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# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY

**TO:** TASK FORCE MEMBERS  
ALSC/PLA Public Library Services for Children Policy  
Statement Task Force

**FROM:** Penny Markey  
Chairperson

*Penny*

**RECEIVED**

FEB 25 1994

**ALSC**

**SUBJECT:** Report of meeting a ALA in Los Angeles

To recap activities prior to and at the Conference. I coordinated input from various committee members and sent out a draft document prior to the Conference for discussion at our meeting.

When Caroline, Gretchen, Lillian and I met on Saturday afternoon at the Conference, one thing that was clear was that our "function statement" was very unclear. It seemed that the purpose of developing a policy statement was interpreted differently by each of the task force members, the ALSC and PLA Board members and virtually anyone with any interest in the subject.

Thanks to Lillian's intimate knowledge of the workings of ALA, we discovered that ALA Council had in recent years adopted a policy on Youth Services. That policy (No. 52.5.5) fulfilled our charge. To that end, Gretchen and I drafted a document stating our recommendations (see attached). I presented the document to the ALSC Board on Monday, Feb. 7. Gretchen and I presented it to the PLA Board on Tues., Feb. 8. In both cases, the Boards accepted our recommendations including our unwritten one to disband the task force.

Therefore, it is with warm wishes and many thanks that I announce that our task force becomes what may be the first casualty of the ALA self-study. Thank you for your hard work in gathering input and sharing your thoughts and ideas. I am attaching draft #2 in the event that at some point you may be able to use it in subsequent work. It was a pleasure meeting and working with you.

cc: Susan Roman ✓  
Ellen Stepanian ALSC

George M. Needham  
Pat Woodrum PLA

TO: ALSC Board/PLA Board

FROM: ALSC/PLA Public Library Service for Children  
Policy Statement Task Force

RE: Task Force Recommendations

DATE: February 5, 1994

The ALSC/PLA Public Library Service for Children Policy Statement Task Force has explored a variety of approaches to responding to its charge. Based on our research, discussion and examination of current existing policies, we are making the following recommendations to your Board.

1. The task force recommends that the ALSC and PLA Boards reaffirm their commitment to ALA Policy #52.5.1 Youth Services. This policy reads as follows:

"The American Library Association recognizes that the future of libraries and of society itself depends upon the preparedness of youth to carry adult responsibilities for business, government, parenthood and other leadership. Children and young adults cannot fulfill their potential or that of society without high quality library opportunities through both public and school libraries. ALA is committed to the support and development of resources and services for children and young adults through both school and public libraries."

As this policy has been adopted by ALA Council, the Task Force does not feel a public hearing is appropriate at this time. The Task Force feels that this policy effectively addresses the value and need for public library services for children as indicated in the charge to the task force.

2. The task force recommends that each division reprint this policy in its divisional policy manual and encourage their respective constituencies to utilize the statement in the development of local policy for children's services.

**ALSC/PLA Policy Statement Taskforce**

**DRAFT #2:  
Children's Services Policy Statement  
(2/5/94)**

The Public Library is committed to providing excellent service to children and recognizes not only that children are a viable service clientele with unique needs, but that children represent the future of our community and our nation. *Services to children should be free and accessible to all children in the community.*

The education of our children is an area of vital concern on the local, state and national levels. The Public Library plays an integral role in support of formal and informal education.

Library service to children contributes to the child's language acquisition, literacy, reading readiness, reading competencies and motivation. Research shows that a child who reads or is read to on a regular basis and/or participates in library activities displays increased vocabulary (Locke) and verbal skills (Fasick). These children exhibit an increased attention span (Dowd) and enhanced reading comprehension skills (

). Library service to children also provides non-English speaking children with materials in their own language and opportunities to master English.

The Public Library has a responsibility *to be in the forefront* to gather resources and introduce children, their *families and caregivers* to the concept of information literacy and to the importance of reading and independent learning. Public Library services need

to be able to insure that the child has access to and an opportunity to utilize information technology. The Public Library will then provide the means for a child to acquire information literacy and competency in exploring the expanding information arena.

Children's Services in the public library plays an important role in the child's early childhood social development *and provides an opportunity for intellectual stimulation.*

Studies have shown that participation in storytime programs increases the preschoolers attention span (Dowd). Library programs also increases the child's rapport with other children (CYPSSL) and creates a sense of relationship to a larger community (Burstyn).

*The child's access to the literature and stories available in the public library help the child learn about her world and participate in a wider culture.*

Public Library service to children must respond to the changing needs and interests of children. *It must be relevant and reflect popular culture.t ure* It should provide an introduction to the Arts, Sciences and Humanities. Quality library services to children must recognize cultural diversity and incorporate opportunity for children to learn more about their own and other cultures.

Library service to children must be age-appropriate, relevant and presented in an innovative manner . Library services to children should incorporate state-of-the-art technology and encourage children to recognize the viability of the public library and what it has to offer. *The Public Library has the rare opportunity to facilitate life-long learning skills and a love of reading.*

Strong public/private partnerships and collaborative efforts are encouraged to combine

resources to better serve the children in their community, and improve the quality of life for children and families. *Resource sharing serves to stretch dollars, increase cost-effectiveness and take advantage of broad expertise available within the community.*

## DRAFT

### ELEMENTS OF CHILDREN SERVICE IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The Public Library serves as a vital community resource center satisfying and stimulating the informational, recreational, *cultural* and educational needs of young people and their families. The Public Library serves as an integral partner in the community supporting the enhancement of the quality of life for children and their families.

The following are essential elements in providing quality library service to children and their families:

1. A well trained staff is responsive is to the library-related intellectual, developmental and social needs of young people, families *and caregivers*.
  - a. The staff maintains a *relevant* materials collection designed to meet the diverse needs and *popular* interests of the children and families in the community.
  - b. The children's staff helps customers select appropriate library materials to fulfill their need for informational, recreational and educational materials at the same time encouraging and expanding their spheres of interest.
  - c. The library provides information access to children using modern, state of the art technology and resources.
  - d. The staff plans library activities and develops outreach programs designed to appeal the children in their communities and to introduce the library and its resources as relevant, appealing and interesting.
  - e. The staff is responsible for management of the children's department, including analysis of community needs; long range planning, development, implementation and evaluation of childrens services policies and procedures. (in conjunction with and with responsibility to integrate these plans to overall library policy.)

2. A broad and relevant materials collection is needed to reflect the needs and interests of children and their families *and caregivers*.

a. The collection supports: homework needs, recreational reading, independent learning, literature based school curriculum, home schooling needs and reading readiness skill development.

b. The collection includes a variety of media such as computer software, videos, CD's, audio tapes, magazines, pamphlets, maps and posters, etc..

c. The collection offers materials in a variety of formats, for example, braille, large print, and books on tape.

3. A variety of high quality innovative programs make relevant cultural and educational contributions to the lives of the children and families of the community.

a. Programs enrich and stimulate service to current library users, attract non-users to the library, motivate children to explore the library materials collection and identify the library as a focal point of the community.

b. Programs for various age levels meet developmental needs and interests of the children and meet community needs. They may include infant, toddler and preschool and programs; school-age reading motivation programs; vacation reading programs; after-school programs; intergenerational programs and more.

c. Programs for parents on a variety of relevant topics including children's literature, importance of reading aloud, parenting; child health and safety related issues, etc.

d. Programs utilize a variety of methods and materials and include book related materials. These may showcase the arts, sciences and humanities and may include a variety of activities and formats.

4. Partnerships and collaborative efforts with other child serving agencies establishes the Library as an active participant in community affairs.

a. Strong interactive relationships with local educational institutions to support the needs of students and educators.

b. Joint planning and cooperation with social service and child advocacy agencies to become a part of the child advocacy network.

c. *Cooperation with other agencies to encourage greater cost effectiveness.*

5. Public relations and marketing efforts are necessary to enhance visibility and the importance of children's services in the public library as an educational and child advocacy organization.

a. Communication and collaboration with local media -- newspapers, television, cable, radio, etc.

b. Outreach efforts to reach parents *and caregivers* to encourage family reading and library use.

c. Efforts to raise the profile of the library within the community for the purpose of raising community awareness, seeking funds, etc.