette Avram **developed Machine Readable Cataloging (MARC)**, a standardized format that allowed bibliographic records to be encoded in computer-readable fields. Computing became more ingrained in library practices in 1972, when Stanford University's BALLOTS became the earliest successful **implementation of an integrated library system**. By the late 1970s and 1980s, libraries began replacing card catalogs with searchable computer catalogs, transforming how users discover materials. Along with these formats came a new standard for cataloging, the **Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR)**, first published in 1967. The standard saw a new edition in 1978, AACR2, and subsequent revisions. These were succeeded in 2010 by **Resource Description and Access**, which adapted bibliographic description for digital environments.

*Karen Dowling (front) and Judy Kirsch (back) conduct a computer search.*



ALA's **Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF)** was **established** in 1967 as an answer to Cold War-era censorship efforts. Under the leadership of founder Judith Krug (above, left), OIF became the profession's central clearinghouse for materials challenges and First Amendment advocacy. Krug founded the **Freedom to Read Foundation** in 1969 as a separate non-profit dedicated to litigation and public education. The following year, ALA established the **Merritt Humanitarian Fund** to support librarians who lose employment or face discrimination because of their defense of intellectual freedom or civil rights.



In the late 1960s, against the backdrop of an unpopular war abroad and converging social movements at home, politically engaged librarians **formed round tables, task forces, and identity-based affiliates as spaces for advocacy**. ALA's Social Responsibilities Round Table was formed in 1969, followed by several other groups, including the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (1970); the Task Force on Gay Liberation (1970), now the Rainbow Round Table; Reforma (1971); the Chinese American Librarians Association (1973); and the American Indian Library Association (1979).

*Members of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (1977)*

# 1980–1999

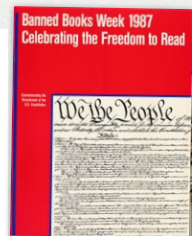
In 1971, college student Michael S. Hart typed up and shared the Declaration of Independence—the first digital document in what would become **Project Gutenberg**. The volunteer-driven effort to digitize and freely distribute public domain texts is now an online library of more than 75,000 ebooks. Large-scale digitization efforts accelerated with the 2004 launch of the **Google Books Library Project** (now Google Books), which partnered with major research libraries and by 2019 had scanned more than 40 million volumes.



ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee in 1977 produced **The Speaker**, a 42-minute film about a high school's decision to host a professor advocating a theory of Black genetic inferiority, meant to address "toleration of ideas we find offensive." It drew both condemnation and praise during 45 minutes of heated discussion after its premiere at ALA's 1977 Annual Conference. "The Speaker has fractured friendships and professional relationships since that day in Detroit," wrote Barbara M. Jones, former director of OIF, in a 2014 article in *American Libraries*. The controversy reflects enduring tensions within the profession over the defense of free expression, concerns about social justice and platforming, and questions of whether libraries can truly be neutral.

Clara Stanton Jones, 1976–1977 ALA president, addresses Council about *The Speaker* in 1978.

In the 1980s, coordinated book removals were fueled in part by Satanic Panic, or concern among conservative activists about titles dealing with witchcraft, the occult, sexuality, and other broadly defined "anti-family" themes. In response, ALA and the American Booksellers Association in 1982 launched the **first Banned Books Week**, which takes place every fall. That same year, the US Supreme Court handed down a foundational legal precedent on censorship with its decision in **Island Trees School District v. Pico (1982)**, which ruled that public school officials cannot remove books from school libraries simply because of their content.



Fewer than 1% of people in the US were regularly using the internet in 1990; that figure ballooned to nearly 50% by 2001, according to the International Telecommunications Union. **Personal computers became standard fixtures** in homes, schools, offices, and libraries, and with the **advent of Google** in 1998, search engines replaced card catalogs as information-seekers' default tool.



Much of the modern federal infrastructure supporting libraries was erected in 1996: The Museum and Library Services Act established the **Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)** as the primary federal public funding source for libraries, and the Telecommunications Act authorized the **E-Rate program**, providing discounts on internet service and equipment to schools and libraries.

The **first Library Card Sign-Up Month** in 1987 came at the suggestion of then-Secretary of Education William Bennett. Teaming up with the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, ALA kicked off the first campaign with a youth-focused event on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., complete with storytimes and pizza. It's now celebrated every September with new themes and honorary chairs.



ALA established its **Spectrum Scholarships** in 1997. First awarded in 1998, the scholarships support students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups pursuing ALA-accredited master's coursework. The program provides funding and opportunities for community-building and professional development. By 2025, ALA had awarded more than 1,600 scholarships.

# 2000–2026

In the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, **Congress swiftly passed the Patriot Act (2001)** to expand federal surveillance powers, which included authorizing searches of library circulation and internet records and barring libraries from disclosing those searches. ALA Council passed multiple resolutions opposing these policies in the following years. In 2005, a group of librarians known as the **Connecticut Four**, along with the ACLU, challenged a National Security Letter demanding patron data in a case that gained national attention. (Patriot Act provisions on library surveillance expired in 2015.)

**The Marrakesh Treaty**, first adopted in 2013 by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and implemented in the US in 2018, created international copyright exceptions to allow for the production and sharing of accessible books for people who are blind or print disabled. The law opened the door for WIPO's Accessible Books Consortium and Global Book Service, whose catalog has grown to include 1 million accessible titles in more than 80 languages.



When **Hurricane Katrina** struck the Gulf Coast in 2005, destroying millions of library materials and forcing more than one-third of Louisiana's libraries to close, workers quickly pivoted toward recovery. Facilities that reopened offered internet access for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) claims and distributed aid information. In 2010, FEMA designated libraries as essential temporary relocation facilities, a recognition of the role that libraries played in keeping communities intact during the disaster. Less than a year after Katrina, ALA became the **first national group to return to New Orleans** and its reopened convention center, with nearly 17,000 attendees at Annual. More than 1,000 of them volunteered (above) to help rebuild homes and libraries.

As research—some dating as far back as 1990—increasingly showed that library fines disproportionately block low-income patrons from services, advocates started questioning their efficacy. The success of prominent fine-amnesty campaigns in the 2010s opened the door for **many libraries to implement fine-free policies**. ALA Council passed a 2019 resolution calling fines “a form of social inequity” and urging libraries to explore alternatives. Major systems to eliminate overdue fines include Chicago Public Library, Indianapolis Public Library, and San Diego Public Library.

In 2020, when the **COVID-19 pandemic shuttered libraries**, staffers turned parking lots into drive-in storytime venues, created 24/7 Wi-Fi hubs, and hosted vaccine clinics. They used 3D printers in makerspaces to produce face shields, and school librarians supported the shift to remote learning. Many pivots that began as emergency measures hardened into lasting shifts toward digital access and disaster-resilient services.

The 2022 **launch of ChatGPT** forced libraries to confront urgent questions about generative artificial intelligence (AI): how to stanch the flow of unlabeled AI content in collections, teach information literacy in the age of deepfakes, and preserve authorship and privacy. The Authors Guild and *The New York Times* each sued OpenAI and Microsoft in 2023 claiming unauthorized use of copyrighted materials to train AI systems, two of several pending cases with implications for library collections. Meanwhile, institutions are experimenting with AI-driven programs and services and educating students and patrons on how to use the tools responsibly.

The early 2020s saw a **dramatic increase in organized censorship efforts** nationwide, particularly targeting materials by and about those who are LGBTQ+, Black, Indigenous, and people of color. State libraries in four states cut ties with ALA in 2023 over culture-war issues, with some citing the Association's stance on book bans targeting “sexually inappropriate materials” (a term often used to target materials about the human body, puberty, or LGBTQ+ identities).

The **second Trump administration** in 2025 launched attacks on libraries and public information, including firing Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden; attempting to dismantle IMLS; proposing cuts to E-Rate funding; and eliminating diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in federal institutions. Library supporters have celebrated partial wins in the courts, and ALA's advocacy campaigns have mobilized communities to Unite Against Book Bans and Show Up for Libraries. **AL**







# 1917–1919

## World War I and Library War Service

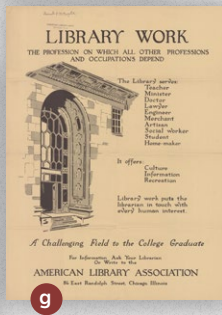
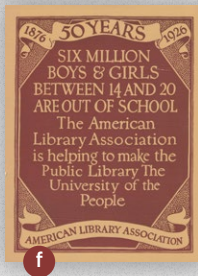
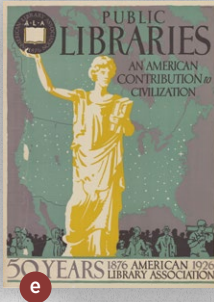


- a. Knowledge Wins (1918)
- b. Books Wanted (1918)
- c. "Hey Fellows!" (1918)



# 1920–1939

ALA's 50th anniversary and early promotional posters



- d. Hospital Library Service (1925)
- e. Public Libraries: An American Contribution to Civilization (1926)
- f. 50 Years: The University of the People (1926)
- g. Library Work: The Profession on Which All Other Professions Depend (1925)
- h. Develop the Power That Is within You (1921)

# Famous READers through the Years



# 1940–1959

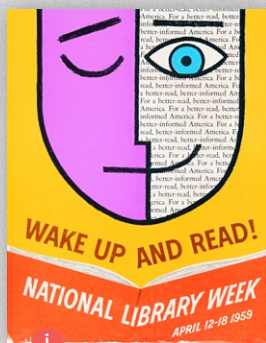
## World War II and tools for democracy



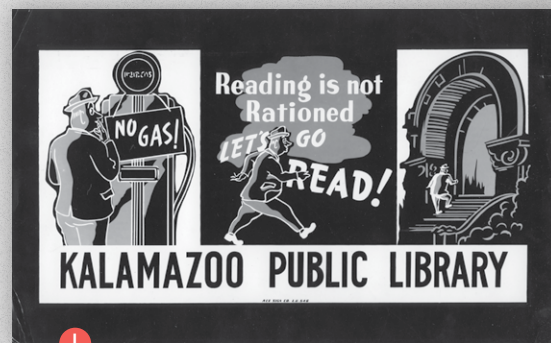
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l

- i. Give More Books, Give Good Books: Victory Book Campaign (1943)
- j. Wake Up and Read! (1959)
- k. Books Are Weapons in the War of Ideas (1942)
- l. Reading Is Not Rationed (1943)



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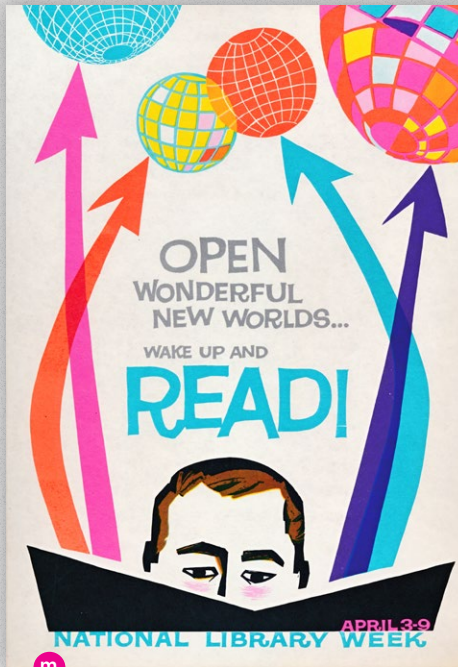


8

- 1. Mickey Mouse (1978)
- 2. Miss Piggy (1980)
- 3. David Bowie (1986)
- 4. Indigo Girls (2002)
- 5. Yo-Yo Ma (2001)
- 6. LeVar Burton (2002)
- 7. Dolly Parton (2023)
- 8. Meg Medina (2023)

# 1960–1989

Literacy campaigns, banned books, community engagement

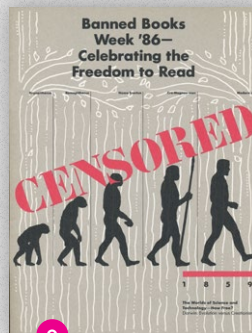


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- m. Open Wonderful New Worlds: Wake Up and Read! (1967)
- n. Read: The Fifth Freedom ... Enjoy It! (1963)
- o. Banned Books Week (1986)
- p. Explore Inner Space: Read (1967)
- q. Get a Head Start (1985)
- r. Be All You Can Be. Read. (1968)
- s. Reading Is for Everybody (1970)



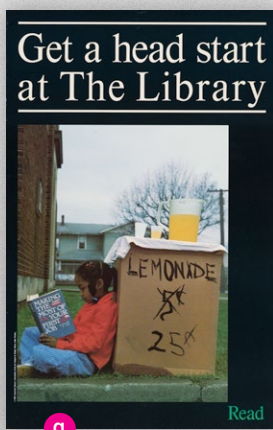
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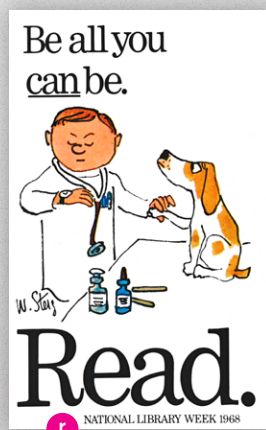
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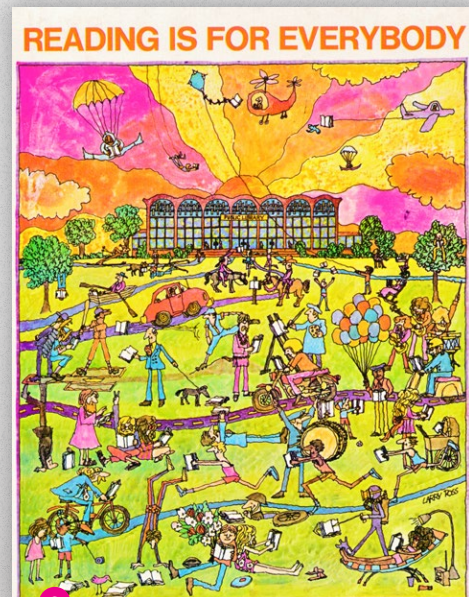
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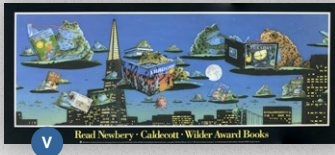
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s

# 1990–Present

The modern era



- t. Censorship Is So 1984 (2025)
- u. Join Shaq's Team (1994)
- v. Read Newbery-Caldecott-Wilder Award Books (1992)
- w. Open Your Mind to a Banned Book (2003)

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# A Seat Table

## AT THE

Reflections  
from  
eight ALA  
trailblazers

BY Anne Ford

**F**or 150 years, the American Library Association (ALA) has shaped the landscape of libraries and the profession itself—but its leadership has often reflected the racial and gender biases of society at large. For this special anniversary issue, *American Libraries* spoke with eight barrier-busting Association leaders about their struggles, triumphs, breakdowns, and breakthroughs. The stories and lessons they share reveal how diversity fuels and transforms the power of libraries everywhere. **AL**

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**ANNE FORD** is a former *American Libraries* editor-at-large. Freelance writer **EMILY UDELL** provided additional reporting.

**I**N VIRTUALLY ALL MY PROFESSIONAL positions, I was the only Black person. I never had problems as a result, because almost everybody accepted that I had to be exceptional in order to be in the position I was in. Earlier, as an undergraduate in the mid-1950s, I had been a basketball player, and often I was the only Black player on the floor. I had the ability to shut out cheers and jeers.

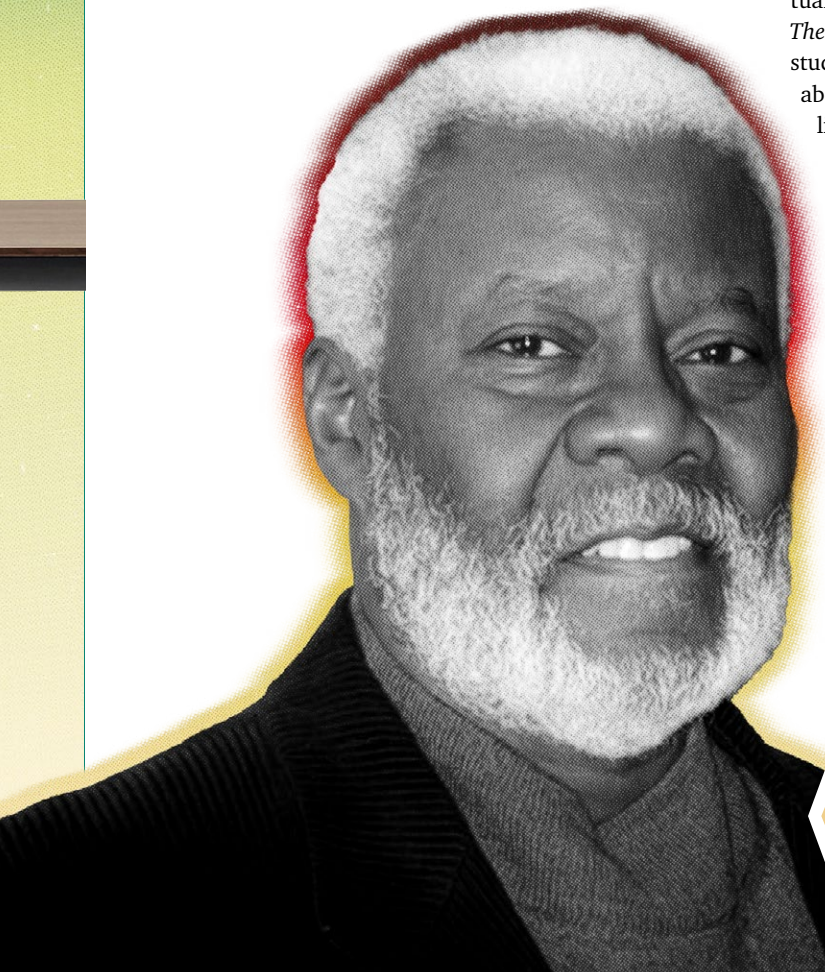
The first year I was at ALA was the year that the Nixon administration decided it would no longer have federal funds for libraries. We had a very astute director of our legislative office, and she said, "If you can't get Congress to see the light, you have to make them feel the heat." We started a grassroots campaign called "Dimming the Lights on the Public's Right to Know." We got libraries across the country to dim the lights at noon during National Library Week and explain to patrons what was going on. The congressional staffers said that they got more letters about that than they had had on anything prior. And Congress reversed the administration's recommendations to zero out the library funds.

**“Almost everybody accepted that I had to be exceptional in order to be in the position I was in.”**

Now, there had been a longstanding tradition that ALA didn't get involved in social issues. The younger librarians in my generation didn't accept that, because we were right in the middle of the Vietnam War. We had tremendous problems with poverty. We had tremendous problems with race and gender.

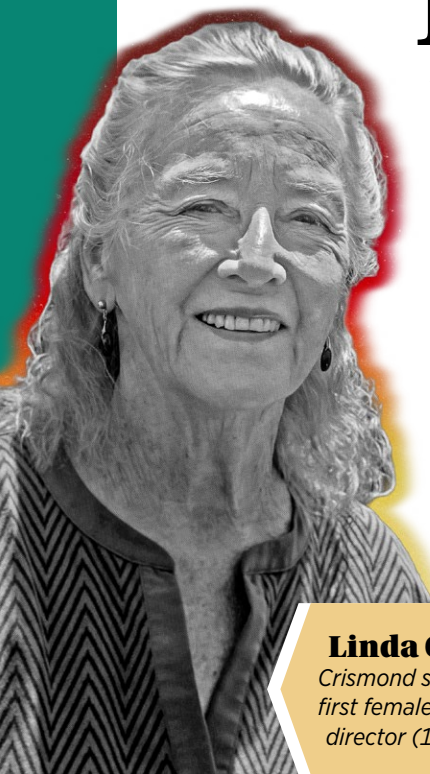
It came to a head in 1977, when [ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee] produced a film called *The Speaker* ([bit.ly/AL-Speaker](http://bit.ly/AL-Speaker)) about a high-school student group that wants to invite a speaker to talk about the inferiority of other races. The film pitted librarians against librarians. It became so fierce that Dan Rather came to the Council meeting at which they were discussing whether ALA would allow the film to be released. They did agree to allow the film to be released, but there was still very strong feelings within the membership as to whether it was appropriate.

When I became executive director, there were very few female directors of major public libraries. That changed within a period of about five years, in part because of the pressure that the membership put on these institutions. Female librarians have assumed leadership roles in unprecedented numbers over the years. Minority librarians have advanced in almost every sphere of our field. So I think that we've done very well. ●



**Robert Wedgeworth**

*Wedgeworth served as ALA's first Black executive director (1972-1985).*



**I** WENT TO ALA SAYING THAT I came as a candidate who was not active in the ALA structure, so I didn't have a bias of who were my favorites and who were not. I said, "You need to hire a woman. Because in our woman-dominated profession, it's kind of sad that we've never been represented by a woman at the top of ALA."

One of my idols was Robert Wedgeworth. I remember meeting with him at the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions conference in 1991 in Moscow [during the August Coup, which accelerated the Soviet Union's collapse]. I was having lunch with Bob in the hotel when we heard this rumbling coming down the street, and it was tanks rolling into Moscow.

The organizers of IFLA had planned a farewell reception on the top floor of the Kremlin. So we all went to the Kremlin and celebrated, and the Russian librarians were doing a conga line. I remember

**Linda Crismond**  
Crismond served as ALA's first female executive director (1989-1992).

**“ In our woman-dominated profession, it's sad we've never been represented.”**

the bottles of vodka and orange Fanta down the center of the table.

I got along wonderfully with the ALA staff. I embarked upon a plan to visit every state library association, all the affiliates of ALA. I think I had accomplished 15 or so different states before I left.

I went on to work in the book business. Now I am completely retired. I'm the leader of the book club at the Tarpon Springs (Fla.) Public Library, which I enjoy. You want to know what our current book is? *Lula Dean's Little Library of Banned Books* by Kirsten Miller. Nothing has ever turned me off from being a librarian. ●



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**“ We had to find a way to be viable, but we had to find a way to stay alive.”**

**Tracie D. Hall**

*Hall led the Association through the COVID-19 pandemic as its first Black female executive director (2020–2023).*

**W**HEN COVID FIRST APPEARED, THERE was this idea that libraries would stay open as an essential service. But when we realized it was a pandemic, we knew that if we were going to serve our communities, we had to keep librarians and library workers healthy. We had to find a way to be viable, but we had to find a way to stay alive.

I was learning how to lead during a pandemic. Every day brought some major issue, and if you tripped up over any of those issues, that could decide your fate. During that time, I would dream about the Association. I hope that I'll never have a leadership moment like that again.

The decision that the board and Council made to recommend that libraries close their doors, it took a lot. But that was absolutely the right thing to do. Nobody just went home and turned off the lights, right? We

truly moved our services into the digital age, and the pandemic was the prompt for that.

My ALA leadership was symbolic for so many people. To hear from folks that even some part of it inspired them has been some of the most meaningful feedback I've gotten. I've had a few of the children of my friends say that they want to go to library school, and some are there now. I've gotten emails and social media messages from people saying, "I wanted to let you know I just got my MLIS, and you inspired me."

I think that we still have a lot of work to do in terms of public perception of what librarians look like. I was walking with some librarians, and one of them said, "I just want to thank you for your enthusiasm for libraries, even though you're not a librarian." I laughed, and I said, "Why would you think I wasn't a librarian?" They stopped, and they said, "Oh my goodness, I really apologize." ●



**“Everybody needs to see themselves and be acknowledged. Because everybody counts.”**

**Patricia “Patty” M. Wong**

*Wong served as ALA’s first Asian American president (2021–2022).*

internet access? What can we do to make sure that every child has opportunities to do their homework at night?” Little by little, she created policy. The E-Rate for American Indian tribal libraries—that came from us. I’m very proud.

What’s amazing is that we have people who are winning the Newbery and the Caldecott—and not just in the honor category—who are people of color, who are talking about people-of-color everyday things. And that is where we want to be.

Back in the Sixties and Seventies, I really didn’t see anything that reflected who I looked like as a Chinese American. What I did see, though, were a lot of caricatures and stereotypes and things that evoked a Western interpretation of a folk tale.

But one of the children’s librarians at my San Francisco public library was a world traveler, and she knew that my sister and I were two of the few kids of color in the neighborhood. So she did her best to bring artifacts and picture books from China, from Russia, wherever she traveled, and shared them with my sister and me. Everybody needs to see themselves and be acknowledged. Because everybody counts. Everybody’s welcome. Every door is a right door. ●

**B**EING PRESIDENT OF ALA KIND OF KNOCKED ME over. I should have done it when I was younger, because it takes a lot out of you. Because of the anti-Asian sentiment that erupted during COVID, it was personally very difficult. No one within the ALA hemisphere was disrespectful at all. But I’ve had people spit on me, telling me to “go back,” et cetera. It takes a lot of physical and mental strength in order to do your best by the community.

In my tenure, services to American Indian library communities were not as robust as they should have been. There was still this economic and technological divide. Because I gained a little bit of attention being the first Asian American president of ALA, then–Federal Communications Commission Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel asked to talk to me. So I had her at my disposal to ask questions like, “What can we do about our American Indian communities that don’t have any

**I** DECIDED TO RUN FOR OFFICE JUST AFTER the pandemic started. I was back in my office, but no one else in my library had returned yet because we were still navigating a pre-vaccine era. I wanted our professional association to be bolder and stronger about what library workers were facing at the time. The drama about me is I’m a Marxist lesbian, so I assumed I wouldn’t get selected as a candidate, and I definitely didn’t think I would win.

I’m not the first queer president of ALA. There was one person who was out to only a small number of people, and another who was out to only her friends and immediate community. To have someone at the top of the profession say “I’m a lesbian” meant a lot to some people.

There is something distinctive about being the first openly queer person in a public role. I got all that shit for being a Marxist, but it’s really all about the hatred of queer people.

Becoming a target for the right, people will sometimes blame you, so I struggled against that a lot, both inside the Association and out. I remember being in a meeting with a state chapter president, and he was screaming at me to quit, because I was the reason things were bad in his state. That kind of stuff.

**Emily Drabinski**

*Drabinski served as ALA’s first self-identified queer president (2023–2024).*



**I** HAVE TO TELL YOU, I WAS VERY PROUD OF holding the title [of first Latino/a ALA president]. And I have to thank Reforma, because that's where I was able to step into leadership positions that helped prepare me for the presidency and exposed me to others so that they could experience my leadership abilities.

I liked the idea of training people to be library advocates—people who are working at circulation desks, the reference desk, and places like that, who know so much about how libraries operate. I wanted them to be prepared to advocate for libraries anytime and anywhere. Who better than the front-line folks? The directors are, quite frankly, always in meetings.

Front-line staff don't have the same experience as library deans and directors do, but they sure do have the exposure to all the users who come in every day. It just made sense to me that if we could get them to a comfort level where they could speak about their library in very passionate terms, that's hundreds more people who could do that than just the head of the library. I get excited thinking about it all over again.

We need to get more Latinos in master's programs to be able to work in academic libraries and public libraries, and to some extent, school libraries. And one way to do that is to help them finance their education. A lot of these MLIS programs are at private institutions, so you're looking at private tuition. A lot of library staffers are Latinos, particularly in public libraries. The pool's there. We just have to find the resources to get them qualified.

We didn't have problems with censorship when I became ALA president. In the political climate that we're in now, we

**“ I wanted [front-line staff] to be prepared to advocate for libraries anytime and anywhere. The directors are, quite frankly, always in meetings.”**

have to be on our toes all the time, you know? If you're in a very conservative community, you need to understand that there could be challenges to the material that you purchased, challenges to the programs you might want to offer, and that's when libraries have to be the strongest. We have a chance to take a deep breath here and there, but not for very long. ●

**Camila Alire**

*Alire served as ALA's first Latino/a president (2009–2010).*



**“ I think the answer is for us to be as organized as our enemies are.”**

Legislation in multiple states that addressed me, in some cases, by name. I had a meeting one evening with a group of librarians and library supporters who were afraid to even talk to me. That's a lot, right?

When you're in a public position, your feelings about that—your experience—have to be in

the background. I think I did a lot of good stuff, and I kept sticking with it, even though many people would probably tell you now that the big mistake I made was sticking with it.

It's not enough to be right. You also have to be organized, and you have to build power that's bigger than theirs. And I believe ALA is one of those engines—that's why I ran. I think the answer is for us to be as organized as our enemies are.

On my “Road to Annual” library tour, I intentionally traveled to places where ALA and I as a person are not always embraced. It affirmed the distance between the social media-driven drama and what's actually happening on the ground: No matter what people believe politically, the library is something that unites them. ●

Photo: James Nublie (Drabinski)



**I** MADE MY NAME AS THE FIRST Chicano librarian, but I'm actually Native American. When I went to the University of California, Los Angeles, as an undergraduate, I met a librarian who was giving a course in the English department. I watched this very formidable, tall woman tell Germanic stories, Scandinavian stories. I was so impressed by her and her storytelling, but what struck me was that there weren't any sto-

**“ This was when Native books were cataloged with the dinosaurs.”**

ries about my people. I thought, “Maybe that’s something I could do,” and I decided to go to library school. This was when Native books were cataloged with the dinosaurs, you know?

My first job was with Los Angeles County, and I was fortunate enough to be placed with six librarians to work in Black and Latino communities. They were a very multicultural group of women who came from all walks of life. Today, most librarians don’t have that diverse multicultural mentorship. Now there’s enough of us in all these different ethnic and cultural racial groups that we tend to be with each other. But this group mentored me, and I’ll always be grateful. I learned so much from them, their stories, their histories, and that’s how I started developing as a Chicano librarian.

I’ve been trying to change the face of librarians as a profession for 50 years. One of the things that we accomplished with the Spectrum Scholarship Program is that it brought other perspectives in. People come up to me and say, “Thank you.” I’m looking at them ’cause I don’t know who they are, and then they tell me, “I’m a Spectrum Scholar.” They’re proud of themselves, and that makes me feel good.

I have to be optimistic [about the future of libraries]. I’m not willing to toss away all the good work people have done. My grandmother told me, “Good is better than evil. It always wins. Take your time.” We have to leave our footprints. Otherwise, we weren’t there.

The people I met and the places I got to experience made my three years at ALA pretty good. When I went to Florence, I went to the library Michaelangelo designed, and the librarian said, “We know who you are, and we have something here that we think you would like to see.” They brought out this big, big book. It was leather and metal and it had a lock and a key, and she opened it, and inside was an encyclopedia of the Mayans. She said, “These are your people.” ●

**Elizabeth Martínez**

*Martínez cofounded Reforma in 1971 and went on to serve as ALA’s first Mexican American executive director (1994–1997).*



“ Indigenous people have experienced generations of oppression, and our trust in the federal government was broken a long time ago.”



**Cindy Hohl**

*Hohl served as ALA's first Spectrum Scholar president and second Indigenous president (2024–2025).*

**I** WAS RECRUITED INTO LIBRARIANSHIP by my husband, who is a second-generation librarian. I applied to the Spectrum Scholarship Program, which has become my home base within ALA. When I became the first Spectrum Scholar elected as ALA president, that was very meaningful.

I believe leadership is a selfless service. When we elect leaders who do not fit that bill, we must hold them accountable and do our best to make sure no one's left behind.

As an Indigenous woman, I'm never bewildered by American politics because Indigenous people have experienced generations of oppression, and our trust in the federal government was broken a long time ago. We have seen similar behaviors to what we're experiencing right now. Racism has been the American standard since the first contact with Indigenous people. Little has changed when people still lose their rights to their bodies, their identity, and their freedom.

As ALA president, I strove to represent the best of us all with humility, grace, and fortitude. During my term, I used my platform to remind us

of our humanity and that we're in this together. I stood up against the face of absolute ignorance and destruction. I was told that no other president endured such relentless attacks on the field and the profession, with attempted censorship, political attacks, and adverse legislation. But you can't predict the environment that you'll serve in.

I carry the strength of my ancestors with me, no matter where I go. I was raised to believe that we're all related. We say "mitákuye oyás'in" in Dakota, which means "all my relatives." That helps us center ourselves as human beings. I was also raised to protect the vulnerable and to speak out against injustice. That warrior spirit is within me.

On my "We All Belong" library tour during my presidency, I learned what I already knew: That librarians are some of the best people among us. I also saw that literacy in all forms should never be negotiable, because it's a necessity for people, enabling them to live their best lives. I believe in the power of working together as helpers of society for the public good. That's what librarianship is. ●



## A Library for Librarians

Like many American Library Association (ALA) staffers, librarian and archivist Colleen Barbus remembers the Association's previous headquarters—especially the tendency of new employees to eventually “stumble across the ALA Library and say, ‘Oh, I didn’t even know this was here,’” she says. “The stacks led you into a couple of little rabbit warrens.”

The rabbit-warren days are over. Since ALA headquarters moved in 2020 to its present location at Chicago's 225 North Michigan Avenue, Barbus has presided over a completely reimagined in-house library. Visitors step off the elevator to find a large, open, bright area that's home to not only the office's main reception desk but also row upon row of low book-filled shelves, “kind of elementary-school style,” Barbus says. “That way, you see all across the space.”

Focused on the history of libraries and librarianship, as well as mission-critical topics such as intellectual freedom, the collection includes many early editions of books that have won the Newbery Medal, the Caldecott Medal, and other prestigious ALA awards, going back to the very first



Newbery winner in 1922, *The Story of Mankind* by Hendrik Willem van Loon.

When she's not aiding ALA staffers and members with materials requests, Barbus fields questions from the public, from “How do I get my book on library shelves?” to “How do I become a librarian?” One favorite recent query: “How many Carnegie library buildings are still in operation as libraries in the US?” (Answer: about 750.)

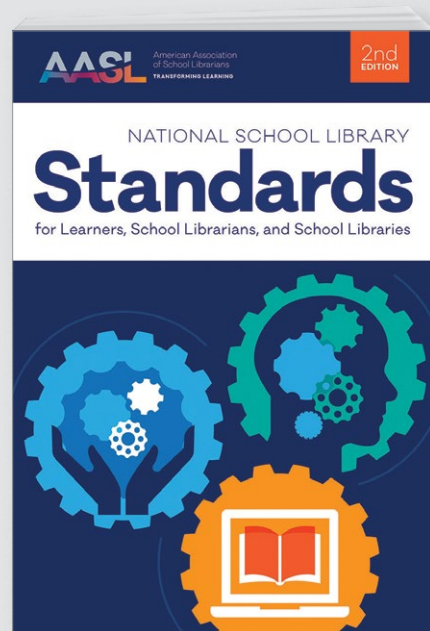
Her only trouble, Barbus says, is keeping herself from over-researching a question just because it's interesting: “Stick to the assignment!” **AL**

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