

Summer 2019 - Public Relations Principles

Caroline Vaught

American Library Association



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	p. 3
Organization and Industry Overview	p. 4
Public Relations in ALA	p. 6
Situation Analysis	p. 8
Publics	p. 10
Public Relations Activities	p. 12
Recommendations	p. 17
References	p. 19
Appendices	p. 20

Executive Summary

As the oldest library centered organization, founded in 1876, the American Library Association is at an advantage when it comes to competition. They have had years to develop a flawless system that continues to work in modern society. ALA knows their audience and has expanded to have 11 different specialized divisions.

This public relations audit focuses on what makes ALA so unique from different organizations. They have had the time to really get to know their publics and make a name for themselves in the book industry. Their biggest asset is their growing social media channels. With solid values that are firmly stated in their mission statement, ALA does its best to give access to information to all people equally and exercising the freedom of speech.

The author of this audit aims to highlight the best that ALA has to offer not only to their employees and their members, but to the general consumer in the hopes that flaws can be spotted and dealt with in a reasonable and timely manner. Brief recommendations are stated at the end of this to better improve the way that the American Library Association works and functions.

Organization and Industry Overview



Source: "American Library Association to List Chicago Properties"
<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org>

The American Library Association (from this moment on referred to as ALA) is an organization that oversees the direction of American libraries. The first meeting of ALA was held in 1853 with the intent to meet annually, but there was no true action until October 6th, 1876 when there was a call to have a convention for librarians. As expected for the time period, 103 librarians (90 men and 13 women) responded and became the first ALA group. ("History", 2017)

ALA is the parent organization of several divisions: American Association of School Librarians (AASL), Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS), Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), Association of Specialized, Government & Cooperative Library Agencies (ASGCLA), Library & Information Technology Association (LITA), Library Leadership & Management Association (LLAMA), Public Library Association (PLA), Reference & User Services Association (RUSA), United for Libraries (Trustees, Friends, Foundations), and Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA). Each division is a branch of ALA itself and is built by certain individuals to maintain each division where they publish their own newsletters and journals and, in some cases, offer scholarships and maintain relationships with their own affiliates. ("ALA Divisions, 2019)

In compliance with their mission statement (as stated below), ALA goes out of their way to make sure that every aspect of the library is covered in some way or another from research to colleges to children to young adults.

ALA is headed by a council that essentially makes all the decisions for the organization, policy-wise. Along with the Council, they also have an Executive Board that administers policy decisions and programs. ALA has 37 standing committees and is hope to 11 membership divisions and 20 round tables for members to share their thoughts, but don't conform to the interests of any of the specific divisions. The branching of different networks and affiliates allows ALA to spread out and reach a bigger audience. Two meetings are required by the council each year, but one is held at the annual conference held by the organization (see p.15 for details on ALAAC) ("Upcoming...", 2019)

The ALA Executive Board consists of the president, president-elect, immediate past president, treasurer, executive director, and eight members elected by Council from its

membership for three-year

terms. The current President is Wanda Kay Brown and the President-Elect is Julius C. Jefferson, Jr. from the Library of Congress. There are currently 13 people on the Executive Board. ("Council Composition...", 2017)

ALA MISSION STATEMENT

"To provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all."

See appendix A to learn more about ALA's rules, guidelines, and bylaws.

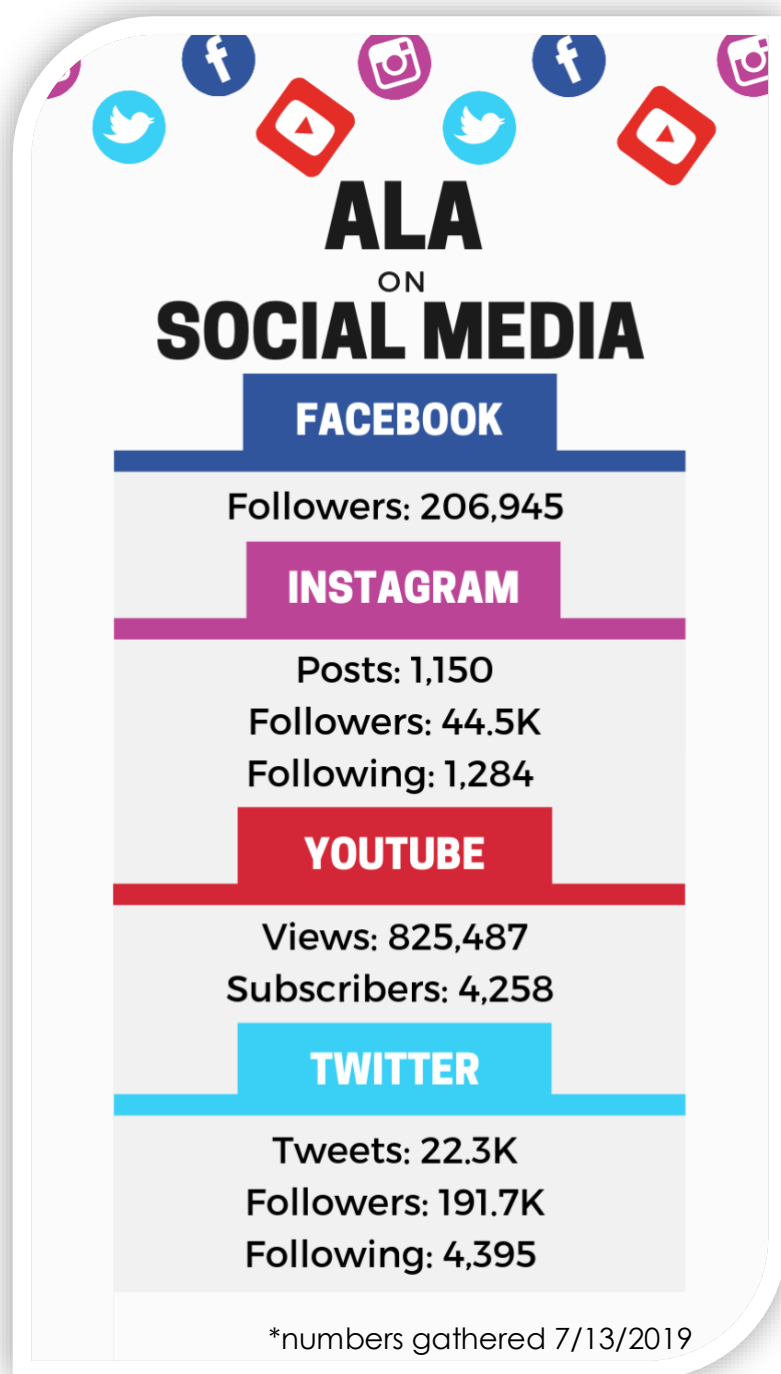
Public Relations in ALA

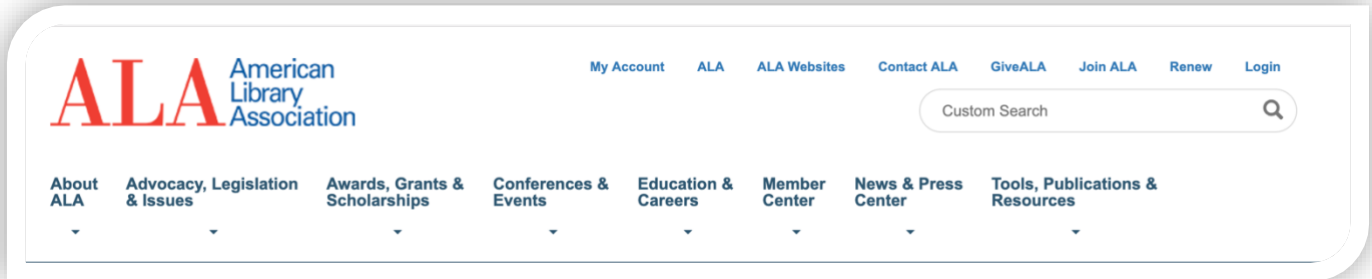
Social Media

In the book industry, social media is one of the most important aspects of maintaining a relationship with not only employees and those directly affected by the inner workings of ALA, but also to all of their peers which includes essentially every library, those that utilize libraries, and the librarians that run them. ALA uses the main social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter to spread their information. As shown in the image to the right, it appears as though the most productive platform in use is Facebook with Twitter as a close second. While YouTube has the most views overall, it has the lowest number of followers/subscribers.

See appendix B to learn more about ALA's social media pages.

In addition to their extensive social media usage, ALA also has a deeply detailed website that allows for relatively smooth navigation that shows what they are involved in and shows off the different publications they have organized by their divisions.





Source: "ALA"
www.ala.org

As pictured above, ALA has very accessible navigation. Their "About ALA" section appropriately details the history of ALA. It is where they put their mission statement as well as their constitution, bylaws, and rules regarding council positions. Essentially, it is where the standard background information is placed, so that the reader can better understand the layout and the workings of ALA.

Obviously, as an organization centered on the accessibility of books and learning devices for all people, equally. This is where their "Advocacy, Legislation & Issues" tab comes from. This is where they talk about Banned Books Week, which focuses on reading books that have previously been censored or that have been banned from schools or other organizations for not having the same values or ideas that we have in modern society. A sub tab "Equity, Diversity & Inclusion" also focuses on their values of getting the same resources to all people.

The other tabs focus on different aspects of their PR (see p.12 to see ALA's PR activities). This includes their multiple publications (newsletters, books, etc.) and makes sure to give a sub tab on their professional ethics.

ALA's press releases and press kits are put in the "News & Press Center" tab to make them more accessible to members of the press. This is where they show off their different connections by linking to their social media sites and their recent media coverage, which not only showcases what recent media they have been putting out, but also what media outlets they have connections to.

News & Press Center

[ALA Press Releases](#)

[ALA Social Media Channels](#)

[Message Book for Members](#)

[Press Center](#)

[Press Credential Guidelines](#)

[Press Kits](#)

[Recent Media Coverage](#)

[State of America's Libraries Report 2019](#)

Situation Analysis: SWOT

Strengths

- **Original library hub:** ALA is the original and longest standing hub that connects together all American libraries
- **Organization:** With a solid hierarchy and flawless system, ALA's website and inner workings work in their favor. Everything has a place and fits seamlessly into the organization.
- **Values driven:** The organization follows their mission statement and shows it with all the related content they have on their website and is obvious in their press releases

Weaknesses

- **Small community:** ALA is mostly aimed at librarians and, even though they advocate for equal opportunity for all library goers, they are only really known by librarians and publishing industry professionals. Most casual library goers aren't going to know about ALA.
- **Non-profit:** As a nonprofit, the organization is at a disadvantage when it comes to having the funds to properly do the things they want to do which includes exposure and press releases.

Opportunities

- **Readership:** With modern technology, ALA has the opportunity to reach a broader audience than they already do, which can bring more people into libraries. It also gives them the opportunity to put some of the content online to make it more accessible (as per their mission statement). ALA can also reach out to other libraries and organizations internationally to build a bigger web of activity and connectivity.

Threats

- **Decreased interest in libraries:** Even though the internet is a great resource for spreading out, it also makes people less likely to physically go to a library. People are more likely to take the time to look something up at home or use their Kindle or iPad to read instead of going to a library.
- **Competitors with the same values:** Some newer groups that are more focused on technology threaten ALA's stance on top, since they are an older group that has to adapt more to big changes, especially in regard to technological advances.

Publics

Producers

- Employees/Council Members
- Librarians
- Members

The main producers for ALA are their employees and council members, because they make the bulk of the decisions for ALA. Librarians are also considered producers, because they are essentially employees. They are the ones that see the decisions of ALA in action and can report back to help them determine whether or not certain choices were worth making or if they are actually working like they should. Members that donate to ALA are also producers, because they put money into ALA to help it make changes to what is going on in libraries. Therefore, their input is important to what ALA is trying to do.

Consumers

- Library goers
- College students
- Academics/Researchers

Consumers are those that receive the product that the organization is releasing. In this case, that means library goers. Underneath this could be the subtopics of college students, who utilize their campus libraries to study and work. Likewise, academics and researchers are also highly likely to be frequent library goers.

Enablers

- Media

In general, media is going to enable the organization. They are the ones that are going to spread press releases, write reactions and reviews, and, in many cases, are going to be consumers as well as enablers.

Limiters

- Government
- Competitors

Competitors are the biggest limiter on ALA, because they hold the same values as ALA and advertise that they have the same beliefs. Some of these competitors are a big threat to ALA. Likewise, the government is a limiter, because of the different rules and laws they put into place that keep ALA from doing some of the things they want to do to better libraries.

Public Relations Activities

Campaigns

National Library Week

National Library Week focuses on bringing awareness to local, academic, and school libraries. ALA challenges the public to visit their libraries and then share their stories about their experiences with the library throughout their lives. The purpose of this is to show that libraries are more than just places to read books, but also places to have discussions and learn about new and exciting things. Many libraries have programs such as group discussions, arts and craft sessions, reading circles, and book clubs that can bring together communities as well as teach people new skills that they otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity for.

Held in April, there is a new theme for each year. The theme for April 2019 was Libraries = Strong Communities to showcase how libraries are at the heart of a town and are what bring people together. ("National Library Week", 2019)

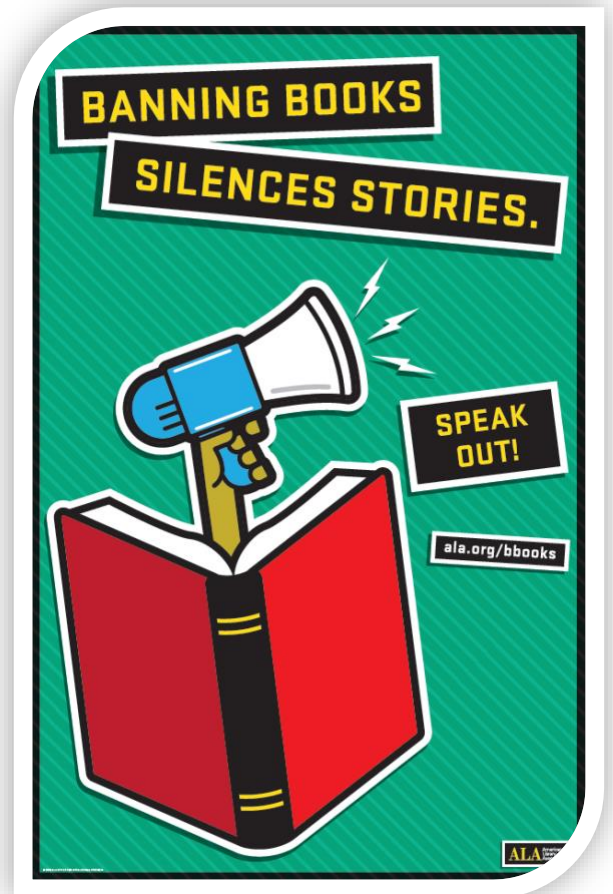
Banned Books Week

Banned Books Week is held in a week every September to celebrate the freedom of speech. For decades, there have been books that have been challenged and censored, because they seem to no longer fit the modern mold of literature. Some of these books have been banned from cities, schools, and libraries across the country and, in some cases, across the world. A few of the banned books include *To Kill a Mocking Bird* by Harper Lee and *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, but also more modern books like *Two Boys Kissing* by David Levithan and *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. Usually the reasons for banning these books are

because of the outdated language, the presence of LGBTQIA+ characters or material, or the appearance of suicidal thoughts or actions. ALA's stance is that reading shouldn't be regulated and even maintain a channel to call and report any instances of book regulating, burning, or banning. ("Banned Books Week", 2019)

Library Card Sign-Up Month

Every September is considered Library Card Sign-Up Month. The purpose of this is to convince people that getting a library card is the first step to a life of learning and developing not just for kids, but for adults as well. This year (2019), ALA teamed up with Disney Pixar to make the cast of the animated film Toy Story 4 the headliners for the 2019 Library Card Sign-Up Month ("September is...", 2019).



Libraries Transform

Libraries Transform is an ALA initiative focused on increasing the public awareness of libraries and the critical role they play in transforming lives and communities through education. Libraries Transform provides a collection of free resources, including graphics, key messages and ideas, that can be used for marketing, advocacy, outreach, fundraising and more. Launched in 2015, Libraries Transform is all about what libraries can do for people instead of what they can have for people ("Libraries Transform Campaign", 2019).

Programs

Book Expo America

As the biggest professional annual gathering for the book industry, it's only fitting for ALA to be present. At this event, ALA gets the opportunity to talk to the top people in publishing to spread the word of libraries and to make connections that are invaluable.

See appendix C to learn more about Book Expo America.

Americans and the Holocaust: A Traveling Exhibition for Libraries

The Americans and the Holocaust traveling exhibition addresses important themes in American history, including Americans' responses to refugees, war and genocide in the 1930s and '40s. This exhibition will challenge the commonly held assumptions that Americans knew little and did nothing about the Nazi persecution and murder of Jews as the Holocaust unfolded.

Drawing on a remarkable collection of primary sources from the 1930s and '40s, the exhibition focuses on the stories of individuals and groups of Americans who took action in response to Nazism. It will challenge visitors to consider the responsibilities and obstacles faced by individuals — from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to ordinary Americans — who made difficult choices, sought to effect change, and, in a few cases, took significant risks to help victims of Nazism even as rescue never became a government priority. The USHMM and ALA PPO hope to challenge people to not only ask “what would I have done?” but also, “what will I do?” The special library exhibition — based on the exhibition at the USHMM in Washington, D.C. — will

travel to 50 U.S. public and academic libraries from 2020 to 2022 (“Americans...”, 2019).

Harry Potter’s World: Renaissance Science, Magic, and Medicine

Twelve libraries were selected to host the exhibition for a four-week display period between September 2009 and November 2010. All libraries on the tour were expected to pay for incoming shipping for the exhibition, which ranged from \$250 to \$450, depending on the distance between sites. Using materials from the NLM’s History of Medicine collections, the exhibition explored Harry Potter’s world, its roots in Renaissance science, and the ethical questions that affected not only the wizards in J.K. Rowling’s books, but also the historical thinkers featured in the series. Featuring fifteenth- and sixteenth-century views of the world and its creatures taken from the works of the period’s leading thinkers, alchemists, naturalists and occultists, the exhibition panels explored the intersection between the Harry Potter novels and Renaissance thinkers, lore, and practices (“Harry Potter’s”..., 2012).

American Library Association Annual Conference

ALA’s annual conference celebrates the connection between librarians with readers, bloggers, industry professionals, and anyone who generally loves books! Every year, hundreds of people flock to ALAAC to meet with their fellow book friends and learn about new books that will be coming out within the next year. This event includes giveaways, ARC (advanced reader copy) exchanges, author meet ups, and tons of different speakers from agents, editors, publishers, bloggers, and authors to exchange ideas and hopes.



Projects

Publications and Newsletters

ALA has several publications and newsletter that span over several divisions. These publications range from Middle Eastern to the Arts. There's essentially a newsletter or online magazine for anything you can think about which puts ALA at an advantage when it comes to literary and historical pieces.

Recommendations

Accessibility

While ALA has an in-depth website, their content isn't exactly accessible to the average person. Without being on the inside or being a librarian, there isn't a whole lot that the general person can do with ALA. The website should

Making a channel where the general person (someone not involved with ALA or their divisions at all) can make recommendations and make their programs and campaigns more open. As per their mission statement, they should be completely open to helping others that don't have huge public libraries or libraries that belong in large cities, because their focus is all about making content accessible to all people. Their belief is that of free content, but they aren't doing all they can to make this happen. Appealing to the general audience would help put some real conviction behind their mission and prove that they really are doing all they can.

Visual

Visually, the ALA website (www.ala.org) is disappointing. Of course, that's not to say that it should be bright colors and frills, but the gray scale backgrounds on every page with red and blue accents get tiring after a while. There are so many different tabs and subtabs and then sub tabs even under those, the navigation gets a little tedious and starts to feel not so welcoming.

After exploring the website, it seems as though the organization behind the tabs doesn't make too much sense and they all start to run together. Making certain

articles in different colors would not only make the website more visually appealing, but it would also help with some of the organization issues.

Consumer-friendly

The fact of the matter is that the regular consumer just won't know about ALA and what they do to help the libraries in America. There's no way that, unless a person was prominent in the book industry, a higher than average library goer, or a librarian themselves, the general consumer will know that ALA is the backbone of the library system. A way to fix this would be to make posters that go up in libraries, but the real way to fix this problem would be to make their social media more appealing to more than just extreme bibliophiles.

ALA has many different exhibits and publications that would interest a large group of people, but without people knowing about ALA and the different activities and programs they have available, those people won't know that there's even anything for them to be interested in and, therefore, ALA misses out on the opportunity for money from donations and the consumer misses out on the opportunity to learn something new or to learn more about a subject that truly interests them.



References

"ALA Divisions". (2019, January 28). Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/divs>

"Americans and the Holocaust: A Traveling Exhibition for Libraries". (2019, June 18).

Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/tools/programming/USHolocaustMuseum>

"Banned Books Week (September 22-28, 2019)". (2019, May 17). Retrieved from

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/banned>

"Council Composition and Charge". (2017, July 18). Retrieved from

<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/council>

"Harry Potter's World: Renaissance Science, Magic, and Medicine". (2012, May 14).

Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/tools/programming/potter>

"History". (2017, July 18). Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/node/230/>

"Libraries Transform Campaign". (2019, April 30). Retrieved from

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/libraries-transform-campaign>

"National Library Week". (2019, March 29). Retrieved from

<http://www.ala.org/conferencesevents/celebrationweeks/natlibraryweek>

"September is Library Card Sign-up Month". (2019, July 08). Retrieved from

<http://www.ala.org/conferencesevents/celebrationweeks/card>

"Upcoming Annual Conferences & Midwinter Meetings". (2019, July 09). Retrieved

from <http://www.ala.org/conferencesevents/upcoming-annual-conferences-midwinter-meetings>

Appendices

Appendix A

ALA makes sure to keep an updated page about their Bylaws as well as a separate page about their organization Constitution.

Bylaws

- [ALA Election Information](#)
- [Constitution & Bylaws](#)
 - [ALA Bylaws](#)
 - [ALA Constitution](#)
- [Council](#)
- [Executive Office and Office of ALA Governance](#)
- [Financial Data](#)
- [Handbook of Organization](#)
- [Legal Guidelines](#)
- [Officers & Executive Board](#)

ALA Bylaws

[Go to ALA Constitution](#)

Article

1. [Membership](#)
2. [Meeting](#)
3. [Nominations and Elections](#)
4. [Council](#)
5. [Chapters](#)
6. [Divisions](#)
7. [Round Tables](#)
8. [Committees](#)
9. [Finances](#)
10. [Notices by Mail](#)
11. [Voting by Mail](#)
12. [Parliamentary Authority](#)

Article I. Membership

- **Section 1.** Classification of Membership. Membership of the Association shall consist of:
 - *Personal Members:* any person who has completed the process of joining the Association as an individual or on whom membership has been conferred by the Association.
 - *Chapter Members:* any legally constituted state, territorial, or regional library association that has been granted chapter status by action of Council under [Article V, Section 1\(c\) of the Bylaws](#).
 - *Organization Members:* Non-profit libraries and nonprofit schools conducting programs of library education; library associations; affiliated organizations; foreign organizations; and non-profit organizations other than libraries and library schools.
 - *Corporate Members:* For-profit companies and organizations interested in supporting the work of the Association

Constitution

ALA Governance | Election

- ALA Election Information
- **Constitution & Bylaws**
 - ALA Bylaws
 - ALA Constitution**
- Council
- Executive Office and Office of ALA Governance
- Financial Data
- Handbook of Organization
- Legal Guidelines
- Officers & Executive Board

[Email](#) | [Print](#) | [Cite](#) | [Share This Page](#)

ALA Constitution

Article

1. Name
2. Object
3. Membership
4. Divisions and Round Tables
5. Meeting
6. Council
7. Executive Board
8. Officers and Committees
9. Endowment Funds
10. Affiliated Organizations and Chapters
11. Bylaws Amendments and Editorial Changes
12. Amendments

Article I. Name

- **Section 1.** The name of this body shall be the American Library Association.

[Top](#)

Article II. Object

- **Section 1.** The object of the American Library Association shall be to promote library service and librarianship.

ernance/constitution/constitution#affiliated

Appendix B

Facebook

ALA
American Library Association

American Library Association
@AmericanLibraryAssociation

Home
Fundraisers
Events
Posts
About
Twitter
Notes
Photos
Pinterest
YouTube
Videos

BECAUSE THE SUMMER SLIDE ISN'T PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT.

LIBRARIES TRANSFORM
#LibrariesTransform

Like Follow Share ...

Donate Send Message

Write a post...

Photo/Video Tag Friends Check in ...

Fundraisers + Create

Pamela's Birthday Fundraiser for American Library Association by Pamela Lee Livingstone
\$111 / \$1,000 - Only 7 hours left!

Community
Invite your friends to like this Page
200,662 people like this
207,138 people follow this
1,849 check-ins

About
See All

Chat (22)

Instagram

ALA
American Library Association

americanlibraryassociation Follow

1,153 posts 44.8k followers 1,284 following

American Library Association
The world's oldest and largest library association.
ala.org

Followed by tnzfiction, madeline.e.miller, bnrivercrossing + 2 more

#ALAAC19

POSTS TAGGED

BECAUSE LIBRARIES MAKE LEADERS

The Jewish Book Center's
Decade of
INSIDE
"COMING TO AMERICA"
READING GROUPS

YouTube

ALA American Library Association



American Library Association

4,287 subscribers

SUBSCRIBE 4.2K

HOME

VIDEOS

PLAYLISTS

COMMUNITY

CHANNELS

ABOUT



What do librarians do?

#TeamALA We're here for you
AmericanLibraryAssociation

0:01 / 3:11

What do librarians do?

12,641 views · 3 years ago

From answering reference questions to planning programs, working with 3D printers to dancing with Stormtroopers, librarians have their fingers in a lot of pies. We recently asked librarians "What do you do at your library?" and got some fabulous answers!

Let us know in the comments what a "day in the life of a" [READ MORE](#)

RECOMMENDED CHANNELS

TopekaLibrary

SUBSCRIBE

National Library of Science

SUBSCRIBE

Library of Congress

SUBSCRIBE

Twitter



American Library Association

22.4K Tweets

BECAUSE THE INTERNET SHOULDN'T HAVE A SLOW LANE.



LIBRARIES TRANSFORM
#LibrariesTransform

LIBRARIES TRANSFORM.ORG



Follow

American Library Association

@ALALibrary

Updates from the American Library Association (ALA) and libraries in general, authored by ALA staff. Contact us: library@ala.org

Chicago, IL ala.org Born October 6 Joined February 2009

4,394 Following 192.1K Followers

Followed by Tara St. Pierre, Laurie Forest - is in the writing cave 🌈👉🔥, and 55 others you follow

Tweets

Tweets & replies

Media

Likes



American Library Association @ALALibrary · 5h

ALA Presidential Citations honor forward-thinking global libraries. Meet this year's winners in the latest issue of [@amlibraries](http://amlibraries.bit.ly/2JUynFK). bit.ly/2JUynFK

The image shows the top portion of a website for BookExpo 2020. At the top left is a search icon. In the top right corner, there is a "Login to My Show" link with a user icon. The main header features the "BookExpo" logo with the tagline "the business of book culture" below it. To the right of the logo, the dates "MAY 27-29, 2020" and the location "JAVITS CENTER, NYC" are displayed. Further right are three links: "BookCon", "UnBound", and "New York Rights Fair". Below the header is a navigation bar with several menu items: "SHOW INFO", "FOR ATTENDEES", "AUTHOR APPEARANCES", "EVENTS", "THE FLOOR", "FOR EXHIBITORS", and "MEDIA". A prominent yellow button labeled "REGISTER TO ATTEND" is positioned on the right side of this bar. The main banner area features a teal-tinted background image of a crowded exhibition hall. Overlaid on this image is the text "Save the Date! BookExpo 2020 will be May 27-29, Javits Center, NYC" in a large, yellow, cursive font. Navigation arrows are visible on the left and right sides of the banner text.