

# THE AMERICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION: PROMOTING INFORMATION POWER AND EQUAL ACCESS

**SUSAN ARAMAYO**

It is a great pleasure to be here with you again today, and particularly to have had the opportunity of listening to my dear friend Jane. As she kindly mentioned in her remarks, we have shared our love of this profession for quite some time.

I fondly remember the last time I was here with many of you, in this same auditorium. When Mary Tseroni and Vassilis Tsiboukis and I first began to consider what I should speak about today we thought it would be useful to have a discussion of the role and status of librarians ... a topic I love to talk about. There are many approaches to this subject. One possibility would have been to review the Special Library Association's "Competencies for Information Professionals for the 21st Century", something we talked about when I was here last. This time, however, we decided that I should concentrate on what the American Library Association is focusing on, and you'll see that much of it has to do with advocacy. The current president of ALA was in Italy this past spring and I had ample opportunity to discuss his program with him. I thought you might be interested in how he sees the Association's responsibilities.

Just a bit of background about ALA. It's the oldest and largest library association in the world, founded in 1876, with a current membership of almost 64,000. The Association includes all types of libraries:

State, public, school and academic libraries

Special libraries serving persons in

government,

commerce and industry,

the arts,

the armed services,

hospitals,

prisons and other institutions

Members include libraries, librarians, library trustees from the United States, Canada and 115 other countries

To give you some idea of the diversity of interests, ALA serves as the umbrella association for a number of divisions:

## **Public Library Association**

American Association of School Libraries

Association of College and Research Libraries

Association for Library Service to Children

Young Adult Library Services Association

Association for Library Trustees and Advocates

*Library Administration and Management Association*

Association for Library Collections & Technical Services

Library and Information Technology Association

Reference and User Services Association

The Association also has a number of offices, listed on this slide. This gives you an idea of the wide range of ALA interests. The ALA Washington Office is ALA's lobbying



arm. The Washington Office monitors and analyzes proposed legislation affecting libraries and information. It promotes the best interests of libraries, library users, and the public at large in a broad and complex range of legislative, regulatory and public-policy issues.

One example of the activities of this office is their sponsorship of Library Legislative Day when hundreds of librarians and library supporters from all over the United States come to Washington D.C. They are briefed on current legislative issues and then spend the next day visiting their congressmen and senators to talk with them about the crucial importance of libraries.

ALA is committed to focusing its energy and resources in five key action areas:

Diversity - commitment to recruiting people of color and people with disabilities to the profession and to the promotion and development of library collections and services for all people.

Education and Continuous Learning - opportunities for the professional development and education of librarians, library staff, and trustees.

Equity of Access - advocates funding and policies that support libraries serving people of all ages, income level, location, or ethnicity, and providing the full range of information resources needed to live, learn, govern, and work.

Intellectual Freedom - Intellectual freedom is a basic right in a democratic society and a core value of the library profession. The American Library Association actively defends the right of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

21st Century Literacy - Assists and promotes libraries in helping children and adults develop the skills they need, whether the ability to read or use computers. Three percent of the U.S. adult population is considered illiterate - 8,400,000 people.

These action areas are further confirmed in the Library Bill of Rights, included in your infor-

mation packet, which was adopted by the American Library Association in 1948. It sets out the basic policies which guide library services.

Now to today's issues. As the current ALA President, Mitch Freedman, has stated, there are many issues confronting the American Library Association and the nation's libraries and librarians. Some of them are perennial; others are a reflection of our times.

Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act (USA PATRIOT ACT) of 2001

Last October, in response to the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Congress passed and the President signed the USA Patriot Act. This law broadly expands law enforcement's surveillance and investigative powers. In particular, the law raises complicated questions with respect to what constitutes a business record and the law's broad definition of computer trespassers. The law also creates a new relationship between domestic criminal investigations related to foreign intelligence.

Librarians in the United States have always been very protective of the records which show who has borrowed which books, journals, etc. In fact there have been cases when librarians have gone to jail before revealing such information.

In the United States, police or any other law enforcement body, such as the FBI, must have a warrant in order to request and acquire records of library use. Under the USA Patriot Act all of these guarantees of privacy have been superseded by the federal government's procedures, which make it much simpler for officials to acquire an individual's library, hospital and education records. And, the library is not permitted to reveal to anyone that the records have been demanded or which records the law enforcement officials took.

In addition to providing information on its web site on how to respond to such requests for



information the American Library Association also offers a procedure by which libraries so affected may call ALA's Intellectual Freedom Office and ask to be referred to ALA's attorney without violating the secrecy provision of the USA Patriot Act. Under this procedure and under the guarantees of lawyer-client privilege, the library is then free to discuss with the ALA attorney-without violating the law-how to respond to such requests, and what the library's options are.

#### Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)

CIPA is a federal law which would have required all libraries wishing to continue to receive federal money to provide filters on all Internet terminals in the library, for all terminals used by children, adults, and staff.

The American Library Association and the American Civil Liberties Union challenged the law's constitutionality, stating it violated free speech provisions of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. ALA committed over \$1,000,000 to fight CIPA and defend library users' access to constitutionally protected speech.

As a result, in May of this year, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit decided that the federal government cannot implement this law, which would have gone into effect July 1st. The decision now goes directly to the U.S. Supreme Court for review. The panel's decision was based on the observation that technology blocks so much unobjectionable material that it would violate the First Amendment rights of library patrons.

#### **Uniform Computer Information Transactions Act (UCITA)**

Today there are several ways to purchase software. If you buy it in a store it often comes wrapped in plastic. The package includes the software itself and the license governing your use of it - the term for this is "shrink-wrap". Once you tear off the plastic you have automatically agreed to the terms of the license. On the other

hand, if you purchase software by downloading it from the Internet, when you click on "ok" or "I accept" you are actually agreeing to the terms of the license for that software. This means that you, the purchaser, have agreed to licensing terms which you have never seen. It also means that you have no opportunity for comparison-shopping. You have a license to use the software - you don't own it. What you own is a license that carefully specifies how you can use that software, and how your license can be revoked if you use that software in a way that violates its terms and conditions.

This type of licensing arrangement, under UCITA, would not necessarily be limited to software. It can be extended to books, magazines, CDs, movies, etc. In other words, the law may contribute to a fundamental transformation in the way information is disseminated both in the United States and throughout the world.

UCITA represents a movement toward licensing of information in its many forms and away from the sale of copies as traditionally understood under copyright law. Today, when a library or a person purchases a book, for example, you own that book. You can do with it as you wish, since the property rights, under Copyright Law, have been transferred to you. UCITA is the information industry's effort to impose unreasonable constraints on fair use by enacting legislation in each state of the United States that will supersede those rights of access, and information use and dissemination, guaranteed to citizens through copyright law, case law, traditional patterns of use, and fundamental notions of property.

Right now this act is being presented to each of the 50 State legislatures in the United States. The Washington Office of the American Library Association and various committees and working groups within ALA have prepared talking points and strategies that state library associations and individuals can use to explain to state legislatures the negative effect this law would have on freedom of information.



## Advocacy

Advocacy does not come to our profession easily. As Mitch Freedman, current president of ALA, pointed out in a speech he gave in Rome last March:

There are some who consider speaking up for libraries to be "unseemly" - even dangerous - because they associate library advocacy with taking a stand for a particular point of view or representing a special interest. Librarians often avoid marketing and the seeming superficiality of public relations. We often believe that what we do should speak for us - that our actions would replace the need for our words.

This simply isn't true. We owe it to ourselves and to our users to become powerful advocates and recruit others to our cause.

Dr. Freedman went on to describe a successful advocacy program from the early 90's:

In the face of crippling library-funding cuts across the United States and the increasing privatization of public information sources, the ALA developed an intense campaign to fight budget cuts in 1991. We literally took our message - Libraries Are Worth It - on the road with rallies in several U.S. cities. We followed up with a long-range communications plan and invested in media training for all of our key leaders. We developed a speakers' network and a phone-in campaign that attracted more than 250,000 supporters of full funding for libraries.

These efforts increased our media coverage by more than 200 percent. The battle to maintain federal funding was won, and awareness of the need for local library funding was raised. And it took an army of advocates who continue to lobby legislators and train other advocates across the country. It's been 10 years since the American Library Association began its first advocacy efforts, and there is no doubt they've been effective. It is increasingly evident that policymakers recognize libraries as central to our local, national and global information infrastructures.

Effective library advocacy in the United States has resulted in record-high - although not high enough - federal funding, the establishment of the e-rate telecommunications discount program [which provides federal funding for libraries' telecommunications expenses] and a new federal Institute of Library and Museum Services, an independent federal agency that fosters leadership, innovation and a lifetime of learning by supporting the nation's museums and libraries.

Last year, before beginning its Campaign for America's Libraries, a five-year public education initiative, ALA conducted research about the public's perception of libraries and learned the following:

- Libraries are popular but are taken for granted
- Libraries are everywhere but not as visible as they need to be
- Libraries are unique but facing new competition
- Librarianship is not seen as a "cutting-edge" profession.

These perceptions have played a key role in the messages which have been developed for use with The Campaign for America's Libraries. ALA has developed materials, available on the association's web site and in the packet of information we have provided here today, to be used by all library advocates to bring to as many peoples' attention as possible the value of libraries and librarians. This becomes even more important during difficult economic times when one of the first things the budget officers look at is the cost of running a library and see it as an easy target for budget reduction. And it's a response to "we have the Internet, why do we need libraries or librarians?"

The logo for the campaign is "@your library" and is based on three key messages:

- Libraries are changing and dynamic places
- Libraries are places of opportunity
- Libraries bring you the world

Based on ALA's campaign, the Campaign for the World's Libraries was officially launched in August 2001 during the IFLA conference in Bos-



ton, Massachusetts. The IFLA campaign will also use the slogan @your library and its official translations to unify the communications activities of libraries around the world.

The World's Libraries campaign will use the same three key core messages as the ALA campaign, with the following goals:

- Raise awareness about the variety of programs and services offered
- Increase use of libraries at schools, at colleges and universities, in government, at work, and in daily community life
- Increase funding for libraries
- Involve librarians as stakeholders on public policy issues such as intellectual freedom, equity of access and the "digital divide"
- Encourage librarianship as a profession

The logo has been translated into a number of languages:

French, German, Russian and Spanish as well as Arabic, Armenian, Azeri, Bulgarian, Chinese, Georgian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Kazakh, Korean, Turkish and Vietnamese.

Four Canadian library associations have signed agreements with ALA and as a result of the IFLA partnership the library associations in the following countries have signed agreements with ALA and IFLA; Azerbaijan, Australia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Kazakhstan, Mexico and Turkey.

So - what role can you play in advocacy for libraries?

- Get involved with the Campaign for the World's Libraries - and discover new ways to use the brand "@ your library"
- Ask you library patrons how you've made a difference in their lives. These specific stories are more effective than any fact or figure. Recruit them to be library advocates.
- Speak up and speak out. Ask to make a presentation about the library at a meeting of busi-

ness, professional, alumni, faculty, student, government or civic groups. Let them know why they should - and how they can - help their libraries. Talk with decision makers and media to get your messages out to leaders.

As an integral part of the Campaign for America's Libraries, ALA and President Freedman are working on two fundamental issues confronting American librarians -the issue of the upcoming shortage of professional librarians in the United States and, the issue of compensation (pay, health insurance, paid vacations and sick leave, attendance at conferences).

A major personnel issue confronting U.S. libraries is the shortage of librarians. In interviews librarians have mentioned several reasons for the crisis, the chief ones being low salaries, competition from the private sector, and an increasing number of librarians reaching retirement age.

### **Statistics:**

More than one fourth of all librarians with master's degrees will reach retirement age before 2009.

Between the years 2010 and 2014 21% of librarians will retire.

The need for new librarians appears to be growing. For the years 2000-2010 a 3 to 9 % increase in jobs for librarians has been forecast. At ALA's Job Placement Center at the association's 2001 Midwinter Meeting in Washington, D.C., there were 831 vacancies compared to 260 applicants. Five years ago there were 360 vacancies for 436 applicants.

Last January Laura Bush, President Bush's wife, announced that President Bush's 2003 budget will include a proposal for \$10 million to recruit and train library professionals. Anticipating the loss of as many as 68% of current professional librarians by 2019, the initiative will be designed to "help recruit a new generation of librarians." The President's initiative would:



- Provide scholarships to graduate students in library and information science,
- Support distance learning technology for training programs in underserved areas,
- Recruit librarians with diverse language skills.

The President's proposed initiative recognizes the key role of libraries and librarians in maintaining the flow of information that is critical

- to support formal education;
- to guide intellectual, scientific, and commercial enterprise;
- to strengthen individual decisions; and
- to create the informed populace that lies at the core of democracy.

The initiative will be managed by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, about which I have already spoken. This initiative addresses the decrease in the number of professional librarians.

To address the difficulty in recruitment of librarians, ALA has established a Task Force on Better Salaries and Pay Equity for Library Workers which will provide the leadership, research, publications and inspiration to help empower librarians to better promote their worth to the community. Several areas that require attention are:

- Overcome the stereotype of the librarian as the selfless, dedicated, and devoted worker who is in the profession to do good, and who will accept any pittance of pay just for the opportunity to work in a library and be of service
- Promote a better understanding of what a librarian does - it must be understood what education, experience, judgment and special skills it takes for us to do our jobs.
- Contribute to the fight for pay equity; women have been discriminated against in a variety of ways, one of the primary of which is in compensation.

## Conclusion

As librarians we must be constantly vigilant to assure equal access to information by all. We must increase the awareness of the value of libraries and librarians. We must insure the availability of trained professional staff who are properly compensated. Advocacy may be described in terms of campaigns and five-year projects but it is an ever-present concern.

I would like to leave you with two quotations I came across while researching this paper:

In a paper presented at the IFLA conference in Jerusalem, August 15, 2000, William R. Gordon, Executive Director, ALA, 1998-2002, said,

Throughout the proud history of our profession, librarians have recognized and championed the power of the printed word in a free and open society. There is no right more fundamental to a democracy than the right of all citizens to information. There is no greater danger to a free society than the loss of freedom that occurs when access to information is restricted.

And, during the worst days of World War II, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt told the United States that:

Libraries are directly and immediately involved in the conflict which divides our world and for two reasons. First, because they are essential to the functioning of a democratic society. Second, because the contemporary conflict touches the integrity of scholarship, the freedom of the mind, and even the survival of culture, and libraries are the great tools of scholarship, the great repositories of culture, and the great symbols of the freedom of the mind.

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