LIBRARY SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES POLICY
RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The American Library Association promotes equal access to information for all people, and

WHEREAS, There are over 54 million Americans with disabilities, and

WHEREAS, Libraries play an important role in the lives of people with disabilities by facilitating their full participation in society, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the American Library Association adopt the following policy on Library Services For People With Disabilities:

The American Library Association recognizes that people with disabilities are a large and neglected minority in the community and are severely underrepresented in the library profession. Disabilities cause many personal challenges. In addition, many people with disabilities face economic inequity, illiteracy, cultural isolation, and discrimination in education, employment and the broad range of societal activities.

Libraries play a catalytic role in the lives of people with disabilities by facilitating their full participation in society. Libraries must use a variety of concrete strategies based upon the principles of universal design to ensure that library policy, resources and services meet the needs of all people.

ALA, through its divisions, offices and units and through collaborations with outside associations and agencies is dedicated to eradicating inequities and improving attitudes toward and services and opportunities for people with disabilities.

1. Americans With Disabilities Act
Providing equitable access for persons with disabilities to library facilities and services is required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, applicable state and local statutes and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). The ADA is the Civil Rights law affecting more Americans than any other. It was created to eliminate discrimination in many areas, including access to private and public services, employment, transportation and communication. Most libraries are covered by the ADA's Title I (Employment), Title II (Government Programs and Services) and Title III (Public Accommodations).

2. Library Services
Libraries must provide adapted services for people with disabilities to ensure them access to library resources. Such services may include, but are not limited to, extended loan

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by Council Resolutions Committee
periods, waived late fines, extended reserve periods, library cards for proxies, books by mail, reference services by fax or email, home delivery service, remote access to the OPAC, remote electronic access to library resources, volunteer readers in the library, volunteer technology assistants in the library, American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter or realtime captioning at library programs, and radio reading services.

Libraries must include persons with disabilities as participants in the planning, implementing, and evaluating of library services, programs, and facilities.

3. Facilities
The ADA requires removal of barriers that restrict access or use by individuals with disabilities. Both architectural and communication barriers must be removed.

ADA design guidelines specify accessible parking, clear paths of travel to and throughout the facility, entrances with adequate, clear openings or automatic doors, handrails, ramps and elevators, accessible tables and public service desks, accessible public conveniences such as restrooms, drinking fountains, public telephones and TTYs, visible alarms in rest rooms and general usage areas, and signs that have Braille and easily visible character size, font, contrast and finish.

ADA guidelines for removing communication barriers include provision of interpreter or realtime captioning services when requested for public programs, reference services through TTY or other alternative methods, and print materials made available in alternative formats such as large type, audio recording, Braille, and electronic text.

4. Collections
Library materials must be accessible to people with disabilities. Materials must be available in a variety of formats, and accommodations such as assistive technology, auxiliary devices and physical assistance must also be provided.

Within the framework of the library’s mission and collection policies, public, school, and academic library collections must include materials with accurate and up-to-date information on the spectrum of disabilities, disability issues, and services for people with disabilities, their families, and other concerned persons. Depending on the community being served, other types of libraries may include medical, health, and mental health information and information on legal rights, accommodations, and employment opportunities.

5. Assistive Technology
Well-planned technological solutions and access points, based on the concepts of universal design, are essential for effective use of information and other library services by all people. Libraries must work with people with disabilities, agencies, organizations and vendors to integrate assistive technology into their facilities and services to meet the
needs of people with a broad range of disabilities, including learning, mobility, sensory and developmental disabilities. It is essential that library staff be aware of how available technologies address disabilities and know how to assist all users with library technology.

6. Employment
ALA must actively work with employers in the public and private sectors to recruit people with disabilities into the library profession, first into library schools and then into employment at all levels within the profession.

Libraries must provide reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities and ensure that their policies and procedures reflect the rights of people with disabilities as provided by the ADA and other laws.

7. Library Education, Training and Professional Development
All library schools must require students to learn about accessibility issues, assistive technology, and the needs of people with disabilities both as users and employees.

Libraries must provide training opportunities for all library employees and volunteers in order to sensitize them to issues affecting people with disabilities and to teach effective techniques for providing services for users with disabilities and for working with colleagues with disabilities.

8. ALA Meetings and Conferences
All ALA meetings and conferences must be welcoming and accessible to people with disabilities.

The association and its staff, members, exhibitors, and hospitality industry agents must consider the needs of conference participants with disabilities in the selection, planning, and layout of all conference facilities, especially meeting rooms and exhibit areas. ALA Conference Services Office and division offices offering meetings and conferences must make every effort to provide accessible accommodations as requested. Since the needs of individuals with disabilities are diverse and vary from one person to another, people with disabilities wishing to attend ALA functions will assume responsibility for requesting accommodations from ALA according to ALA policies and meeting and conference instructions.

Conference programs and meetings focusing on the needs of, services to or of particular interest to people with disabilities must have priority for central meeting locations in the convention/conference center.

9. ALA Publications and Communications
All ALA publications and communications, including books, journals, and correspondence, must be available in alternative formats including electronic text. The ALA Webpage must conform to the guidelines for accessibility.

Moved by: Jan Beck Ison, ASC.LA Counselor

Seconders: Don Sager
Betty Isa
Alice Calebrase
Title of Resolution:
Library Services for People with Disabilities Policy Resolution

Background:
ALA does not have a policy statement on library services for people with disabilities although it does have statements about other minority groups. The Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Assembly, an assembly administered by ASCLA that has representatives from divisions and round tables, drafted a statement to address this issue.

Issue:
There are over 54 million Americans with disabilities today and the number is expected to rise as our population ages. The American Library Association needs to provide guidance to libraries on how to provide equitable and inclusive library services to this growing segment of the population.

Action Proposed:
That the ALA Council adopts the Library Services for People with Disabilities Policy.

ALA Units and/or committee consulted (if any):
The policy was drafted by the ADA Assembly, which has representatives from divisions and round tables. Following the 2000 Midwinter meeting, the draft policy statement was sent (via staff liaisons) to all division and round table leaders.

Endorsements by ALA Units and/or committees (if any):
The ASCLA Board of Directors endorsed the policy at the 2000 Midwinter meeting. The policy was reviewed this spring by the ALA Policy Monitoring Committee and committee chair Donald Sager, reported (via e-mail) that the committee reviewed the policy and does not “anticipate any conflicts with existing policies”.

Fiscal Implications:
The policy will have fiscal implications for ALA in point 9: ALA publications and communications. ASCLA recommended that ALA include funding in the FY2001 budget for consultant services to advise the association on the best ways to produce publications in alternative formats. At their spring 2000 meeting, BARC reviewed the draft policy and noted that money for consultant services has been included in the OLOS budget. If Council approves the policy, OLOS, in consultation with ASCLA and the ALA diversity officer, will be responsible for its implementation.

Policies and Positions:
1. If this resolution necessitates a change in existing policy, state the policy number and the change. This policy does not necessitate a change in existing policy.
2. If this resolution establishes policy, state the policy. The policy is included in the resolution and consists of opening paragraphs and nine points.

3. If this resolution conflicts with existing policy, state provisions for resolving the conflict. This policy does not conflict with existing policy.

4. If this resolution proposes an ALA position statement, indicate the position’s relationship to libraries and library service. This policy will provide a framework for libraries on delivering equitable library services for people with disabilities.

Initiating Committee or Unit: (if any)
ASCLA

Mover/seconder information:

Mover’s name and local telephone number: Jan Beck Ison, ASCLA Councilor,  

Seconder’s name and local telephone number:

Don Sager
Betty Tsai
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Others