

LIBRARIES AND THE WAR

A Statement of Library Policy

ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

THE United States is at war. The country requires of every profession as of every citizen, the utmost intelligence, realism and devotion.

In a time of war there are certain duties which libraries can best perform.

Every library must organize its services and expenditures without delay to meet the necessities of a nation at war. Each library activity must stand a triple scrutiny.

Will it contribute to victory?

Will it help to make a better America?

Will it help to make a better world?

Whatever fails to meet this test must yield to things more urgent.

More, not less, will be expected of the library. It must meet new demands from men, women and children who are thinking about and working for their country's welfare. The library will require better facilities, not poorer; more books, not fewer; and better work from every librarian.

Library budgets should be protected. Librarians should take full advantage of their opportunities for patriotic service and thus challenge an understanding public support. Economies must be achieved not by reduction of library service as a whole, but by care-

ful selection of the most useful services which demand emphasis, and by higher efficiency in operation.

Officially or unofficially, every library must *become a War Information Center* in which are currently available the latest facts, reports, directories, regulations and instructions for public use. The urgencies of wartime will frequently require immediate information and quick decisions. The library must therefore step up the tempo of its service. It must foresee and prepare to meet such demands.

The library must *supply technical information to industrial defense workers and students*. Treatises, manuals and periodicals must be given opportunity—by librarians—to expedite the production of war materials. Engineers, inventors and designers must be assisted—by librarians—to avoid doing over again what has already been well done and recorded. Foremen and instructors must be aided—by librarians—in avoiding slow and costly ways of training apprentices in matters that may be learned quickly from the printed page.

The library must *disseminate authentic information and sound teachings in the fields of economics, government, history and international relations*. Because this is a war between democracy and totalitarianism, it is a conflict of ideas, theories and political ideals as well as of military weapons. Ignorance of ideas, as of facts, may defeat the noblest intentions. The people of America, and not their soldiers and government officials alone, will make the final decision. To do this the people must not only be informed concerning the issues but must be alert to their significance and implications. The library, more than any other single agency, must aid them in this process.

The library must *make available valid interpretations of current facts and events*. Manipulations of the truth for any reason, public hysteria or indifference, over-confidence or despair will impair the national war effort. The library can help materially to combat such irrational attitudes by providing not only trustworthy facts but rea-

soned interpretation. Freedom of inquiry is one of the basic freedoms which the American people are again fighting to preserve. With such minor limitations as are occasioned by military necessity, librarians will protect the right of inquirers to find in the library material on all sides of controversial questions.

The library must help to relieve the strain of war, by maintaining its supply of recreational reading, for men and women, and especially for children.

The library must *help and support postwar planning*. Our nation now has a twofold purpose—to win the war and with the victory to help establish a world order of decency, security and human dignity. Already some of the best minds in the country are dealing with postwar problems—plans for employment, security, and the upbuilding of America; the basic principles of international relations; the practical implications of human geography; the relations of the United States to the whole world, and especially to the other Americas. Ideas are seething, plans are beginning to take form. Librarians can help to prepare the American people for wise decisions on these momentous questions by making known factual information, sound ideas, and rational proposals.

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION • 1942

Printed in the United States of America