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Rocks in the Whirlpool

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Outline

Rocks in the Whirlpool

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Rocks in the Whirlpool

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“Equity of Access” for all to the records of humanity is a key action area of the American Library Association (ALA). By 2005 the Association has declared that it will be the leading voice for equitable access to information resources in all formats for all people.

Since the formal organization of the Association in 1876 its members, divisions, committees, task forces and commissions have steadily worked to develop and extend access to library services. This work, of course, has not been linear. The philosophical discussions and debate that have brought the ALA to its current level of support for “Equity of Access” as a key action area mirror to some extent shifts in the larger society informed more and more by a progressive advocacy.

In the Association's formative years issues of access were as simple as choosing to include fiction in a public library's collection, deciding upon the age at which a child might be permitted to select books considered serious adult reading, or agreeing upon uniform cataloging rules. Internal discussion gradually moved the Association to argue for greater inclusion of materials and outreach to new audiences, while its public stance grew to include support of freedom to read and legislative efforts to extend library services. Over the decades challenges to access have grown more complex as issues of intellectual freedom, variations in local funding, and digital divide concerns have had a multiplier impact on the goal of equity of access.

Characterizing these challenges to access is so extraordinarily complex that the broad picture must be pieced together by focusing on myriad specific aspects. This is not only the case for librarians in the United States, but internationally as well. American Library Association President, Barbara J. Ford (1997-1998), identified 'Equity of Access' as one of ALA's Goal 2000 critical action areas and urged librarians to take a larger role on the world stage to ensure a fair information doctrine. At the beginning of a new century it is especially critical that the ALA consider Equity of Access in an international framework.

(1)

A call to reset the research and policy agenda of information technology and social inequality provides a simple metaphor that helps frame discussion. "Downstream" issues relate to literacy, education, income, gender, ethnicity; "Upstream" issues relate to technology, connectivity, and infrastructure. (2) Today the torrents of upstream and downstream issues that affect equity of access have converged to create a furious whirlpool that shows no sign of abating. The events of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent legislation including the "Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act" have renewed

concerns about intellectual freedom, civil liberties, and equity of access. (3) The library and its policies should be the rocks in this whirlpool. Upstream challenges to Internet access like rural connectivity and CIPA crash against downstream challenges like the need to expand commitment to information literacy and people living in poverty. Amidst this turbulence the library as a safe haven must grow ever stronger and more assertive in multiple arenas. This will happen because of the efforts of librarians from all sectors.

This paper provides some of the historical context of the American Library Association's efforts to define, extend, protect and advocate for Equity of Access. It is important to note that the paper focus is on central tendencies rather than internal debate. Analysis of division, roundtable and affiliate actions that have contributed to the larger picture and have been fundamental to the overall Association's development of policies for equity of access are not fully addressed. However, it should be noted that the work of the Association in its divisions, roundtables and affiliates has been absolutely critical in advances to achieve equity of access. For instance, cataloging, classification, and technology achievements in main entry, authority control, or linked systems protocol have been the axes about which bibliographic control has turned. Without ongoing development of all aspects of bibliographic control by members of the profession, such as the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services "AACR2 and Metadata" Institute (4), equity of access would be an unreachable goal.

Similarly, the Social Responsibilities Round Table, Intellectual Freedom Round Table, and Government Documents Roundtable (inter alia) have put forward resolutions and taken stands that have generated tension and asked the difficult questions that have helped librarians to synthesize issues in the context of social justice and equality. Being able to characterize the ALA's role in fighting for Equity of Access as piling rocks in the whirlpool is the result of the efforts of many librarians in school, academic, public and special

libraries over many decades. The focus on Equity of Access as a key action area by the American Library Association is part of the heritage of every librarian.

Toward the Concept of Access

“Almost overnight, the organization became a public service organization.”

It took many years for the American Library Association to crystallize a focus on equity of access. Histories of the earliest years of the American Library Association, founded in 1876, provide a picture of an organization led by a highly homogeneous group who, in the words of historian Wayne A. Wiegand, “shared a relatively closed definition of reality and believed a rational, informed electorate was essential to democracy.” These leaders felt the “best reading” would induce society to reduce social conflict and insure social order. (1) Sydney H. Ditzion has characterized the social-economy aspect of libraries at that time as a possible tactical approach to persons of influence to gain support. He describes an 1891 ALA circular that suggested the public library could lessen crime and social upheaval by providing the highest entertainment. (2) Wiegand points out that by the time of entry into World War I the “reforming spirit of the Progressive era had identified the ‘problem’ groups in American society—the immigrants, the urban indigent, and criminal and insane, the remote rural dweller, the impressionable child, to name but a few—and the historical record shows that ALA had sponsored some activity or group which sought to address the socialization needs of each.” (3)

In his study of libraries and the immigrant experience Jones notes that those writing of immigrant services and libraries have taken either progressive or revisionist viewpoints. The former view librarians as motivated by egalitarian principles and the ideal of public education; the latter by authoritarian principles and the ideal of social control by an intellectual elite. (4) While it is an oversimplification to state that the egalitarian camp gained steady inroads to overtake the authoritarian camp, Jones, writing of the ALA Committee on Work With the Foreign-Born from 1876-1924 notes "Ironically, then, as immigrants were being transformed into Americans, librarians were also being transformed through their contacts with immigrants....In the process they, too, were changed, metamorphosed into more tolerant Americanizers, more progressive citizens, and more responsive professionals." (5) From its founding to World War I the internal debates and personal beliefs of U.S. librarians within the American Library Association have demonstrated a slow but concerted evolution toward a greater commitment to access as needs of immigrants, working people and children began to receive focus and attention. (6)

Library War Service conducted by ALA during World War I is viewed by ALA historian, Dennis Thomison, as testimony to the fact that the Association was capable of being welfare oriented rather than being a strictly professional organization. "Almost overnight, the organization became a public service organization." (7) Enlivened by the success of its Library War Service ALA leaders planned for an "Enlarged Program for American Library Service" which would include a fund raising campaign to "encourage and promote the development of library service for all Americans." After much development and discussion the "Enlarged Program" was dropped in 1920 (8), but the planning and work that went into the effort shaped the thinking of Association leaders over the decade to come. It was during this time (1919) that ALA supported the Smith-Towner bill that proposed federal funds to extend public libraries for educational purposes and a bureau of

libraries. Although the bill was not enacted, the idea to extend access was under discussion. (9)

Extension and Adult Education

The Enlarged Program concept, the experience of a national role for libraries during World War I, and ALA Council discussion of federal support undoubtedly influenced the Association's direction during the 1920s. Among many areas of focus two stand out as forming the basis for the development of the Association's eventual commitment to equity of access: adult education and extension.

The ALA was closely aligned with the beginnings of the adult education movement. In her exploration of the founding of the American Association for Adult Education (AAAE), Amy D. Rose observed that both adult education and libraries were viewed by the Carnegie Foundation as contributing to the diffusion of knowledge to assist people in making decisions about their own lives. (10) During the 1920's William S. Learned's report to the Carnegie Corporation, *The American Public Library and the Diffusion of Knowledge*, (11) and the ALA Commission on the Library and Adult Education report, *Libraries and Adult Education* were published. (12) The ALA established the Board on Library and Adult Education (later the Adult Education Board) with ongoing reports in the *ALA Bulletin*. Adult education as an important role for libraries has been recently invoked by Robert S. Martin of the Institute of Museum and Library Services. On the need to re-institute a profound respect for the educational function of libraries, Martin has revisited the history of librarianship and asserted, "This means setting the library once again to the only task of importance that it ever performed, providing education for those who seek it." (13)

The ALA Committee on Library Extension (established in 1925) worked to extend library services to unserved areas in the United States and through a Carnegie Corporation Grant supported an ALA regional field agent for the South, Tommie Dora Barker. (14) The League of Library Commissions, established in 1904 and affiliated with ALA (eventually becoming the State Library Agency of the Extension Division in 1942) worked on rural issues especially during the New Deal. The Citizens' Library Movement, especially in North Carolina, demonstrated a grass-roots desire for library service. (15) During the 1920s ALA embraced the idea of libraries as a means to provide adult educational opportunities and combined this idea with many efforts to extend library service to unserved areas.

A Federal Role for Libraries

The formalization of the ALA's work to establish a federal role for libraries began under the aegis of Carl H. Milam, Executive Secretary of ALA from 1920-1948, who wrote a memorandum in 1929 to the ALA Council, "What Should be the Federal Government's Relation to Libraries?" Peggy Sullivan's biography of Milam provides much insight into the role Milam played. (16) His service on the National Advisory Committee on Education provided him an opportunity to consider issues such as federal aid to libraries in the larger context of the reform ideals of Roosevelt's New Deal planning. Redmond Kathleen Molz has carefully analyzed the relationship of library planning during this period to national planning initiatives. (17)

In 1934 the ALA Executive Board responded to another proposal by Milam for a long-term plan for libraries by establishing a National Planning Committee (18). The National Plan developed by the Committee included examination of the inequity of tax-support and provision of financial support so that library materials might be available throughout the nation. ALA President Charles H. Compton (1934-1935), enthusiastic about federal aid for

libraries, appointed Carlton B. Joeckel as chair of a new ALA Federal Relations Committee. The National Plan was discussed at ALA Council during the 1934 annual conference. A sticking point was the locus of control (federal versus state and local). Revisions were made affirming state and local responsibility and continuance and increase of local support. The National Plan was approved at the December 1934 Conference. (19) In Molz' analysis of this process she notes, "the issuance of the *National Plan* was the first time that the Association itself entered the national political arena to state a plank as a public policy actor." (20)

The work done by the Library Extension Board had laid much ground for a national vision of library service driven by a now clearer idea of equity of financial support. Beginning in 1929 the Library Extension Board's occasional mimeographed newsletter, *Library Extension News*, was subtitled, *Equalizing Library Opportunities*. The idea of the "Equalizing of Library Opportunity," was clearly addressed in a 1936 ALA publication issued jointly by the Library Extension Board and the Committee on Planning, *The Equal Chance: Books Help to Make It*. Using line drawings and charts, *Books Help to Make It* compared per capita income to public library availability and declared, "It is increasingly true in our modern world that knowledge is power and that the uninformed man not only is handicapped in making a living, but is a liability as a citizen, for whose ignorance we all pay." (21) This simple pamphlet urged people to get involved in state and national planning for library support to achieve "equalizing of library opportunity."

"We will not have democracy in America until we have some such nation-wide mutual aid, some such nation-wide cooperation of federal, state, and county governments in this great job, this great democratic responsibility of making libraries locally accessible not only to the privileged millions, but to the 45,000,000, mainly on the farm, without local access to a public library." Frank P. Graham, Founder, Citizens' Library Movement of North Carolina, 1936. (22)

In 1937 the work of ALA leaders was recognized with the authorization of funds for a Library Services Division in the U.S. Department of Education. Of this, Carleton B. Joeckel observed: "The creation in 1937 of a Library Service Division in the United States Office of Education was an event of great significance in the history of Federal relations to libraries. ...Prior to the establishment of this Division, there was no Federal office directly responsible for leadership in a Nation-wide program of library development. The new unit will serve as a Federal library headquarters and will provide a national focus for library interests."(23) The establishment of a federal unit devoted to library development contributed to the decision to revise ALA's National *Plan* in 1938. The revision expanded upon the role of state library agencies. (24) Strengthening the idea of the public library's role in education was Alvin Johnson's 1938 monograph, *The Public Library—A People's University*. (25)

During the period following the publication of the 1938 *National Plan*, the ALA leadership carefully monitored the national planning situation and the general interest in post-defense planning. In October 1941 Carlton B. Joeckel was appointed Chair of the new ALA Committee on Post-Defense Planning (later changed to Post-War Planning) by the Executive Board. (26) The Committee issued *Post-War Standards for Public Libraries* in 1943 prepared at the request of the National Resources Planning Board (NRPB). (27) Adequate provision for library service had been recognized in the *National Resources Development Report for 1943* issued by the NRPB in the section, "Equal Access to Education." Part of a national effort to help make the world a better place in which to live, the *Post-War Standards* asserted the importance of the public library and recommended that public library service should be universally available in the United States and its territories.

In 1948 *A National Plan for Public Library Service* was published by the American Library Association as the final component of the work of the Postwar Planning Committee. In the chapter reporting an inventory and evaluation of service, it was noted that total national public library income is less than one-third of the amount required to provide minimum service; there are very great inequalities among the states in per capita expenditures; there are serious inequalities in library expenditures *within* each of the states; and large proportions of the American public are served by libraries weak in total income or in income per capita. (28) Essential features of a national library plan were defined with the role of the state library agency delineated as central to achieving adequate, purposeful public library service. The *National Plan for Public Library Service* proposed “a nationwide minimum standard of service and support below which no library should fall.” (29)

“Very great inequalities among the states in per capita expenditures for public libraries are a dominant characteristic of American library development...Some degree of national equalization of these great differences between the states in library support must be a major concern in library planning.” *A National Plan for Public Library Service* -1948 (30)

To clarify the role of librarians in federal research programs, to form a closer relationship with the Office of Education and other library-related agencies, and to strengthen its influence with Congress an ALA Washington Office was established in 1945. (31) To some extent this marked the end of the era of ALA member involvement in the trenches, as legitimization of the national plan required the guidance of lobbyists. (32)

Role of the Library in the Post-War World

Concurrent with the completion of the *National Plan for Public Library Service* the ALA membership addressed the question of the role of the public library in the post-war world.

Working with foundation officers the ALA leadership developed plans for a study “to define legitimate library activity by adapting the traditional educational purposes of libraries to new social conditions and the public’s willingness to pay for such services.”

(33). Funded by a grant from the Carnegie Foundation and submitted to the Social Science Research Council, Robert D. Leigh from the University of Chicago was selected to carry out the *Public Library Inquiry*. The *Inquiry* was conducted and results published between 1947-1952. (34).

At a Forum on the *Inquiry* held at the University of Chicago, Graduate Library School in 1949 Bernard Berelson, author of the Inquiry volume, *The Library’s Public*, responded to concern about his findings that the library reached only a minority of the population—the better educated. He noted a split between the professed and practiced objectives for the public library. “Just as many lawyers will tell you that their objective is to see justice done, whereas they are actually out to win cases, so many librarians will tell you that education is their objective, when they are busy trying to increase circulation.”

(35) Writing of the effect on the *Inquiry* and its subsequent contribution to the reformulation of the public library’s service mission, Mary Niles Maack has observed, “By creating an awareness that library services had been primarily, if unintentionally, restricted to an elite clientele, the *Public Library Inquiry* proved to be one of many catalysts that stimulated the innovative outreach efforts of the late 1960s and early 1970s.” (36).

The *Inquiry* is crucial in understanding ALA’s commitment to equity. Carried out at the behest of the ALA leadership the *Inquiry* emphasized “that values are intimately related to decisions about the kinds of collections and services the library offers to the public,” a point made by Raber (37). This idea is carried further by Jorge Reina Schement in his 2001 essay, “Imagining Fairness,” in which he declares, “Clearly, the desire for equity draws its strength from the same deep source as that which feeds the desire for equality. Yet

Americans remain ambivalent when asked to endorse policies aiming to achieve equity of access.” (38).

Federal Aid Era

The passage of the Library Services Act (LSA) in 1956 was the result of 35 years of concerted effort of the part of the American Library Association. Designed to assist in the establishment of library service in areas unserved, especially in rural parts of the country, the LSA required that each state submit a plan for library development before it was eligible to receive federal aid. (39) Although this paper has not focused on the activities of state library agencies in pursuit of equity of access, it must be noted that the work of the state library agencies, usually in collaboration with the ALA state chapters, has been central to this goal. The 1966 report, *The Library Functions of the States* (based on a 1960 survey), recognized the importance of state library agencies in their intermediary role between the Federal government and local libraries and recommended they be strengthened. (40)

In 1964 the LSA became the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) and was expanded to include urban libraries and construction. In 1966 library cooperation was added as well as services to the institutionalized, blind, and people with physical disabilities. The ALA Washington Office website notes: “The Library Services and Construction Act, throughout its history beginning in 1956 as the Library Services Act, has acted as a remarkable stimulus to a wide variety of library activities. The Federal role in support of libraries embodied in LSCA has allowed states considerable flexibility to adapt to state needs within federal priorities. Those priorities have included public library construction and renovation (most recently to provide access for the disabled); interlibrary cooperation and resources sharing; adaptation of new technologies for library

services; outreach to special segments of the population such as the disadvantaged, those with disabilities, the elderly and homebound, those in institutions, those with limited English-speaking ability, those who need literacy services, those on Indian reservations and innovative services at child care centers and for latchkey children.” (41)

The addition of a library title in 1965 to both the Higher Education Act (HEA) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was predominantly the work of the ALA. In their assessment of the federal role in library development, *Civic Space/Cyber Space: The American Public Library in the Information Age*, Redmond Kathleen Molz and Phyllis Dain, characterize the LSCA, HEA and ESEA as “distributive legislation”—legislation that subsidizes services that benefit society as a whole. (42)

In 1966 Lyndon B. Johnson appointed a National Advisory Commission on Libraries (NACL) with the task of considering the nation’s library structure, the nature of the present and wisest possible future of Federal support in the development of national library and informational resources and the most effective shaping of those resources to our common need as we can picture it over the next decade. (43). Among the recommendations of the NACL was the establishment of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS). Legislation to establish NCLIS supported by ALA was successful and the Commission was established in 1970 (PL-91-345). (44) ALA’s vision first articulated in the 1930’s now had a bully-pulpit at the federal level.

At its outset NCLIS established the goal, “To eventually provide every individual in the United States with equal opportunity of access to that part of the total information resource which will satisfy the individual’s educational, working, cultural and leisure-time needs and interests, regardless of the individual’s location, social or physical condition of level of intellectual achievement.” (45)

In 1973 NCLIS began the process of drafting a document to describe a National Program for Library and Information Services. After circulating a draft and soliciting extensive input, NCLIS released *Toward a National Program for Library and Information Services: Goals for Action* in 1975. Eight program objectives were set forth: 1) Ensure that basic minimums of library and information services adequate to meet the needs of all local communities are satisfied; 2) Provide adequate special services to special constituencies, including the underserved; 3) Strengthen existing statewide services and systems;

4) Ensure basic and continuing education of personnel essential to the implementation of a national Program; 5) Coordinate existing Federal programs of library and information service; 6) Encourage the private sector (comprising organizations which are not directly tax-supported) to become an active partner in the development of the National Program; 7) Establish a locus of Federal responsibility charged with implementing the national network and coordinating the National program under the policy guidance of the National Commission; 8) Plan, develop and implement a nationwide network of library and information service. (46) On July 4, 1975 the American Library Association committed to "maximum cooperation with NCLIS in implementation and further development of the *Goals for Action*." Molz has characterized the *National Program* of 1975 as the "lineal descendent" of the *National Plan* of 1934. (47)

During its first years NCLIS also prepared for the first White House Conference on Library and Information Services (WHCLIS) under PL- 93-568. The WHCLIS was held November 15-19, 1979, in Washington, D.C., preceded by 57 pre-conferences in states and territories and 6 special national pre-conferences. The ALA, state chapters, and state library agencies collaborated intently on this national effort. The five conference themes addressed library and information services for meeting personal needs, enhancing lifelong learning,

improving organizations and professions, effectively governing society and increasing international competition. Delegates approved 64 resolutions urging an increased library role in literacy training, improved access to information for all, the free flow of information among nations, and the idea of a library as a total community information center and an independent learning center. (48)

An assessment of the role of the American Library Association in gaining federal support through 1980 was made in the report of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR): “The chief credit or the blame (depending upon your point of view) for the establishment of a federal role for libraries lies with ALA. It was ALA that first conceived of the idea of federal aid and it was ALA that was the initiator at almost every step of the way.” (49)

The second White House Conference on Library and Information Services convened July 9-13, 1991, in Washington, D.C. as authorized by Public Law 100-382, The three conference themes were library and information services for literacy, democracy and productivity. Among the summary of issues prepared by the American Library Association was a strong statement on equity of access, “Open and equitable access to information in all formats is a linchpin of our democratic society.” Delegates approved 95 recommendations, with two as top priority: services for children and youth and equity on the information superhighway. (50) Following the second White House Conference on Library and Information Services taskforces from ALA, the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) and Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) identified two major goals: improvement of information access through technology and the educational empowerment of those who still live outside the mainstream of quality library service. (51) New legislation in 1996, the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), moved the administration of federal aid to public libraries from the Department of Education to the new Institute of Museums and

Library Services. (52) LSTA built on the strengths of previous federal library programs, but included some major advantages and differences. While it retained the state-based approach from previous legislation, it sharpened the focus to two key priorities for libraries—information access through technology and information empowerment through special services. (53)

Since the beginning of the movement to establish representation for libraries in the federal government and to secure federal support for libraries there has been consistent involvement from the American Library Association. It was members of the Association that formulated the National Plan that today has evolved into the LSTA and IMLS. Today, ALA's input to the Federal government is in collaboration with the ALA Washington Office as advised by the Committee on Legislation which is charged "To have full responsibility for the Association's total legislative program on all levels – federal, state, and local. To recommend legislative policy and programs for Council approval and to take the necessary steps for implementation. To protest any legislation of executive policy adversely affecting libraries. To seek rulings and interpretations of laws and regulations affecting the welfare and development of libraries. To represent the ALA before executive and legislative branches of government as required at all levels. To provide a forum within ALA to gather information about needed legislation and to keep all units of the Association informed of the ALA legislative program. To direct the activities of all units of the Association in matters relating to legislation." (54)

ALA now has in place an advocacy program for governmental library support through member involvement. Programs such as *Library Advocacy NOW: Mobilizing Support for Libraries -- An American Value* established by 1994-1995 ALA President, Arthur Curley, have contributed to the Association's capacity to support the public good which emerges from the provision and use of library resources. Access to the aggregate systems of U.S.

libraries, which librarians have created with federal encouragement and support, increases the public good beyond what any one library could every supply, and makes support and improvement of library services a goal in the national interest. (55)

Downstream Access: Getting to the Table

ALA's efforts to establish a national agenda that focuses on equity of access through federal support of libraries has been the result of work beginning over eighty years ago. However, parallel consideration of downstream issues relating to equity for the individual and getting all people to the table where they can make full and capable use of the resources made available has also been essential. The American Library Association has demonstrated a long history of effort in this regard, but full commitment evolved only after the Association struggled from within.

Literacy and Lifelong Learning

The most obvious "downstream" issues that confront librarians seeking to provide Equity of Access are participation in basic literacy provision and activation of opportunities for lifelong learning. ALA has a long history of commitment to adult education. This commitment has often been described as coming to national attention with the publication in 1924 of William S. Learned's report to the Carnegie Corporation, *The American Public Library and the Diffusion of Knowledge* and the establishment of the American Library

Association Commission on the Library and Adult Education that same year. (1) The ALA established the Board on Library and Adult Education (later the Adult Education Board) in 1926 with ongoing reports in the *ALA Bulletin* and the issuance of the “Reading with a Purpose” series through 1931.

After World War II ALA’s commitment to literacy and adult education expanded greatly. This front-line priority on the part of U.S. librarians is no less important in gaining an understanding of the profession’s historical efforts to achieve equity of access than national plans and agendas. Highpoints include the Adult Education Section established within the Public Library Division in 1946; the “Great Issues” program for adult discussion groups launched in 1948; and the American Heritage Project in 1951 (supported by \$150,000 from the Fund for Adult Education of the Ford Foundation). (2)

In 1952 Ford Foundation funding provided the resources for ALA to establish an Office of Adult Education. Two years later Helen H. Lyman issued the results of her national study, *Adult Education Activities in Public Libraries*. (3) This was followed by several evaluative monographs: a history of the adult education movement in libraries by Margaret E. Monroe in 1963 (4); Bernice McDonald’s study, *Literacy Activities and Public Libraries* in 1964 (5); and Robert Ellis Lee’s, *Continuing Education for Adults through the American Public Library* in 1966. (6) In the seventies a series of books on literacy and libraries by Helen H. Lyman were published by ALA: *Library Materials in Service to the Adult New Reader* (1973) (7); *Reading and the Adult New Reader* (1976)(8); and *Literacy and the Nation’s Libraries* (1977). (9)

The 1979 White House Conference on Library and Information Services included life-long learning as a theme. A resolution on literacy called for the expansion of literacy programs at the community level, identification of effective adult literacy programs, coordination of library programs with other adult education programs, cooperation among public

educational agencies and joint planning. (10) That same year the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) established a program to support humanities programming in public libraries, which the Vermont Humanities Council pioneered in 1980 with humanities-based reading and discussion programs. The American Library Association, most often through the Public Programs Office, has collaborated with NEH to develop library-based humanities programming. (11)

In 1981 ALA Executive Director, Robert Wedgeworth worked with other ALA Staff, Peggy Barber, Associate Director, and Jean E. Coleman, Director of the ALA Office for Library Outreach Services (OLOS), the Ad Council, and the American Association of Advertising Agencies, to launch the National Coalition for Literacy. (12) From 1983-1990 the *Adult Services in the Eighties: Project of the Reference and Adult Services Division, Services to Adults Committee* was conducted to provide libraries with planning and benchmarking information. (13) During the eighties the U.S. Department of Education, "Library Literacy Program," Title VI, LSCA, made over \$65 million in grants for literacy programs to public libraries. Douglas Zweizig, Jane Robbins, and Debra Wilcox Johnson provided an analysis of these programs in their study, *Libraries and Literacy Education*. (14) ALA convened an association-wide Literacy Assembly in 1989 and National Partners for Library and Literacy continued the work of National Library Week partners in collaboration with the ALA Public Information Office, coordinated by Peggy Barber. The Bell-Atlantic Family Literacy Project was initiated in the ALA Office for Library Outreach Services. (15)

In 1991 the second White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services was held and included a strong literacy focus. (16) Family Literacy programs were administered by OLOS with grants from Bell Atlantic, the Viburnum Foundation, Cargill, Inc. The Association for Library Service to Children received Prudential Foundation grant

support for the “Born to Read” programs. (17) In 1995 the ALA Office for Literacy and Outreach Services –OLOS- (formerly Office for Library Outreach Services) changed its name to reflect expanded focus on literacy. “Literacy in Libraries Across America” was funded within ALA by the Lila-Wallace Reader’s Digest Fund, which included monies for a Literacy Officer in OLOS. (18)

Gail Spangenberg’s 1996 book, *Even Anchors Need Lifelines*, a study supported by ALA, the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress, and Harold McGraw refocused attention on the important institutional and service roles libraries play in literacy. (19) In 1999 ALA funded a full-time Literacy Officer in OLOS. In 2001 an ALA Standing Committee on Literacy was established with Peggy Barber as first Chair. That same year the Association published *Literacy and Libraries: Learning from Case Studies* (20) and established the BuildLiteracy.org site to answer questions about adult literacy, libraries, and coalitions. (21)

For over eighty years ALA has a strong record of activating efforts to expand the opportunities for new readers and to foster their involvement in life-long learning. This record includes partnerships, collaboration, work with governments, and development of basic tools such as studies, texts, conferences, workshops and websites to support librarians in the delivery of literacy services.

African –Americans

One of our nation’s greatest shames is the lack of community services provided for people of African-American heritage until the civil rights legislation of the 60s, and one of African-Americans’ greatest triumphs is that as a people their love of learning and desire for education overcame this lack. Alma Dawson has provided a comprehensive review of this literature. (22) The American Library Association addressed the issue of services to

African-Americans in Barker's 1936 report, *Libraries of the South*. A chapter is devoted to "Library Services to Negroes," with discussion of the Rosenwald demonstration libraries, but the report was not prescriptive, merely factual. (23) The 1948 *National Plan for Public Library Service* identified the lack of service to Negroes in the south as one of the most serious problems facing the profession, in the chapter, "Taking Stock of the American Public Library," but made no observation on the political or social factors relating to segregation. (24)

The story of ALA addressing the problems of library segregation does not become part of the profession's history until the early 1960s, but the story of segregation has been documented by many scholars. (25). In 1960 ALA President Benjamin E. Powell (1959-1960) appointed a Special Committee on Civil Rights to examine the existing statements of ALA and either recommend operating upon these, or prepare some alternative statement that the Association could support in the area of civil liberties." (26) The Special Committee reported at Midwinter 1961 that a new paragraph needed to be added to the Library Bill of Rights: "The rights of an individual to the use of a library should not be denied or abridged because of his race, religion, national origins or political views." (27) The motion passed with one dissenting vote and was criticized by the editor of the *ALA Bulletin* and some statements in the literature. (28) However, the Association stood firm.

In 1962 Archie McNeal, chair of the Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC), surveyed state chapters and determined there were several with no African-American members. The IFC Committee recommended that ALA determine which chapters were meeting minimum requirements for chapter status; that board action be taken against members discriminating against users; that institutional membership be declared void because of discrimination; and that institutions applying for membership be required to sign a statement of assurance that no discrimination was practiced against users on the basis of

race, religion, or personal belief. (29) Although much debate ensued, including the canard that social change was not ALA's prime responsibility, a strong statement was adopted by ALA at the 1962 Annual Conference. The "Statement on Individual Members, Chapter Status and Institutional Membership" indicated that membership in the association and its chapters, had to be open to everyone regardless of race, religion, or personal belief. Four chapters withdrew from ALA: Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi. (30)

Two years later when E.J. Josey was not allowed to attend a meeting where an ALA staff member was speaking, the membership voted that all officers and staff of ALA should refrain from attending in any official capacity at any state associations unable to meet the requirements of chapter status in ALA. The Board sought to more narrowly define "officer," which was accepted (after debate) by the Council. The issues of constitutionality called into question by these actions were muted by the return of the chapters who had withdrawn. (31)

The "Statement on Individual Members, Chapter Status and Institutional Membership" gave impetus to the 1963 study, *Access to Public Libraries*, commissioned by the ALA Library Administration Division (LAD) to gather information on the problem of free access to library buildings, resources and services to understand the extent of the problem and to give a valid basis for working toward improvement. (32) The study was prepared by International Research Associates (INRA) as a self-audit upon restrictions based on race to "broaden understanding of limitations on the free and equal access of all persons to the resources and services of public libraries in the United States." The study focused on five aspects of the race problem as it affected public libraries: extent and pattern of segregation; rate of change toward desegregation; factors tending to retard and those tending to promote change; role of the law in the segregation of public libraries; and attitude of libraries and library boards toward segregation. (33)

The findings generated much controversy for they not only reported on direct discrimination (complete exclusion), but also “indirect” discrimination practiced by branch libraries in cities that were so differentiated in terms of quantity and quality that one group is more limited in its access to the library resources of a community than another. (34)

“No one should have been surprised that branch libraries discriminate against Negroes, since all public institutions in the United States had discrimination against Negroes built into them. This fact is well known in the South; it is time the North woke up to it.”
-- Virginia Lacy Jones, 1963 (35)

In its report on *Access to Public Libraries* submitted to the ALA Council at Midwinter 1964 LAD provided a complete chronology of the study and the follow-up actions with recommendations. The final recommendation is most pertinent to this discussion, “That the American Library Association, using every means at its disposal, continue to promote freedom of access to libraries for all people.” (36)

Commenting upon the study and responses to it, *Library Journal* editor, Eric Moon noted that the responses were in some ways more historic than the report. “We have learned things too about the state of our professional art; it is shakier than we knew. After all our standards, all the definitions of goals and needs, suddenly we are told by the LAD Board that ‘library administrators are *struggling* to find the ‘right way’ in the ‘complex’ matter of branch location and service.” (37)

By 1965 the state chapters that had left ALA returned. In his essay describing E.J. Josey's role Eric Moon observed, "That we had been able to clean our professional house so rapidly was due, primarily, to the moral force that E.J. Josey brought to the endeavor." (38)

ALA, Outreach, and Equity; "Every Means at Its Disposal"

Freedom of Access to Libraries

At the 1966 Midwinter meeting Verner Clapp moved for a review of action taken by the Association on the recommendations of the 1964 LAD follow-up of *Access to Public Libraries*. The Council Committee on Freedom of Access to Libraries did so and reported at the July, 1966 meeting: "The answer is, inescapably, Nothing." (39)

A second review was called for and a Special Council Committee on Freedom of Access to Libraries appointed, chaired by Keith Doms. The Special Committee was charged: "to review action taken by the Association in the execution of its expressed intention to 'continue to promote freedom of access to libraries for all people' using every means at its disposal and to make recommendations to the Executive Board and Council at the Annual Conference of 1966." (40) The Special Committee report was submitted to Council at the 1968 Kansas City Conference and included results of a questionnaire of access to public libraries, interviews with national leaders (including Negro leaders and officials of the Research Division of the United States Commission on Civil Rights) and a review of relevant ALA activities from 1964-1968. The recommendations of the Special Council Committee on Freedom of Access to Libraries in the words of the report, "cry out for immediate action." Additionally, an underscored comment accompanying the report stated, "Therefore we unequivocally suggest that the development and improvement of library services to the culturally disadvantaged and underprivileged be viewed as a major goal of the American Library Association as long as it may be necessary."

1. It is recommended that a study be made to determine location, size, and kinds of library facilities basic to effective service to members of minority groups.
2. It is recommended that a study be made to determine the adequacy of materials to meet the needs and interests of members of minority and other special groups.
3. It is recommended that a study of non-users of public libraries be made to determine characteristics of non-users, user needs, and approaches to minority group service.
4. It is recommended that studies be made to determine appropriate educational programs for librarians and in-service training of staff for more effective service to members of minority groups.
5. It is recommended that a study be made to determine opportunities for employment and advancement of members of minority groups in libraries toward the end of furthering employment and advancement opportunities in American libraries. (41)

Social Responsibilities

The 1968 Kansas City conference is viewed as pivotal in ALA's history as for it was there, on June 28, 1968 that the ALA Round Table on Social Responsibilities of Libraries was established. The history of the founding of what is today the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) has been carefully documented and compellingly told in Toni Samek's *Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility in American Librarianship, 1967 – 1974*. (42) To a large extent the need for commitment to social concerns as underscored by the Special Council Committee on Freedom of Access to Libraries and called for by SRRT created the framework for an extraordinary period of attention to the needs of the disadvantaged by U.S. librarians. At this same conference the ALA Council established a

Coordinating Committee on Library Service to the Disadvantaged which oversaw the publication of *Library Service to the Disadvantaged: A Study based on Responses to Questionnaires from Public Libraries Serving Populations Over 15,000*. (43)

In the late 1960s, a number of American librarians argued that library collections lacked balance, that a purist moral stance on intellectual freedom was an example of hands-off liberalism, and that the library served mainstream social sectors, not the whole community.” Toni Samek, (42)

Office for Literacy and Outreach Services

On July 3, 1970, the Council voted to establish the Office for Library Service to the Disadvantaged (OLSD; changed to Office for Library Outreach Services [OLOS] in 1980; changed to Office for Literacy and Outreach Services [OLOS] in 1995) with Vincent J. Aceto as the first Chair of the new Office’s Advisory Committee. The purpose of the Office was delineated: to promote the provision of library service to the urban and rural poor, of all ages, and to those people who are discriminated against because they belong to minority groups; 2) to encourage the development of user-oriented informational and educational library services to meet the needs of the urban and rural poor, ethnic minorities, the underemployed, school dropouts, the semiliterate and illiterate and those isolated by cultural differences; and 3) to insure that librarians and others have information, access to technical assistance and continuing education opportunities to assist them in developing effective outreach programs. (44) Jean E. Coleman was appointed as staff liaison in 1973. (45)

Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Task Force [GLBTF]

Another landmark for issues relating to equity occurred within ALA in 1970 when Israel Fishman became the first coordinator of a Task Force on Gay Liberation (later the Gay,

Lesbian and Bisexual Task Force [GLBTF]) within the recently formed Social Responsibilities Round Table—the first professional gay association in the world. As James V. Carmichael, Jr. points out in *Daring to Find Our Names: The Search for Lesbian and Gay Library History*, the energies of the GLBTF have been largely devoted to service concerns for lesbian and gay patrons through nonpejorative subject headings and promotion of gay literature. In 1971 the ALA Council passed a resolution brought forward by the Task Force recommending that libraries and members strenuously combat discrimination in service to and employment of individuals from all minority groups, whether the distinguishing characteristic of the minority be ethnic, sexual, religious or of any other kind. (46)

Women

Another focus relating to equity of individuals was the establishment of the SRRT Task Force on Women (now the Feminist Task Force) and the ALA Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship (COSWL) founded in 1976. Though comprising the majority of the profession, services to women and the role of women had been neglected by the association at large. (47)

Equity at Issue

In 1981 ALA established a Council Committee on Minority Concerns and Cultural Diversity to provide a forum for addressing, debating, discussion and resolving problems and issues of concern that affect ethnic minority librarians and culturally diverse groups within ALA, ALA affiliates, and the profession. Librarians of color have formed affiliate organizations such as the American Indian Library Association (AILA); Asian/Pacific American Library Association (APALA); Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA); Chinese-Americans Library Association (CALA); and REFORMA-National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking. (48) In 1983 the report of the NCLIS Task Force on Libraries and Information

Services to Cultural Minorities was published based on the concerns that the 1979 WHCLIS had not adequately addressed the information needs of this large segment of the American population. (49) In 1984 ALA President E.J. Josey (1984-1985) charged an ALA President's Committee on Library Service to Minorities with reviewing the NCLIS report to suggest specific measures and activities that could be undertaken by ALA as an action document. The President's Committee, co-chaired by Elizabeth Martinez and Binnie Tate Wilkin, submitted the report, *Equity at Issue: Library Services to the Nation's Major Minority Groups*, in 1985. The report declared, "The major overall finding was that a disparity exists and continues to grow between the provision of library services for minority and poor communities compared to that provided for white and affluent communities. This inequity is most reprehensible in communities where the white population is actually the numerical minority." (50) The President's Committee on Library Service to Minorities recommended that ALA endorse the 42 recommendations made to NCLIS and further recommended that the Council Committee on Minority Concerns and Cultural Diversity follow and monitor the Association's progress in responding to these recommendations. Follow-up included the 1990 publication, *Addressing Ethnic and Cultural Diversity: A Report on Activities of the American Library Association, 1986-1989* by Sibyl E. Moses. (51)

Since its founding OLOS has been the conscience of the American Library Association as stated in the June 28, 1995 ALA Council "Resolution on the 25th Anniversary of the Office for Literacy and Outreach Services." The resolution identified OLOS for work increasing library service to the unserved and underserved; promoting literacy; advocating full intellectual participation for all members of the public; making it possible for minority librarians to be active in ALA through liaison work with ethnic affiliates and the Council Committee on Minority Concerns and Cultural Diversity; work with the Social Responsibility and Ethnic Materials and Information Exchange Round Tables; and

development of publications and programs on outreach, literacy, and community information.

Upon completion of ALA's Goal 2000 initiative the publication, *Equal Voices, Many Choices: Ethnic Library Organizations Respond to ALA's Goal 2000* provided a summary of ethnic organizations' reactions. (52) In 1998 ALA's commitment to equity of access was reaffirmed through the addition of a new unit within the Association, the Office for Diversity with Sandra Ríos Balderrama as the Association's first Diversity Officer. (53)

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. The ALA has worked long to provide access within its various units through efforts such as the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) "ACRL Guidelines for the Preparation of Policies on Library Access" (54) and the "Roads to Learning: The Public Libraries' Learning Disabilities Initiative" which encouraged linkages among libraries, community organizations, and service providers to improve service to learning disabled people, their families, professionals, and other interested people. (55) But it was not until 2001 that the association adopted an overarching policy for Library Services to People with Disabilities as developed by the Americans with Disabilities Act Assembly.

Libraries must not discriminate against individuals with disabilities and shall ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to library resources. To ensure such access, libraries may provide individuals with disabilities with services such as extended loan 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 real time captioning at library programs, and radio reading services.

Library Services to People with Disabilities Policy-2000

“The Library Services to People with Disabilities Policy” is a powerful commitment to inclusiveness that states, “Libraries play a catalytic role in the lives of people with disabilities by facilitating their full participation in society. Libraries should use strategies based upon the principles of universal design to ensure that library policy, resources and services meet the needs of all people.” (56)

Services to Poor and Homeless People

In 1990 the American Library Association adopted the policy, “Library Services for the Poor,” which states: “it is crucial that libraries recognize their role in enabling poor people to participate fully in a democratic society, by utilizing a wide variety of available resources and strategies.” Open doors are very different from proactive service. (57) In Sanford Berman’s essay in *Poor People and Library Services* the work to implement the policy is outlined along with his discussion of inadequacy of access to poverty-related resources. (58) Two ALA units focus on serving poor people, the SRRT Task Force on Hunger, Homelessness and Poverty; and the OLOS Subcommittee on Library Services to Poor and Homeless People charged with developing and recommending to the OLOS Advisory Committee initiatives and priorities to achieve implementation of the ALA Poor People’s Policy, to participate actively in said implementation, and to monitor the profession’s effectiveness in achieving that implementation. (59)

Protecting and Extending Access

Intellectual Freedom and “*Libraries: An American Value*”

The protection of access is often identified as concurrent with the ideals of intellectual freedom, another of ALA’s “Key Action” areas. Intellectual freedom is a basic right in a democratic society and a core value of the library profession. The American Library Association actively defends the right of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment. At the Midwinter 1999 Council of the American Library Association, 1998-1999 ALA President Ann K. Symons, presented *Libraries: An American Value* which was adopted reaffirming the Association’s commitment to free access to books, ideas, resources and information. (1) The work of the Association in defense of Intellectual Freedom has long been carefully documented through the publications and website of the Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF). (2)

For many years the OIF extended its scope of interpretation as new technologies emerged. However, the emergence of computer technologies in the seventies was the occasion of a new era of public deliberation about equity of access. The advent of machine-assisted reference service in the 70s and costs of providing services compatible with library ideals of equality of access were analyzed by Peter Watson in his essay, “The Dilemma of Fees for Service: Issues and Actions for Librarians.” At the 1977 ALA Council and Membership meeting in 1977 the Council reaffirmed advocacy for free access to information by its resolution on Free Access to Information. (3)

Toward a Conceptual Foundation for a National Information Policy

Protection of access became a clear ALA focus when 1977-78 ALA President Eric Moon’s special task force, chaired by David Kaser, presented the document, “Toward a

Conceptual Foundation for a National Information Policy,” for discussion at the 1978 Midwinter Meeting President’s Program.” This document coalesced much of the profession’s thinking about information access into “five separate but related ‘universals.’ All information must be available to all people in all formats purveyed through all communication channels and delivered at all levels of comprehension. If any one of these five qualities is compromised, the whole is enervated, and the national enterprise as a consequence suffers.” (4) Having set the tone with this no-hold barred challenge, ALA began a steady process of refining and addressing different aspects of information policy to protect and extend equity.

As is often the case in ALA much of the heavy lifting on issues begins in the more nimble and focused roundtables. The strong case for the availability of government information made so forcefully by member of the Government Documents Round Table and the ongoing work of Anne Heanue, creator and author of “Less Access to Less Information By and About the U.S. Government” from 1981-1998, to keep the public informed about efforts to restrict and privatize government information, provided a model of activism that carried through on matters of government information policy to the GPO Access Act of 1993. (5) Thus at the time of Eric Moon’s presidency and his support of the universals outlined in “Toward a Conceptual Foundation for a National Information Policy,” the ALA was beginning to put into place a clearly articulated commitment to protecting access.

Freedom and Equality of Access to Information

In 1983 ALA President, Carol A. Nemeyer (1982-1983), appointed the Commission on Freedom and Equality of Access to Information comprised of information policy experts to review the new issues relating to the production and dissemination of information and to identify issues of public policy related to information access. Dan Lacy chaired the

Commission and its final report, *Freedom and Equality of Access to Information; A Report to the American Library Association*, is often referred to as the “Lacy Commission.”

“One cannot talk about the roles libraries play in the distribution of knowledge without making the connections among the component parts of the system: the authors, the publishers, the technological apparatus, the libraries, the seekers of knowledge and information.”

Beverly P. Lynch, ALA President (1985-1986) “Forward,” *Freedom and Equality of Access to Information* (6)

The recommendations included in *Freedom and Equality of Access to Information* fell into categories of “Telecommunications,” “Electronically Stored Information,” “Government Information,” “Censorship,” “Copyright,” “Libel,” “Postal Rates,” and “Libraries and Access to Information.” The specific recommendations relating to libraries included the need for substantially higher levels of financial support to maintain access to information in traditional formats, while providing access to resources in newer electronic formats as well as professional intermediation needed to reach those resources; improved federal funding for libraries; support for information literacy; conservation and preservation of paper-based records; government support for telecommunication costs; support for federal libraries. (7)

Special Committee on Freedom and Equality of Access to Information

At the April, 1986 meeting the ALA Executive Board authorized the formation of a “Special Committee on Freedom and Equality of Access to Information” chaired by J. Dennis Day to review *Freedom and Equality of Access to Information*. (8) The Special Committee held hearings, submitted an interim report, identified relevant ALA policies, and shared major recommendations with all ALA units prior to developing *The Final Report and Recommendations*. The *Final Report* was elegant in its simplicity and clarity. It began with the observation, “Access is the first priority acknowledged in the recently adopted ALA

Mission and Goals Statement.” (9) It continued, “Historically, intellectual freedom and federal library legislation have been major and compelling issues for the Association. Although we have forged strong action-oriented programs in these two areas, the attention paid to access by the units and offices interested in intellectual freedom and legislation has been necessarily bound by their particular focus....to fulfill its mission statement, ALA needs an infrastructure to allow an association-wide concern and ability to respond rapidly and more extensively than the current primary focus on federal legislation or intellectual freedom allows...We, therefore recommend the establishment of a Coordinating Committee on Access to Information as a means to speed ALA’s action in dealing with the broad views of access embodied in ALA’s Mission and Goal Statement.” (10) While the Coordinating Committee met and planned (11) the Coalition on Government Information, authorized by ALA Council in 1985, was organized to focus national attention on efforts to limit access to government information and to develop public awareness of and support for improvements in access to government information. (12) A 1986 policy paper analyzing the need for oversight of national information policy by the information professions proposed an Office on Information Policy within ALA. (13)

In a 1989 paper prepared for the U.S. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, “Information Policy Issues: Putting Library Policy in Context,” Louis Vagianos and Barry Leaser, used some of the ideas developed in *Freedom and Equality of Access to Information* to demonstrate the rapid evolution of issues impacting information access and the need for a framework or forum to approach issues and search for solutions. Of particular interest was their focus on the changing role of the library as a social agent. (14) Again, within the Divisions thoughtful analysis of the issues continued to be carried out in such publications as the 1991 Library and Information Technology Association’s *Citizen Rights and Access to Electronic Information* in which the impact of the electronic information revolution on libraries was explored in depth. (15) That same year ALA issued

Using the Public Library in the Computer Age in which 1990-91 ALA President, Richard M. Dougherty observed, “ People whose lack of economic and technological resources could force them into the ranks of the ‘information have nots’ can remain among the advantaged ‘information haves’ if they are able to consult a well-funded and well-managed public library.” (16)

Your Right to Know: Librarians Make It Happen

The impact of these changes on the work of libraries was a focus of the presidency of Pat Schuman whose 1992 conference within a conference, *Your Right to Know: Librarians Make It Happen* included an amplification of the ideals of equity:

“We will not live in a true information society unless-and until- we ensure that people have access not only to information, but to cultural content. We will not live in a true information society unless-and until-people have the skills and the resources to use this content. We will not live in a true information society unless-and until- public policy makers recognize that an informed citizenry is a public good that benefits us all. We will not live in a true information society, we will not achieve equal opportunity and justice, unless- and until—all people have the library services they need to learn, live, work, participate, and enjoy our democracy.” (17)-- Pat Schuman (ALA President 1991-1992)

ALA Goal 2000—Intellectual Participation

In 1995 the ALA Council adopted “Vision: ALA Goal 2000—Intellectual Participation” as a five-year initiative to position the Association, libraries, and librarians for the 21st century. Goal 2000 envisioned that by the year 2000 ALA would accepted by the public as a voice and source of support for the participation of people of all ages and circumstances in a free and open information society; would be in collaboration with other organizations working for broader public participation in the development of information society issues; would have a vision statement defining its position and role within the emerging

information environment; and would have an expanded Washington Office with increased focus on information issues. (18)

The work of the Coordinating Committee on Access to Information (1988-1994) based on the Lacy Commission Report (1986) and the Kaser Report (1978) laid the intellectual and philosophical groundwork that resulted in the Association's decision to establish the Office for Information Technology (OITP) as set forth in ALA Goal 2000 created by Executive Director, Elizabeth Martinez. (19) Equity of access regarding information technology now had the pieces in place for direct action.

ALAction 2005 and "Equity of Access"

During 1997-98 ALA developed "ALAction 2005" which grew from Goal 2000. The "Key Action Areas" identified were Diversity; Education and Continuous Learning; 21st Century Literacy; Intellectual Freedom and Equity of Access. The expanded description of the Key Action Area, "Equity of Access" states: "The Association advocates funding and policies that support libraries as great democratic institutions, serving people of all ages, income level, location, ethnicity, or physical ability, and providing the full range of information resources needed to live, learn, govern, and work."

Equity of Access-

Key Action Area of the American Library Association

The Association advocates funding and policies that support libraries as a great democratic institution, serving people of all ages, income level, location, or ethnicity, and providing the full range of information resources needed to live, learn, govern, and work.

By 2005, ALA will be recognized as the leading voice for equitable access to information resources in all formats for all people.

ALA will have a comprehensive, clearly-articulated public policy agenda focused on equity of access, embracing the full range of public policy - from telecommunications policy to education and student learning standards.

ALA will have developed a model for 21st Century library practice

encompassing all formats, all people, all means of delivery, and all types and sizes of libraries.
 ALA services and products will be fully accessible to persons with disabilities . (20)

Congresses on Professional Education and Core Values Task Forces

The education of librarians is overseen by the American Library Association through its Committee on Accreditation (COA) and Office for Accreditation. Ultimately the future of the profession's stewardship of issues relating to Equity of Access will be developed and advocated by those individuals being educated in programs granted accreditation. In 1999 the Association appointed a Steering Committee on the Education Summit, chaired by Ken Haycock, which developed background papers on content and process and initiated the first Congress on Professional Education (COPE-1) aimed to reach consensus among stakeholder groups on the values and core competencies of the profession and on strategies for action to address common issues and concerns. The impetus for the Congress arose from changes in name of some programs of graduate education, the seeming lack of attention to core competencies, and the national shortage of professionals to work with young people and diverse and underserved populations. (21)

Among papers commissioned for the Congress under the aegis of the "Issues in the Profession" subcommittee one paper focused on "information equity" as the central goal of the library profession.

Librarianship, thanks to centuries of effort, has a simple and clear goal as well. Applying Ockham's Razor, that entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity, *the goal is information equity*. Inherent in this goal is working for universal literacy; defending intellectual freedom; preserving and making accessible the human record; and ensuring that preschoolers have books to read.

Katheen de la Peña McCook, *Using Ockham's Razor* (22)

COPE-1 recommendations clustered around five areas of major concern including the need to define the scope, content and values of the profession. (23) Follow-up actions (inter alia) included COPE-2 (24), chaired by James G. Neal and the creation of two Task

Forces on Core Values, the first chaired by Don Sager; the second by Patricia Glass Schuman. (25)

Upstream Access: Technological Issues

An Information Agenda for the 1980s

Since the early seventies librarians have carefully considered the intellectual foundations and technical issues that related to information policy. The 1977 Council Resolution on “Free Access to Information,” Kaser Report (1978), Lacy Commission (1986), and other vital Association work in the long march to protect and extend equity of access caused librarians to grapple with information policy issues in response to changing social contexts. The American Library Association, a strong supporter of the first WHCLIS in 1979, used that opportunity to focus on the policy implications of information. Under the aegis of President Thomas J. Galvin (1979-1980), a colloquium, formulated by Theodore Waller of Grolier, Inc. and Carlton C. Rochell, dean of libraries at New York University, defined and explored developments in computing and telecommunications, deregulation, broadcasting and cable, the institutional structure of cooperative networks, copyright, and the transformation of institutions and systems evolved in an era of print. In the introduction to the proceedings, *An Information Agenda for the 1980s* edited by Rochell, Galvin noted, “Four successive ALA presidents have endeavored, in a variety of ways, to use ALA’s substantial human and programmatic resources to help identify and define some of the key questions emerging as a consequence of the transition to a knowledge-based society.” (1) The eighties were a time that technology advanced rapidly within a restrictive period of government access and as we have seen, the American Library

Association throughout the eighties developed policies that helped to inform and position the profession to cope.

The library response included the Coalition on Government Information and numerous reports, studies and conferences within the Divisions and Roundtables to study and achieve understanding. The efforts to ensure free access to information grew exponentially with the advent of the Internet. Once the profession had adopted the resolution on Free Access to Information in 1977, the goal was clear, but the process needed to be developed.

The library community should actively participate in the formulation and implementation of national information policies.

The 1991 White House conference on Library and Information Services (WHCLIS 1991) was a natural catalyst for synthesis of concern. (2) Among its recommendations on upstream access issues, presented by ALA President, Patricia G. Schuman (1991-1992), the American Library Association included funding of the National Research and Education Network (NREN); free distribution of federal information products in all formats; and the assertion that the library community should actively participate in the formulation and implementation of national information policies. (3)

Following the 1991 WHCLIS and passage of the High Performance Computing Act of 1991 (sometimes called the NREN legislation) American Library Association members and units began to address issues relating to the growing National Information Infrastructure (NII) in a variety of ways. Articles in ALA Division journals such as *College and Research Libraries*, *Information Technology and Libraries*, *Library Administration and Management*

as well as conferences, workshops and programs helped develop the broad understanding required to formulate association-wide policy and action. (4)

In 1993 the American Library Association and its Division, the Library and Information Technology Association, in collaboration with the Council on Library Resources with support from the National Science Foundation held an Invitational Forum for National Library Associations--"Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Policy Issues." The goal of the forum was to provide a mechanism for the library community to identify national policy issues, questions and principles in the areas of telecommunications and information infrastructure. That effort resulted in a report and summary brochure, "Principles for the Development of the National Information Infrastructure (NII)" which delineated the relation between fundamental library principles and the Internet. It was useful to the library community and the Congress and the Administration as they grappled with formulating legislative initiatives and policy issues. The recommendations for the principle, "Equitable Access" identified were: 1) The NII should support and encourage a diversity of information providers in order to guarantee an open, fair, and competitive marketplace, with a full range of viewpoints; 2) Diversity of access should be protected through use of non-proprietary protocols; 3) National and international interoperability *standards* should be adopted to promote diversity and an open playing field; 4) Access to basic network services should be affordable and available to all; 5) Basic network access should be made available independent of geographic location; and 6) The NII should ensure private, government and non-profit participation in governance of the network; and 7) Electronic information should be appropriately documented, organized and archived through the cooperative endeavors of information service providers and libraries. (5)

Association officers continued to be diligent in efforts to provide input on national policy issues such as intellectual property and the National Information Infrastructure. In 1994 ALA President Arthur Curley (1994-1995) submitted comments on these issues,

summarizing three key points: a balanced policy framework as essential for the NII; expanded limitations must accompany expanded rights; the need for a new National Commission on New Technological Uses (CONTU) of copyrighted works. Curley also announced a proposal to help the federal government provide incentives to link the nation's classrooms and libraries to the National Information Infrastructure, explaining "The first hook-up is always the hardest to get,"and "Once library users and library workers realize the incredible potential that internet connectivity brings, they will want to make sure these services continue. Libraries must maintain a proactive role in getting on and using the NII." (6)

Curley's 1994 testimonies demonstrate the complexity and breadth of issues relating to libraries and information technology. The capstone to his presidency was the establishment of the ALA's Office for Information Technology Policy.

Establishment of the Office for Information Technology Policy

In June 1995 in recognition of the complexity of issues relating to information policy and as part of ALA Goal 2000 the Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP) was created to enhance the ability of the ALA Washington Office to follow and influence national issues relating to electronic access to information as a means to ensure the [public's right to a free and open information society. (7)

"The establishment of OITP in June 1995 took place in an environment that was highly charged and dynamic; an environment in which technology policy issues were becoming more prominent, but one still not prepared for the complexities of such a discussion. The merger activity of businesses in the computing, telecommunications, and media industry had already served to raise information technology policy issues in the public arena. And the introduction and passage of the 1996 Telecommunications Act further stirred a frenzy of activity in the technology policy arena, affecting two important areas for libraries and their publics — free speech and universal service."

OITP and its first Advisory Committee, chaired by former ALA Executive Director, Robert Wedgeworth, immediately began to organize ALA's response to issues such as discounted telecommunication rates to libraries and schools— Universal Service. It was timely that the ALA's next President, Betty Turock, established information policy concerns as her presidential theme, for under her watch information policy advocacy became a critical focus of the Association.

Envisioning a Nation Connected: Librarians Define the Public Interest in the Information Superhighway

Betty Turock, ALA President in 1995-1996, made equity on the information superhighway the focus of her year. (9) At a President's Summit "A Nation Connected: Defining the Public Interest in the Information Superhighway," held in February, 1996 at the Annenberg Institute, a noted panel set the intellectual framework for a twenty-first century action agenda for librarians. (10) Later that spring Turock introduced the American Library Association's position on universal service in testimony before the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Among the specific recommendations in the filing were: 1) that core universal services for the public—analogue to plain old telephone service (POTS) under the Telecommunications Act of 1934—should ensure the public's ability to access the information superhighway; 2) that text-based access is not sufficient to supply effective public service from libraries and schools. They need high bandwidth technology for interactive multimedia applications; 3) that the definition of discounted special services for libraries and schools should include all telecommunications services available commercially; 4) that the discount rates for telecommunications services should be the lower of either a) the lowest price offered to any customer; or b) a wholesale price,

or fair-cost price, that would cover a company's cost of offering a service; and 5) that additional discount support should be made available in rural, insular, and other high-cost areas as well as in low-income areas. (11)

Since the establishment of the OITP reports supporting the ALA's commitment to issues relating to upstream equity of access have been developed and disseminated. "Policy Briefs" have included, *What Broadband Means to the Library Community*; *The Digital Dilemma: Intellectual Property in the Information Age*; and *The Uniform Computer Information Transactions Act (UCITA) and Libraries*. A series of reports on the E-Rate; reports on Public *Library Internet Services: Impacts on the Digital Divide*; and National Surveys of U.S. Public Library Outlet Internet Connectivity have provided ALA with the well-researched information and analysis required to testify before government on policy issues. (12)

Digital Divide

The American Library Association Office of Technology Information Policy has developed briefings and worked with the ALA leadership on issues relating to the "Digital Divide." The "Digital Divide" concept is used to characterize differences in access to information through the Internet and other information technologies and services in the skills, knowledge, and abilities to use information, due to geography, race, economic status, gender, and physical ability. (13)

Libraries are more essential than ever. They are essential to our economic well-being, to the advancement of learning, to coping with information overload, and to closing the digital divide. With the development of the Internet, there is new hope for rekindling the democratic principles put forth by our founding fathers in the Constitution-new hope that everyone will have the opportunity to participate in our information society. Even if a household cannot afford or chooses not to connect to the Internet from home, people can log on at their local library. Thanks to the universal service provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, nearly every community is now connected, thus ensuring everyone an on-ramp to the information superhighway. (14)

No other recent upstream access concept has had such resonance among library workers and the general public as that of the “Digital Divide.” Articles, conferences and websites have used this metaphor to characterize the opportunity challenges created by an increasingly wired world. The alacrity with which the library community developed its response and recognition of the inherent injustice regarding equity of access as impacted by connectivity and the individual’s capacity to make use of new technologies demonstrates librarians’ acute sensitivity to these issues.

CIPA

The Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) went into effect in April 2001 placing restrictions on the use of funding available through the Library Service and Technology Act (LSTA), Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Universal Service discount program. The restrictions require the use of Internet safety policies and technology which blocks or filters certain material from being accessed through the Internet. The ALA has mounted a strong legal challenge to this legislation in *ALA v. United States* in the U.S. District Court of Eastern Pennsylvania. Throughout the process the Association has provided complete documentation and advice to the library community. (15)

At the closing arguments in the CIPA trial, ALA President, John W. Berry (2001-2002) made a strong statement for information equity.

“There is much at stake in this case. Librarians play a unique role in our society: We bring people together with the information they need and want.” “Librarians do this by making sure libraries have information and ideas across the spectrum of social and political

thought, so people can choose what they want to read or listen to or view. The CIPA mandates are counter to the mission of our public libraries.”

ALA President John W. Berry. (2001-2002) April, 2002 (16)

THE ROCKS IN THE WHIRLPOOL

Throughout its history the American Library Association has reflected democratic principles of action that have helped it to make steady progress in the pursuit of Equity of Access. As with any other democratic organization changes in leadership and response to external forces have made this pursuit sometimes more episodic than linear, but for the most part the Association has built a strong bulwark against those upstream and downstream currents that would erode equity. Unifying visions among the leadership of the American Library Association have been strengthened by reliance on the Association's decentralized structure for development of ideas, agility in complex analysis, and the necessary debate to extend and refine positions.

Library Principles for a Networked World

The development of major information policy issues relevant to libraries continues to be a central focus of the American Library Association. In April 2001 the ALA Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP) Advisory Committee, chaired by Elaine Albright and the ALA Committee on Legislation (COL), chaired by Agnes Griffen called a meeting of participants from ALA divisions and units as well as representatives from other library associations to develop an agenda for libraries and information policy issues. The 1993

“Principles for the Development of the National Information infrastructure” were used as a springboard to reach a consensus on the critical fundamental questions. (1) The result of this meeting was the document, *Principles for the Networked World* which was adopted by the ALA Council in January 2002. (2) The policy issues identified were: 1) Intellectual Freedom; 2) Privacy; 3) Intellectual Property; 4) Infrastructure; 5) Equitable Access; and 6) Content.

The policy issue, “Equitable Access,” user-centered, barrier-free, and format-independent access to information, was characterized as being comprised of the following principles:

- 1) Access to information resources in the networked world should be barrier-free, format independent, and ubiquitous to ensure and open flow of ideas;
- 2) To achieve maximum accessibility by the public in the networked world, cost of information access must be fair and equitable;
- 3) Library access should be crafted in collaboration with communities to reflect local needs and conditions;
- 4) People must have predictable, sustainable, location-independent access to information resources without sacrificing privacy;
- 5) Libraries in the networked world should provide alternative approaches, methods and access points that meet the unique needs and circumstances of all people. (3)

Principles for the Networked World embodies tenets relating to Equity of Access that have been part of the Association’s philosophy since the 1920s with the work of the Library Extension Board; the 1930s with the *National Plan*; the 1940s with *A National Plan for Public Library Service*; the 1950s and 1960s with the LSA and LSCA; the 1970s with *Toward a National Program for Library and Information Services: Goals for Action*; the Kaser report of the late 1970s; the Lacy Commission of the 1980s; GOAL 2000, the LSTA and ALAction in the 1990s.

Unifying Visions by Leadership

The millennial theme of ALA President Sarah Ann Long (1999-2000) was “Libraries Build Community.” To be effective Long argued, libraries must collaborate to form partnerships and alliances beyond the traditional to help make the library a highly visible and integral part of the community. (4) In 2000-2001 ALA President Nancy Kranich emphasized the role libraries play as a cornerstone of democracy. (5) Under Kranich another unifying theme, “information literacy” was a focus to bring together librarians and community members/organizations to help prepare the public to utilize information efficiently and effectively so they can fully participate in the workplace, education, community and family life. (6)

President John W. Berry’s (2001-2002) Task Force on Equity of Access/Digital Inclusion (7) and President-Elect for 2002-2003, Maurice (Mitch) J. Freedman’s campaign on the platform of free access to libraries and information for all, no matter what their economic condition, physical challenges, ethnicity, national origin, sexual preference, or age (8) demonstrate that the ALA leadership continues to pull together the various aspects of the Association’s work that relate to Equity of Access.

Making New Technologies Work for Human Development

The United Nations Development Programme Report for 2001: *Making New Technologies Work for Human Development* notes that the world is challenged to help identify the global information policies that will lend support to developing nations. (9) In the United States the American Library Association has placed itself in the midst of the whirlpool that surges around the hard issues of upstream and downstream access. Rock after rock has been placed in this torrent to provide a rampart on which to fight for Equity of Access.

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Downstream Access: Getting to the Table

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Adopted by the Council of the American Library Association February 3, 1999.

Libraries in America are cornerstones of the communities they serve. Free access to the books, ideas, resources, and information in America's libraries is imperative for education, employment, enjoyment, and self-government.

Libraries are a legacy to each generation, offering the heritage of the past and the promise of the future.

To ensure that libraries flourish and have the freedom to promote and protect the public good in the 21st century, we believe certain principles must be guaranteed.

To that end, we affirm this contract with the people we serve:

- We defend the constitutional rights of all individuals, including children and teenagers, to use the library's resources and services;
- We value our nation's diversity and strive to reflect that diversity by providing a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities we serve;
- We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children's use of the library and its resources and services;
- We connect people and ideas by helping each person select and effectively use the library's resources;
- We protect each individual's privacy and confidentiality in the use of library resources and services;
- We protect the rights of individuals to express their opinions about library resources and services;
- We celebrate and preserve our democratic society by making available the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions, and ideas so that all individuals have the opportunity to become lifelong learners—informed, literate, educated, and culturally enriched.

Change is constant; but these principles transcend change and endure in a dynamic technological, social, and political environment.

By embracing these principles, libraries in the United States can contribute to a future that values and protects freedom of speech in a world that celebrates both our similarities and our differences, respects individuals and their beliefs, and holds all persons truly equal and free.

(2) The Office for Intellectual Freedom is charged with implementing ALA policies concerning the concept of intellectual freedom as embodied in the Library Bill of Rights, the Association's basic policy on free access to libraries and library materials. The goal of the office is to educate librarians and the general public about the nature and importance of intellectual freedom in libraries. ALA. Office of Intellectual Freedom. Accessed April 19, 2002. <http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/>. See also Library Bill of Rights. Accessed April 19, 2002. <http://www.ala.org/work/freedom/lbr.html> Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights. Accessed April 19, 2002. <http://www.ala.org/work/freedom/interpret.html>. Freedom to Read. Accessed April 19, 2002. <http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/freeread.html>. Other Policies, Procedures, Resolutions, and Guidelines Protecting the Freedom to Read. Accessed April 19, 2002. <http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/policies.html> Also see American Library Association, Office for Intellectual Freedom, *Intellectual Freedom Manual*. Sixth Edition. (Chicago: American Library Association, 2002).

(3) Peter Watson, "The Dilemma of Fees for Service: Issues and Actions for Librarians," *ALA Yearbook 1978* (Chicago: ALA, 1978), pp. xv-xxii); ALA Policy 50.3 "Free Access to Information," Pat Harris, "ALA Council," *ALA Yearbook 1978* (Chicago: ALA, 1978), p. 108.

(4) David Kaser "Toward a Conceptual Foundation for a National Information Policy," a document drafted by a committee chaired on behalf of 1977-78 President, Eric Moon, was prepared as a discussion document for the 1978 Midwinter Meeting. Obtained from ALA Archives. p.1. For additional commentary see "Arthur Plotnik "Four New 'Takes' on 1978 Activity from the ALA Midwinter Meeting," *American Libraries* (March 1978): 132-133. The LJ critique (June 1, 1978, p. 1137-8). For great insight into the deliberative process that contributed to Eric Moon's theme and idealistic principles of "free and equitable information for all," see Kenneth F. Kister, "National Information Policy Launched," in *Eric Moon: The Life and Library Times* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2002), pp. 330-334.

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(13) Kathleen de la Peña McCook (Heim), "National Information Policy and a Mandate for Oversight by the Information Professions," *Government Publications Review* 13 (1986): 21-37.

(14) Louis Vagianos and Barry Leaser, "Information Policy Issues: Putting Library Policy in Context," In *Rethinking the Library in the Information Age*. Anne J. Mathews, series editor. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Library Programs, 1989), p. 29.

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1. ALA will be accepted by the public as a voice and source of support for the participation of people of all ages and circumstances in a free and open information society.
2. ALA will be an active formal participant in various national arenas discussing and deciding aspects of the information society that affect libraries and their publics.
3. ALA will have identified and will be in collaboration with other organizations and groups working for broader public participation in the development of information society issues.
4. ALA will have created a vision statement for broad distribution defining its position and role within the emerging information environment.
5. ALA will have an expanded Washington Office with greatly increased ability to learn about, analyze, share information about and shape important national information issues in addition to tracking traditional library issues.
6. ALA will have completed a five-year thematic cycle that has framed the advancement of these issues and coordinated the support of all areas of the Association in preparation for the 21st century.
7. ALA will have provided training and support to library professionals and members of the public to create an awareness of the variety of social and technical issues related to the information society and to provide the necessary background for promoting further dialogue at the local level.
8. ALA will have reviewed and adjusted its internal operations as a means of assisting all divisions and units in carrying out the new focus as appropriate to their sphere.
9. ALA will have redefined library information education and provided five years of training for professionals to update their skills for the new information age.

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(2) Patricia W. Berger, "Toward a National Information Policy: What Should we Expect from a Second White House Conference?" *Library Administration and Management* (spring 1991): 73-79.

(3)"The American Library Association's Recommendations for the Second White House Conference on Library and Information Services." in *White House Conference on Library and Information Services, Information 2000: Library and Information Services for the 21st Century*. (Washington, DC: The Conference, 1991), pp.430-442. The recommendations were the outgrowth of the common agenda developed by ALA and its 21 affiliates in 1990 and written by the ALA Ad Hoc Committee on the 1991 White House Conference on Library and Information Services and an Ad Hoc Committee of the ALA Executive Board chaired by Past-ALA President (1989-1990) Patricia Wilson Berger.

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