

STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Libraries are essential agencies in the total educational and scientific structure of our democracy. As depositories of man's knowledge, ideas, and aspirations, they are making available books and other materials to Americans of all ages and classes. Government at all levels is becoming increasingly aware of the educational, cultural, and inspirational services which libraries provide.

Libraries are of many kinds. There are school, college, university, research, and public libraries. In addition, there are the libraries which serve the government, the hospitals, and other institutions and special libraries of many kinds. To recount the whole list of multitudinous services rendered would take too long, but a few typical examples of what libraries do should be noted:

1. They bulwark the scientific and technical activities of the Nation by making available the books, periodicals, and technical reports essential to successful progress in those fields.
2. They promote better citizenship by providing reading materials on purposeful living as regards the individual, the family, the community, and the Nation.
3. They select good books and other materials to interest children and young people and contribute to a great degree to the improvement of boys' and girls' reading and to the formation of lifetime reading habits. In addition, they endeavor to meet the needs of the retarded reader, because children and young people who read with competence and enjoyment, usually find satisfaction in school work and are less likely to become behavior problems.
4. Since the aging population is now a major problem, new emphasis is being placed upon the role of the library as an active agent in this field. Libraries lend books to elderly people for pleasure, help in developing new skills, assist in pre-retirement planning, and take books to shut-ins in private homes, hospitals, nursing homes and homes for the aged. Moreover, libraries make available books and journals on the whole question of aging for professional workers in this field and for members

of families affected by the problem of elderly persons.

5. They provide schools, colleges, and universities with informational resources and services which support the instructional program and stimulate student interest in reading and in continued self-education.

6. Provide services to special groups such as the blind.

As just stated, the preceding illustrations are an exceedingly limited selection of what libraries are doing. But despite the apparent accomplishments and strengths of our various libraries, the needed potential is far from being achieved. Taking the Nation as a whole, all of these types of libraries suffer from serious deficiencies. Standards of performance and facilities have been set up recently for most of the fields - school, college, public, hospital, and institutional libraries. When library resources and services are measured against these standards, however, the findings show great gaps.

Again, only a few examples out of many can be given, but these are some of the major needs:

1. Establishment on a regional or national basis of coordinated reference, bibliographical, and loan systems to meet the full range of informational and research needs of all our people from the seeker after general information to the advanced scientist and research worker.

2. Stimulation and support of the development of adequate library collections and services for all schools that lack them. At present, there are approximately 10,500,000 children without school libraries, and many additional millions with inadequate service, according to the leading authorities.

3. Remedying the lacks in college and university library resources. Libraries at institutions of higher education must meet fully the needs of the on-going programs of the colleges, the new work loads which are being added as a result of the research contracts being awarded to the institutions, the increasing numbers of students who will be flocking to the campuses during the next decade. Up until now it has been impossible for library resources to keep pace with expanding enrollments.

4. Strengthening the library profession which currently has an estimated short-

age of 10,000 trained librarians. A national scholarship program is essential to help close this gap.

5. Remedying the serious gaps in public library services, both urban and rural. An attack has been started on the rural problem, but the increasing growth of the metropolitan and fringe areas is presenting urgent questions which go beyond city limits and overlap borders. These problems must be resolved. Today there are 25,000,000 people with no local public library service and many additional millions with inadequate service.

The Library Services Act of 1956 was designed to help solve library deficiencies in places with populations of 10,000 or less. The legislation has been a tremendous success and shows how the federal government can cooperate with state and local governments in remedying a serious lack in educational facilities. This cooperative effort has achieved such excellent results that the present Congress has taken steps for its continuance.

Looking at libraries as a whole, the American Library Association is of the opinion that attention should be given at once to remedying the deficiencies in the facilities and services of these vital educational agencies. It is surely in the public interest that libraries fulfill their full potential.

In view of the foregoing facts, the American Library Association would like to present this statement for the consideration of the Platform Committee:

"In this age of progress adequate library services and facilities are required to meet the ever-increasing demand for scientific, technical and research information, for education and for culture. All types of libraries are involved in serving this need -- school, college and university, state, federal, hospital and institution, and public libraries.

"The Democratic Party, therefore, endorses measures which will build up facilities and services in these libraries with full recognition of the need for state and local cooperation, wherever appropriate, with the Federal Government in such activities."

Thank you for the opportunity you have given me to present this statement on behalf of the American Library Association.