

# LIBRARIES AND THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY

ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

*January 31, 1951*

The peace and security of the world being threatened by despotism and aggression, the librarians and friends of libraries of the United States, speaking through the American Library Association, pledge themselves:

1. To strengthen and extend the services of their libraries to meet the needs of national defense and world security.
2. To conserve their resources for the national welfare.
3. To sacrifice, economize, and improvise wherever possible and necessary.
4. To meet the increasing need for information, knowledge and education on which the future world depends for peace and prosperity.
5. To preserve the open market of ideas which libraries represent as a symbol and guarantee of freedom.
6. To lift the morale of a mobilized world through provision of the greatest recorded thoughts of men of all the ages.
7. To cooperate with all agencies seeking to establish a world of decency, security and human dignity.

# A Report to the Council Of the American Library Association

CLARENCE R. GRAHAM, PRESIDENT

IN ITS 75 crowded years the ALA has faced many crises—internally and in the areas of its service to the profession and the nation. It has always responded with vigor and imagination and I feel sure it will continue to do so. We now face a new national emergency—or, more accurately, a continuation of the crisis which many of us have witnessed throughout our lives. Through long familiarity with this crisis we are more aware of its nature than ever before and better prepared for it. We also face the danger of underestimating it from sheer frustration and weariness. This we must not do. My single message to the ALA Council is a call to service—I count on you to respond, as always, energetically and wholeheartedly.

Only 10 years ago at an ALA Midwinter Meeting, one of my distinguished predecessors in office reported the official declaration of a national emergency, the appropriation of billions of dollars for defense and the inauguration of selective service. On that occasion, the ALA dedicated itself to national and world-wide service and libraries everywhere responded with expanded and redirected activities. We now face many of the same problems, some of them more acute than ever because of the more explosive weapons—and ideas—which we have and which we face from our antagonists. Once again the first duties of every American library are to assist in the national defense and to help build a peaceful world.

The ALA has not been inactive as the emergency has developed. We have strengthened our Washington Office and redirected many of our own activities toward the demands of the emergency. We have worked closely on defense projects with other agencies such as the American Council on Education, the National Conference on Mobilization of Education, the American Book Publishers Council, and with the U. S. Office of Education which has been designated by the National Security Resources Board as the focal government agency on matters relating to education. We have strengthened our

Committee on Intellectual Freedom which helps to guard the chief target of our enemies—the free American mind. Now we are calling on all librarians and friends of libraries to mobilize.

We face many problems: centralization of population in the so-called “war-impacted areas”; decentralization of population in the case of imminent attack; shortage of materials even for matters as essential to our future world as education; danger to our research resources—the physical embodiment of our heritage; shortage of staff as manpower demands increase; attacks on our integrity and on the controversial materials in our collections—physical evidence of the very freedom for which we stand ready to fight; and we face a world not yet ready to support the constructive weapons of the mind as fully as it recognizes it must support the destructive weapons for our physical defense.

Nevertheless, we also have tremendous advantages and opportunities: the chance to strike at the very root of the crisis and supply information and understanding—for defense and for future peace alike; the knowledge of community needs and the confidence of our various kinds of communities; the necessary technical materials to aid vocational training, civilian defense, and the other tangible programs on which our country is now embarked; and a frontline role in the conflict of ideas. We have enduring and penetrating weapons and we stand ready to use them with energy stemming from the special knowledge which our training and experience give us.

I ask you, therefore, to adopt, as a pledge, the following resolution on “Libraries and the National Emergency.” (See reverse.)

Let us realize anew the power which we librarians hold and its basic role in the present world conflict. Our weapons—free ideas, freely expressed—are the strongest weapons and therefore are not only the first but the ultimate target of our enemies. Let us cast off modesty, timidity and fear and wield these weapons with full confidence in victory.