

# News Release: American Library Association

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Librarians will be the leaders in a nationwide fight against illiteracy with the guidance of a manual designed to help them initiate, plan and implement literacy programs on the local level.

The manual is the major component of "Literacy and the Nation's Libraries," potentially one of the American Library Association's most far-reaching projects. Also in the works as part of this program are a video tape for use with the manual and continuing literacy education programs.

Coordinated by ALA's Office for Library Service to the Disadvantaged (OLSD) and the Public Library Association (PLA), input is also coming from six ALA divisions, thus insuring representation from many areas of librarianship. Educators in reading and adult education are serving as consultants. Finally, a project board, composed of nine librarians from academic, public, and school libraries, is charged with determining the substantive content of the manual.

According to Jean E. Coleman, director of OLSD and the literacy project, the manual is being written as a very practical methodological guide to organizing and administering literacy programs. It will contain such concrete information as how to choose and order materials, how to identify developmental reading skills and how to sponsor a tutoring program. It is expected to be available to librarians by the 1977 ALA annual conference.

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The project's goal is linked with the Right to Read's goal to achieve close to total literacy by 1980--an ambitious undertaking since research has shown that 21 million Americans are functionally illiterate. In concrete terms, this staggeringly high total means that one out of every seven Americans can't read want ads, job applications or directions for long distance dialing. The vast resources of the nation's libraries are obviously lost to them.

Presided over by librarians, the program will eventually involve educators and community leaders from all over the country. Although isolated libraries have mounted a number of literacy programs, these have necessarily been limited and fragmented. The ALA's program represents the library community's first nationwide effort to eradicate illiteracy.

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