



THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS AND THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

STATE LIBRARIAN
THE NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12230

June 7, 1984

TO: Dr. Brooke E. Sheldon, President, and Members of the Council of the
American Library Association American Library Association

FROM: The ALA Task Force on Excellence in Education

In accordance with a resolution adopted by the ALA Council in June 1983, we were appointed as a Task Force on Excellence in Education. We were asked to examine A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform in relation to ALA's goals and objectives and to develop creative strategies for the involvement of ALA and America's libraries in the reform of education. We also examined a number of other national studies of education. A Nation at Risk and the other studies generally ignore the role of libraries in the reform of education. We have prepared Realities: Educational Reform in a Learning Society to make clear the role of libraries.

Our basic recommendation is that ALA members, units, chapters and affiliated organizations take advantage of the national concern for education. ALA must work with elected and appointed public officials, and candidates for local, state, and national office to achieve for the users of school, college, and public libraries what is being achieved for the public schools in general. In the twelve months since release of A Nation At Risk, more than half the states have raised high school graduation requirement and hundreds of millions of dollars in increased school aid have been authorized in the states. These are impressive results but other action is needed.

Realities is designed to complement and assist educational reform efforts in which thousands of ALA members are participating. Realities, therefore, speaks to public decision makers and others who provide resources to libraries. It will be effective only if ALA members use it with elected officials, other decision-makers, candidates, and others in ways that will encourage them to think about the importance of libraries.

Our examination of ALA's goals statement indicates the need for Council action by adding the following priority to the Goals and Priorities statement:

ALA will promote the creation, maintenance, and enhancement of a learning society, encouraging its members to work with educators, government officials, and organizations in coalitions to initiate and support comprehensive efforts to assure that school, public, academic, and special libraries in every community cooperate to provide life-long learning services to all.

We recommend that Council adopt this priority in June 1984 as a clear signal of ALA's concern for the place of library service in the learning society.

We recommend that each member of ALA read Realities and A Nation at Risk. We also recommend that each ALA unit and chapter develop for our colleagues in education, government, and other national organizations the materials, guides, and actions that will help them understand the potential of library services and the need for action on their part to sustain and enhance those services. Materials and guides should also be useful to the citizens who are concerned with education and library services.

For instance, we need a single, attractive, and informative brochure providing basic information about school libraries in a form that will enable the public to judge the strengths and weaknesses, the adequacy or the needs, and the achievements of the nearest school library.

We need similar publications on academic, institution, public, special, and state libraries. "Evaluating Children's Services" by Diana Young in Public Libraries, Spring 1984 (pages 20-23), an excellent librarian's tool, might be turned into a guide for the interested parent or voter. Divisions and chapters can best prepare the materials needed by specific audiences to share our concern for good library service. Throughout our work we have heard repeatedly a call for information about "model" services that will increase public understanding of the need for library services.

Other ALA Action to Date

ALA members are active in the reform of education throughout the nation. A Nation at Risk was published in April 1983 as a report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education appointed by Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell. A May 1984 report of the U.S. Department of Education, The Nation Responds: Recent Efforts to Improve Education, details action taken in reform of education over the past twelve months and describes the work of task forces in every state and in national organizations. ALA members are participating in many of these task forces.

Late in 1983 the U.S. Department of Education launched the "Libraries and the Learning Society" project, in which presidents and executives of three ALA divisions and representatives of other national organizations exercised leadership in examining the ways all types of libraries could help implement the recommendations in A Nation at Risk. The ALA divisions include the American Association of School Librarians, the Association of College and Research Libraries, and the Public Library Association. The other national organizations include the American Association for Information Science, the Association for Library and Information Science Education, and the Special Libraries Association. We have followed the "Libraries and the Learning Society" project closely. We believe the final report of the project (to be published soon by the U.S. Department of Education) will include important recommendations that librarians and library policy makers should consider as a means of improving library services.

Five ALA members (Richard M. Dougherty, Jane Anne Hannigan, James W. Liesener, Peggy Sullivan, and Douglas L. Zweizig) were asked to prepare discussion papers for a series of conferences held as part of the "Libraries and the Learning Society" project. We are pleased that ALA is publishing the five discussion papers: Libraries and the Learning Society: Papers in Response to "A Nation At Risk" (ALA, 1984).

The Opportunity

All librarians have an unparalleled opportunity to help shape changes in education, to emphasize the importance of libraries in the lives of students and all members of our society, and to get the added resources our libraries need. Practical steps taken now by ALA units and chapters can help ALA members and others take advantage of this opportunity. Realities and the materials prepared by units and chapters should be useful in the contacts each ALA member should make with officials, candidates, and colleagues in professional and community organizations.

We appreciate the opportunity of serving on the task force. We are pleased to present this report of the ALA President's Task Force on Excellence in Education.

The Task Force on Excellence in Education

Joseph F. Shubert, Chair, New York State Library
Rebecca T. Bingham, Jefferson County, Kentucky, Public Schools
Elizabeth B. Day, Santa Barbara, California, Public Schools
William DeJohn, MINITEX
Richard M. Dougherty, University of Michigan Libraries
Virginia H. Mathews, Library Professional Publications, Connecticut
Donald Sager, Milwaukee Public Library
Peggy Sullivan, Northern Illinois University
Eileen D. Cooke, ALA Staff Liaison, ALA Washington Office

Attachments

1. Realities: Educational Reform in a Learning Society
2. A list of recent reports and books important to librarians concerned with educational reform

cc: Presidents and executive directors of divisions
The ALA Executive Board
The ALA Executive Director

Draft Resolution
Proposed to the
Council of the American Library Association
Dallas, Texas
June 1984

RESOLUTION REGARDING ALA PRIORITY FOR
LIBRARIES AND THE "LEARNING SOCIETY"

WHEREAS, the American Library Association shares the concern of the National Commission on Excellence in Education to have schools, colleges, libraries, and other educational institutions adequate to meet the needs of a learning society; and

WHEREAS, school and academic libraries play a central role in the educational communities they serve and

WHEREAS, the nation's public libraries are a primary site for the American people to address lifelong learning needs; and

WHEREAS, the American Library Association has pledged the support of school, public, academic, and special librarians in helping to reform American education and

WHEREAS, the Association, librarians, and library trustees must be among the organizations and professions included from the earliest stages of deliberation on educational reform and the support of the learning society; and

WHEREAS, the goals and priorities of the Association direct the activities of the Association; NOW THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Association will include the following ~~priority~~ ^{goal} as part of its statement of goals ~~and priorities~~:

6-25-84

ALA will promote the creation, maintenance and enhancement of a learning society, encouraging its members to work with educators, government officials and organizations in coalitions to initiate and support comprehensive efforts to assure that school, public, academic, and special libraries in every community cooperate to provide lifelong learning services to all.